



Understanding and monitoring tension and conflict in local communities

A practical guide for local authorities, police service and partner agencies

Second edition

iCoCo
Institute of Community Cohesion

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The London boroughs of Hounslow, Southwark and Waltham Forest piloted the first edition of the guide and provided feedback and contributions.

Many other users of the guide have provided feedback and this has led, in particular, to the additional tool in Section Two to assist managers working with frontline staff to identify and report practical signs of potential tension in communities.

Our thanks go to all those who have made a contribution to help learn more about community tension and how we can work together to address this.

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Foreword to the second edition

Professor Ted Cantle CBE, Executive Chair, Institute of Community Cohesion
Sir Hugh Orde OBE, President, Association of Chief Police Officers



We share a commitment to building safe and strong communities, where people of different backgrounds can live and work together with mutual trust and respect. For the most part, that is how people do live. But we are aware that sometimes there are circumstances where there can be distrust and antagonism within and between communities which cause fear and anxiety and can lead to disorder and violence.

The benefit of monitoring community tension and sharing information between communities and partners is primarily to support communities to develop their own solutions and responses, to prevent tension escalating into conflict and to reduce risks to life and property. Equally, the more we know about and understand community dynamics, the better able we are to anticipate problems and contribute to building positive relationships. Where tensions are rising, the systems, tools and techniques in the guide will help prepare partners to work with communities to manage those difficult situations in ways that are collaborative, sensitive and effective.

Since the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, police, local authorities and statutory and voluntary partners have increasingly worked together on strategic plans and practical operations to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Increasingly, joint tasking is making a difference in local neighbourhoods, addressing residents' local priorities for cleaner and safer neighbourhoods and building stronger communities. This guide builds on those experiences and combines good practice from different partners into a coherent approach. Whilst this is a guide for practitioners, it requires the endorsement and support of leaders, chief executives, and other senior officers from all partners to enable the system to operate effectively – especially as it enables the focus of interventions to shift from those led by the police to wider community-based solutions.

The first edition of the guide was funded by the Metropolitan Police Service, with support from the Department for Communities and Local Government. The team supporting its development included the Communities Together Strategic Engagement Team at the Metropolitan Police, the National Community Tension Team and the London boroughs of Southwark, Waltham Forest and Hounslow, who contributed ideas and good practice and piloted the system. The Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) brought its experience in the broader cohesion agenda to this guide. The Institute is experienced in working with a wide range of local authorities, statutory agencies and local communities. Its expertise is in research, identifying good practice and producing resources and development programmes for politicians, policy makers and practitioners.

Since the first edition, many areas of the country have adopted the system, been involved in training and contributed new ideas. So, whilst the first edition has stood the test of time, the second edition does include some updated elements, particularly to the definitions and measurements of tension, which now include measures of fear and anxiety in communities and damage to their reputation. There is also a new section giving practical examples of the kinds of signs and situations which staff from different agencies working in communities should be looking out for.

We commend the approach and look forward to its wider use and to realising the benefits of improved tension monitoring for all our communities.



Professor Ted Cantle CBE



Sir Hugh Orde OBE

Introduction

Tension monitoring is, in the main, currently a police led activity. Local police services file weekly reports to their local command unit and these are forwarded to the National Community Tensions Team (NCTT), which collates the national picture. Some local authorities also make returns to their regional Government Office for submission to the Communities and Faiths Unit of the Department for Communities and Local Government. These, together with the NCTT reports are used to produce a monthly assessment for government.

The primary purpose of monitoring community tension, however, is to inform local action. This guide aims to help local agencies and communities to get 'upstream' of problems and manage tensions through a measured partnership response. It is based on a strategy of establishing a multi-agency approach to improve communication, information sharing and community engagement to manage tensions. Early interventions will often not be led by the police and will generally comprise a range of measures carried out by a diversity of public agencies, predicting and anticipating events based on good quality comprehensive information and intelligence garnered by the partnership pooling their knowledge and expertise.

Local authority and other local information and intelligence, if brought together effectively, could supplement the police's own model of gathering information on community tensions which is categorised into 'evidenced', 'experienced' and 'potential' (EEP). The information available to authorities and their partners will often not be related to crime and be under the police radar and, as such, it can support a predictive and preventative approach to dealing with community tensions.

In summary, the guide seeks to join up quantitative and qualitative information so that agencies can better understand community dynamics and work together to prepare better responses where there is tension developing.

Community dynamics are, by definition, hard to pin down. They are about change and a diversity of forces and influences. However, in the analyses of community disturbances and conflicts, underlying causes or warning signs are identifiable – often building up long before the 'spark' that ignites an incident. This guide brings together lessons learned and good practice from around the country into an integrated framework.

The guide is organised into three parts:

Part one describes the process for setting up a tension monitoring system, getting people engaged and learning the basic techniques.

Part two sets out five tools to build into the tension monitoring system to make it more sophisticated. It includes techniques to understand how communities are feeling, how we share information, using open source information and using data more effectively. There is a new tool which is advice for managers of frontline staff to guide them in the kind of practical signs and signals which may indicate tensions and how to report them.

Part three suggests some of the options for interventions in the event that tensions are raised and includes community-led approaches, inter-agency approaches and stresses the importance of communications.

Part one

Setting up a tension monitoring system

This part of the guide sets out the basic system for monitoring community tensions.

The steps aim to enable users of the guide to plan how you will work together and learn and use the basic processes and systems.

It brings together techniques developed by different partners and good practice from around the country into an integrated system.

It describes seven basis steps, including an opportunity for review of the processes and systems.

Depending on the level of experience of those involved, training may be needed to support aspects of the approach.

Introduction

Arrangements for tension monitoring vary between different areas - from being virtually absent, ad hoc, police only, or coming into play 'when the heat is turned up', to areas which are increasingly seeking to build more systematic and shared working.

Some information is, of necessity, restricted and confidential. However, the more information partners can share, building a climate of trust, the better the process will be.

By working through the following steps, then regularly using and applying the system, a more sophisticated approach to tension monitoring will result, ultimately producing better outcomes for local communities and a better relationship between communities, police and other partner agencies.

Before you start

Before setting up a specific system for tension monitoring, it is worth checking that some of the basic strategies, plans and ways of working are in place which form the foundations for preventing tensions. For example, is the Community Strategy up to date and in place and setting a shared vision and direction for the area, and is it owned and promoted by all partners? Is there a shared understanding of community cohesion issues in the area and a co-ordinated approach? Are Equality Plans in place, protocols for information and data sharing and is there a New Arrivals Strategy? Are there mechanisms to promote local engagement in decision making? Without some of these basics in place, a tension monitoring system will be more difficult to operate and may end up being a fire fighting exercise.

Appendix 1 provides a '**Foundations for prevention checklist**'. There may be other plans, strategies or ways of working which you can add. It is worth working through the checklist to assess possible areas of weakness or for improvement which need to be addressed by the group, or others, whilst developing the tension monitoring system.

Step one: Set up a tension monitoring group and identify lead officers

This step will enable you to start by establishing a group to work together and build the tension monitoring system for your area. Looking at what works around the country, setting up an inter-agency tension monitoring group and having a named police lead and named local authority lead are prerequisites for developing a robust and integrated system.

Terms of reference, membership, key tasks, accountabilities and operating arrangements will be for local determination. The suggestions here are starting points for guidance and discussion and are not prescriptive – though they indicate the main headings that you need to address and work through.

Terms of reference for a tension monitoring group

The tension monitoring group exists:

- To understand local community dynamics and identify potential or actual tensions
- To minimise the potential negative affects of tension, prevent escalation and reduce conflict
- To consider and plan interventions – short, medium and long term
- To inform and support the management of critical incidents
- To support and promote community cohesion

Membership

Membership of the group should include representatives from the following statutory agencies/ departments/teams:

Community Safety

Police – borough liaison, safer neighbourhoods, borough intelligence

Education – schools section dealing with racial incidents

Community Development /Area or Neighbourhood teams

Youth service

Environment services

Housing – estate management, ALMO or Registered Social Landlord representatives

(Note: The person completing the Community Tension Assessment Return must be a member of the group)

Additional members involved in different parts of the country include:

Executive member with Cohesion or Community Safety portfolio
Community representatives - eg from Independent Advisory Group,
Tenants and Residents Associations, faith groups
Voluntary organisations - Race Equality Council, Voluntary Action Council
Health services

These will need some thought and careful consideration depending on the local dynamics, and due regard to handling confidential information.

The **level** of the representation clearly needs to be appropriate to the task. Representatives will need to be able to bring a broad overview of information from across the area, with some bringing specific information from communities where there is particular tension.

The **Chair of the group** – current practice includes Assistant Chief Executive in a number of authorities, Head of Community Safety, Head of the Local Strategic Partnership – indicating a high level commitment and priority to the task.

Key tasks for the tensions monitoring group

- Collect, share and co-ordinate information about community dynamics and tensions
- Analyse community information based on experienced, evidenced and potential tensions
- Produce Community Impact Assessments including risk assessments
- Devise interventions
- Produce an annual plan
- Produce a communications plan and determine media relations strategy

Frequency of meetings

The tension monitoring group should operate as a virtual team, keeping in regular contact, dealing with things as they arise and keeping each other informed. The group is more than just the meetings.

There can be a tendency to take the view that as tension is perceived to be low that monitoring can be infrequent. This doesn't accord with the preventative and 'early and upstream' approach. Small things can fester, minor nuisances grow into bigger problems if ignored. A seemingly peaceful local situation may be disrupted by national or international events. A 'dormant' issue may be 'bubbling under'.

In situations where tensions are high there may be a need to meet frequently. Many areas have weekly meetings of a smaller group to support the police weekly monitoring and reporting requirement. Some areas meet fortnightly, but generally holding tension monitoring meetings at least once a month seems to be good practice.

Identify lead officers

The task of co-ordinating tensions information on a day-to-day basis and to feed into the wider group needs to be allocated to a named person in the police service and a named person in the local authority.

In councils, ***appropriate officers*** could be the Hate Crime Reduction Officer, the Community Cohesion Co-ordinator, a Community Safety Officer, a Policy Officer in the Chief Executive's Office. The important thing is to have someone whose job it is to be the focus of co-ordination of information and to provide appropriate support and management to this function. You will need to assess and address the training needs of those involved in the process.

Step two: Gain commitment and buy in

This step is necessary to establish a shared understanding of what is meant by community tension, why you're doing it and the benefits.

There could be resistance or reticence from some people to share information or engage with the process as they may erroneously see it as 'spying' on communities or individuals, or they may feel that sharing information will bring no return as nobody will do anything about it.

The following could be used as a **basis for discussion** at the first meeting of the group with a view to gaining greater understanding and buy in. You will want to consider some local issues and discuss the barriers which will need to be overcome. This will help you develop an understanding of the different perspectives and possibly anxieties in the group. It should help in building a local vision together.

What is community tension?

Community tension is a state of community dynamics which may potentially lead to disorder, threaten the peace and stability of communities or raise the levels of fear and anxiety in the whole, or a part of the local community.

Strained relationships may build up within or between communities, or against particular institutions, based on real or perceived events or information or on fears, prejudices, circumstances or specific actions. They may develop over a long period and be inflamed by a 'spark' which leads to disorder and criminal activity.

Community tension may also arise as a result of the **absence** of those factors which produce cohesive communities, which is the term adopted by central and local government to describe communities where

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Community tension is not intrinsically bad - we should expect some tension in healthy communities. For example, community activism and public protest are legitimate and potentially creative activities, though they may cause tensions. People have the right to express opinions and to 'peaceful assembly', providing they are not stirring up racial or religious hatred. These can often be positive means of promoting social change - it is legal expression and may produce tension.

The principal concern is about preventing disorder, the fear of crime, insecurity and actual illegal or criminal activity which often manifests itself when tensions are heightened.

Types of tension

Many different circumstances give rise to tension:

Political – such as extremist political activity (leafleting, graffiti, meetings); elections or by-elections at which extremist candidates are standing; issues potentially detrimental to community cohesion, which are prominent on the public agenda; local demonstrations; local political situations which are exacerbating tensions

Community – such as tensions between specific communities and incidents between specific communities

Immigration, asylum and refugee - such as local concerns about the effects of migration on the local area; impact of national policy on migration (such as asylum dispersal) on the local area; racist attacks motivated by anti-migrant sentiment

Racial and religious – such as actions of racist organisations; racially and/or religiously motivated incidents and offences; concerns within communities – including faith communities about hate crime

Criminal – such as gang activity and antisocial behaviour

National and international - such as incidents which have impacted upon or have the potential to impact upon the local community

Future – such as significant anniversaries and planned demonstrations

There are many examples of conflict and tension – the Lozells disturbances, the reaction to arrests in Yorkshire and London of those alleged to be involved in bombings, racist murders in a number of different towns and gang violence in London and other cities. Could they have been anticipated? Was the response appropriate? Would you be ready to respond in such circumstances?

Why monitor community tension?

- To keep a check on the 'temperature' in communities even when tensions are generally perceived as low – complacency and not listening are not responsible or accountable approaches
- Public bodies have general and specific legal duties with regard to the safety and well-being of communities and 'promoting good race relations'
- Failure to fulfil statutory duties and obligations may result in damage to property, injury and loss of life
- To prevent the serious impact of criminal activity
- To promote positive community relations and well-being where the whole community can live in peace and feel safe

- To understand potential conflict and minimise the risk of disorder, violence or crime, rather than to 'spy' on particular individuals and communities
- To manage a community incident well, tensions need to be monitored and assessed to broker the best responses
- To enable effective problem solving and appropriate management and interventions
- **And**, to recognise that large disorder on any significant scale will severely damage the local reputation and could result in the curtailing of investment in jobs, housing and employment

Key relevant legislation includes:

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups

Local Government Act 2000

- to promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

- to make provision for emergencies which threaten serious damage to human welfare, the environment or national security

Human Rights Act 1998

- to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals and balance those with what is necessary for a democratic society

Public Order Act 1986

- to define new offences relating to public disorder including fear of provocation of violence; intentional harassment, alarm or distress; stirring up of racial hatred; measures to control public processions and assemblies

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

- to extend police powers to stop and search in anticipation of violence

Terrorism Act 2000 and Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005

- to make provision about the restriction and prevention of terrorism

Education and Inspections Act 2006

- to introduce a duty on all maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion and on Ofsted to report on contributions made in this area

Step three: Use the Experienced, Evidenced, Potential (EEP) system

This step will introduce the Experienced, Evidenced and Potential framework to record, collate and assess Community Tension. This was conceptualised and developed by the late Detective Constable Ron Woodland for the Metropolitan Police and the National Community Tension Team and has been adopted by most UK police services.

Wider understanding and use of this framework will assist a broader spread of local authorities, educational establishments, voluntary bodies and other partners to contribute to building a more comprehensive picture of community dynamics and lead to better responses.

Understanding and using the EEP system

Experienced

- How communities feel
- What communities think is happening to them
- Rumour or perception is as relevant as factual information

Evidenced

- What has happened or is happening

Potential

- What might happen or has the potential to happen
- Predicted or planned activity by the police
- Other forthcoming events

The **‘Experienced’** element is of great importance. Knowing how communities feel, the ‘word on the street’, any rumours or stories circulating around or how people are reacting to local, national or international events is crucial to managing an appropriate response. Formal groups such as Independent Advisory Groups, Police Community Consultative Groups, Neighbourhood Forums and Tenants and Residents Associations are good sources of information, but equally important are informal conversations and contacts with as many different people in the community as possible. It is necessary to hear from young people and women, from new arrivals and members of the established community, from faith communities and community groups. This presupposes new and higher levels of continuous engagement with communities to make sure that partners really do have their finger on the pulse, are alive to current rumours, minor disagreements and so on.

‘Evidenced’ information is predominantly collected and recorded by the police on the Crime Report Information System (CRIS) and the Criminal Intelligence data system (CRIMINT). Other evidence which is not recorded as crime - such as Schools’ Racist Incidents Reports, verbal abuse of staff of public or private sector organisations - should be added to police evidence.

‘Potential’ tensions may be linked to a known event - a demonstration or march, a significant anniversary, planned police activity, or gleaned from community conversations. Anticipation of potential tension should not be limited to short term events. Forward thinking of developments in an area - such as major regeneration programmes, housing redevelopments, anticipated new arrivals, changes to transport systems, closure of facilities – and an assessment of the potential community impact will enable partners to plan to mitigate risks to community well-being.

Measuring the level of tension

For each aspect of the assessment – Experienced, Evidenced, and Potential – a description of the level of tension is required and measurement summarised in Section 4:

- 1 Imminent
- 2 High
- 3 Moderate (high)
- 4 Moderate (low)
- 5 Above Normal
- 6 Normal

Descriptions of these levels for each aspect are contained in the Template in Appendix 2A (PG 80)

The Tension Assessment Summary includes an indicator as to whether tension is

- Falling
- Static
- Raised

Using the system

Utilising the three elements enables far greater analysis of the true tension position.

For example, a significant difference between experienced and evidenced tensions might indicate the need for reassurance (where experienced is much higher than evidenced) or research where the opposite is true.

The allocation of numbers within each category will always be a matter of local judgement. Different areas will have different levels of tolerance to tension and different experiences of what is ‘normal’. However, the inclusion of evidence-based criteria, wherever possible, should enable more consistent and robust assessment.

It must be acknowledged that any system must operate within the local environment and that what is high tension locally may not be viewed the same in another area.

The three way assessment must be completed for every community identified as being vulnerable on the Tension Summary Table (See Appendix 2, Section 4).

As familiarity with the assessment framework develops, each community can be assessed using a simple three-figure number, where the first figure is 'experienced', the second is 'evidenced' and the third is 'potential'.

In addition, the figures can be highlighted in colours (red for risen, amber for static, green for decreased and blue for a new assessment) to show how each element of the assessment has developed since the last assessment.

Through regular use of this model, in an inter-agency setting, the group will increase their understanding of the importance of small pieces of information contributing to the overall picture.

Step four: Use the Community Impact Assessment process

Step four introduces another key part of the system - a logical and systematic way of analysing specific incidents and events, identifying the risks and developing responses. Prior to an event and during an incident Community Impact Assessments need to be updated regularly. This can be as frequently as 2 - 3 times a day during critical incidents. It is also used after an incident to assess the impact, lessons learned and any further potential impact on tensions.

The process can also be used for analysing the potential impact of longer term developments, such as the impact of the Olympic Games regeneration sites on the Gypsy and Traveller population or the impact of the new Eurostar terminal on street activities around St Pancras Station.

The Community Impact Assessment

This should include:

Information and intelligence

What is known about the situation?

What is the problem?

What is about to happen?

Who might be affected and how?

What is the potential impact on different groups within the community?

Legislation assessment

Are there any specific implications particularly with regard to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Human Rights Act 1998?

Risk assessment

What are the specific risks which might happen?

Risks can be identified using the PPPELM model

- Physical
- Political
- Police and Community
- Legal
- Economic
- Moral

Each risk can be scored by identifying:

Likelihood - 1 Insignificant 2 Low 3 Medium 4 High 5 Almost certain

Impact - 1 Insignificant 2 Low 3 Medium 4 High 5 Critical

Risks with a score greater than 11 for Likelihood x Impact and any risks with a rating of 5 on the impact scale require an Action Plan to be developed.

Intervention options

Community-led

Inter-agency

Policing

Conclusion

Recommended Action Plan

Authorisation

Agreement and authorisation at an appropriate level for the course of action

Action

Appropriate people to be tasked with carrying out authorised actions

Review result

Assess impact of actions and level of tension after action taken.

Reflect on lessons learned

Community Impact Assessments are dynamic

Community Impact Assessments (CIAs) produced nationally, locally and at neighbourhood level should feed, and be dependent on one another to produce a fuller picture and allow analytical findings, risks and options/recommendations to be contextualised.

CIAs should be limited to small number of risks, less than 10. More than this number indicates that the assessment is too detailed, leading to a confusing document and the decision maker, for whom the assessment is being produced, being overwhelmed.

CIAs will often sit within a hierarchy, where a national assessment will inform a locally based CIA which itself may inform a Borough Command Unit based CIA. The same kind of hierarchy could exist along thematic lines. For example, risks may be identified that require a firearms capability. The firearms capability may then raise further community risks that should be addressed in a CIA completed for the officer in charge of that part of the operation.

Tips:

- ▶▶ Use all information available – and be aware of subtleties and nuances and particularly how different sections of the community might be affected or disproportionately affected
- ▶▶ The level of detail needs to be proportionate to the level of risk
- ▶▶ Speed may be of the essence – do what's possible in the time available – but do it
- ▶▶ Involve others who can give different perspectives
- ▶▶ This is a live and practical working document – not something for the files – but it is only valid for the circumstances prevailing at the time. In the event of a material change of circumstances, a further impact assessment should be carried out

Step five: Establish governance arrangements

Step five seeks to locate tension monitoring clearly within the partnership governance structure. It could be deemed more appropriate to establish governance arrangements at an earlier stage – this is absolutely possible and some may prefer to set this in place at the outset, at the same time as setting up the tension monitoring group. It will depend on how established local partnerships are, their experience of the issues involved and the flexibility of existing arrangements.

The reason it is included at this stage is to give the Tension Monitoring Group the opportunity to understand the process, learn the techniques and establish a system and then recommend the most appropriate governance arrangements for the area, based on their knowledge of what is entailed.

In either event, governance arrangements should be in place within three months of establishing the system.

What are the governance arrangements for?

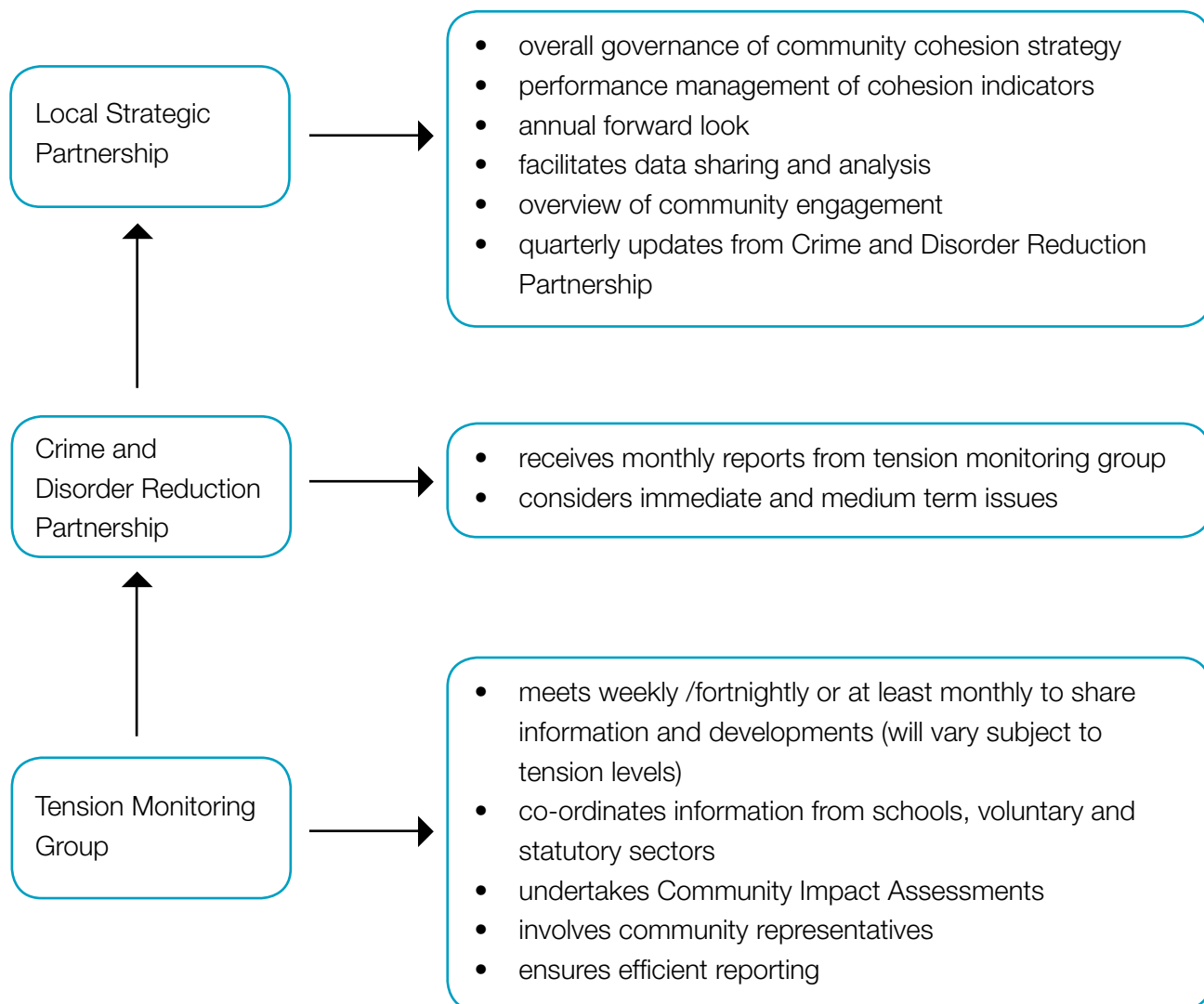
These are necessary to:

- Ensure that information is collated to present to and advise the Chief Executive, Borough Commander, Leader and other lead partner representatives
- Inform and advise key services
- Set clarity around the values and ensure they are upheld
- Ensure accountability and that the processes are legal
- Open the process to scrutiny
- Keep key players informed and involved
- Enable all relevant and related information and issues to be brought together
- Maintain an effective overview and build the lessons and experiences into other plans and strategies

Suggested governance of tension monitoring reporting

Below is a simple structure which could apply – it is one option. Many Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships have professional Executives or partnership groups who handle the business and performance management, with policy and strategy being the function of the Board of each partnership. The tension monitoring process would initially go to the respective boards for endorsement, then to the executives for regular monitoring.

Suggested governance structure



Tips:

- ▶▶ design the governance arrangements which work best for your area – build on existing effective groups if they are relevant
- ▶▶ ensure that all related meetings/processes are connected – eg racial incident monitoring of schools, housing departments, Race Equality Council and other partners
- ▶▶ in some areas, Tension Monitoring Groups report to a Community Cohesion Strategy Group then in to the Local Strategic Partnership – this is one alternative

Links to other related functions

It is important that governance and operational arrangements pay due regard to other related functions including:

- Emergency planning
- Civil Contingencies planning – risk assessment framework and regional resilience forums
- Cohesion Contingencies planning (Department for Communities and Local Government guidance)
- Gold and silver command structures operated by the police service

Ensure the arrangements are lawful

Local Authorities and their partners will need to take legal advice to ensure that their local tension monitoring arrangements are lawful. Some of the relevant legislation is listed in Step Two but also of particular relevance are:

- The Data Protection Act 1998 – this sets out rules governing the processing of ‘personal data’. As far as possible, the data provided under tension monitoring arrangements should not be ‘personal data’ – it does not identify individuals. If reports do identify individuals, then data protection principles apply.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 – this generally requires information to be disclosed unless it is not in the public interest to do so. The Act defines circumstances for exemption to disclosure. Information obtained during the course of tension monitoring may be sensitive and, if disclosed, could cause harm or potentially increase the risks.
- Monitoring political extremism – where the activities of a political group increases community tension, the gathering and use of information for tension monitoring purposes should comply with relevant legislation, such as the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and the Data Protection Act, and relevant Codes of Practice.

Seek legal advice on your procedures and specific issues as they arise.

Step six: Establish reporting arrangements

Step six uses the Experienced, Evidenced, Potential framework for reporting locally, regionally and nationally. The system exists to support better tension monitoring locally – facilitating information sharing, analysis and appropriate interventions at the local level. Reporting through the local governance structure will ensure accountability, broader understanding and connectivity with other related issues.

There are structures in place to report regionally and nationally. These have the benefit of picking up 'cross border' issues, or issues affecting more than one authority either adjacent, within the same region or in another region. Reactions and interactions can move from one area to another, depending on the issue - tensions can be mobile, manifesting themselves similarly or differently in different places.

The structures that are in place can benefit local areas particularly where the information that is reported up the line is collated and transmitted back down to local areas.

Here we consider what to report, to whom and when – in order to have a co-ordinated approach and benefit from feedback.

Report format – The Community Tension Assessment Return

A single, shared format is suggested.

The Tension Assessment Return uses the Experienced, Evidenced, Potential format.

The types of tension listed on page 12 are a guide to the areas to consider but they are not designed to be prescriptive or constraining. It is better that people describe the tensions as they are perceived and experienced locally, rather than conforming to a central description.

Appendix 2 provides a **template for tension monitoring reporting** – the Community Tension Assessment Return. The cover page is for Metropolitan Police Service Returns.

Appendix 3 gives a cover sheet for the return to Government Office. Both can be adapted for local use elsewhere.

Sections 1 – 3 cover the descriptive reporting of the Experienced, Evidenced and Potential.

Section 4 is a tension summary table grading level (from 1 – 6) and trend (falling, static, raised) on specific groups within the population which may be vulnerable. This is collected to maintain an overview and to identify ways of supporting those communities particularly where there is a trend of raised tensions. The categories are collected and analysed nationally, and may change subject to what is happening.

Where levels of tension are 4,3,2,1 – the four higher levels – a Community Impact Assessment and Action plan will be necessary.

The Community Tension Assessment Return is principally to inform the local situation, but routine sharing of returns regionally and nationally will enrich the wider picture.

Timing of reports

Police community tension reports are compiled weekly and forwarded to the Police Service each Wednesday and on to the National Community Tension Team (NCTT) by Thursday noon. Ideally all assessments should be forwarded to NCTT on completion.

Local authorities share tension monitoring information and assessments monthly to the government office for the region, normally by the last working day of the month. (Although currently only areas considered 'at risk' report monthly, wider assessing of tensions and sharing with government office from all authorities is preferable).

Reports from both sources are shared by government offices with the Communities and Faiths Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government for an overall assessment to be made for reporting to ministers and senior government officials.

Ideally the Tension Monitoring Group will time its activities to support this timetable.

Where tensions are raised in any way there should be exception reporting to the Chief Executive and Leader and, where applicable, the Community Safety Manager. The Borough Commander will be informed.

Feedback

The National Community Tensions Team feeds back information on the national picture every Monday to local police services in the Operation Element Bulletin. The information is restricted. The open source digest can be separated and unrestricted and police colleagues may share other information on a verbal basis with the local tension monitoring group. There is also now a partners' version of Operation Element designed for sharing in Tension Monitoring groups.

Government offices are happy to feed regional assessments back to local authorities in the region once they have been compiled – this would only be shared subject to the prior agreement of the individual authorities providing the information. Similarly the national overview from the Department of Communities and Local Government is fed back to regional government offices month by month.

The more information that can be fed back locally to those putting information in to the system, the more trusted the process will be and the more useful information will flow. Information can usefully be shared down the chain (to those providing information) and sideways (to neighbouring areas). But also the wider tension monitoring is shared, the greater the risk of it inadvertently finding its way into the public domain – possibly leading to heightened tensions or, for example, retaliatory activity. Partners should therefore have an explicit agreement about how tensions monitoring information is shared, and who will receive it.

Principles of sharing tensions information

- Partners should have an explicit agreement about how tensions monitoring information is shared, and who will receive it.
- Information passed down the reporting chain should be marked 'not for onward distribution' and be shared only for the purposes of the partner organisation receiving it and should not be shared further outside that organisation. (It will be best to copy information to a single named contact in an organisation, who understands the sensitivities of the information, rather than to staff in general who may not understand the context and may share it with others inadvertently.
- Partner organisations with whom tensions monitoring is shared should agree with those responsible the general purpose to which they will put the information (generally, for effective policy development and service delivery of the organisation) and should advise the group of any specific action they intend to take in relation to a particular piece of information or the issues raised by it.

Tips:

- ▶▶ The more information is shared between partners before submission, the richer the picture.
- ▶▶ The more information that can be fed back locally to those putting information in to the system the more trusted the process will be and the more useful information will flow
- ▶▶ Establish a 'virtual team' of people who are sharing information on tensions
- ▶▶ Where reports are, of necessity, restricted or confidential, share a sanitised version

Step seven: **Develop an annual plan**

Step seven will enable the group to think longer term and consider how the system can be further developed, including using some of the tools in part two of this guide.

It may seem inevitable that tensions monitoring is a reactive process, responding to changing events and circumstances, fire-fighting and countering situations after they have arisen. There is indeed a considerable element of this, especially given the complexity of community dynamics and the multiplicity of factors affecting how people feel and interact.

However, the learning from situations where there has been community breakdown suggests very strongly that not only were the signs there, often for a long period of time, but that earlier interventions were possible.

It is therefore suggested that, in order that the Tensions Monitoring Group becomes something more than a 'here and now' group, there is an annual plan to look at the longer term issues and support the early and upstream approach. It would involve inputs from the wider partnership and applying a greater breadth of knowledge to the thinking.

This annual plan would use some of the **tools in part 2** of this guide.

Annual Plan

Every month would include:

- An Experienced, Evidenced and Potential Tension Assessment
- Community Impact Assessments on specific forthcoming events or activities
- Review of the national, regional and local returns from the previous period
- Specific interventions arising from these

Built across the plan should be a planned programme to:

- Review of the depth and reach of community engagement
- Consider specific communities of interest or geography and particularly vulnerable or excluded communities, new arrivals, priorities for attention

Twice yearly

- Receive reports on population changes and demographic trends

Annually

- An annual forward look - 'horizon scanning' for longer term developments which will impact on community dynamics. (This is a new requirement in the Crime and Disorder Act Review)
- Review processes, systems and lessons learned and build into business plans

Annual forward look

This would consider longer term trends and changes ahead and the risks and impact on the community. It could be done in conjunction with the annual review of the Community Plan and would usually be undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership.

The annual forward look should follow the guidance relevant to the Crime and Disorder Act Review and also use the structure of the Community Impact Assessment. It should consider such issues as:

- Demographic change including economic migration
- Major physical regeneration projects
- Opening or closing of public institutions, shops and places of worship
- Coming or going of major employers
- Progress in 'closing the gap' for the poorest neighbourhoods
- Other long term changes, developments and trends
- Residents' views from perception surveys
- Presence and activities of known extremist groups or influences

It will include positive opportunities and benefits for the community and would aim to assist in devising plans and interventions to ensure that all sections of the community were equally able to take advantage of those opportunities and benefits. Equally, where one section of the community is likely to be disproportionately affected by change, such as the threat of closure of a large employer or a school, specific measures will be necessary to mitigate the impact for those people affected. The Forward Look may consider developments in the next 3 to 5 years - and be reviewed and updated annually.

Review processes and systems

At least once a year it is important to review what's working well and what could be better. Clearly, if the systems are falling down, earlier review will be necessary. The review could follow the format of this guide by asking the questions:

- Is the group functioning well? Are we fulfilling our remit? Do we have all the right people involved? Are they at the right level? Is it chaired by the right person? Is there adequate support for the lead officers?
- Is there commitment and buy in? Has understanding grown? Is further training needed?
- Is the EEP system well established now? When did it work well? When not so well?
- Did the Community Impact Assessments lead to better interventions?
- Are the governance arrangements satisfactory?
- Are the reporting arrangements operating efficiently? Is feedback happening at all levels?
- How did our annual plan go? Did we stick to it and what did we learn?
- What are our achievements? What could we have done better?

Part two

Tools for understanding local community dynamics

Public bodies, voluntary organisations and most importantly, communities themselves hold a vast amount of information about what's happening in their areas, how people are feeling and the impact of changes, different situations, circumstances and events. Putting the individual pieces of information together can help build the 'big picture'.

Part Two of the Guide outlines some of the techniques and models for understanding community dynamics. Some are tried and tested, some are new pieces of good practice and some are emerging practice or research. It is not intended as a comprehensive or prescriptive list, but an indication of areas of exploration and development which can enrich the tension monitoring system.

Part two aims to widen and deepen the information being fed in to the system outlined in part one – making it more sophisticated and more effective. The group could look through the tools and consider the priorities for local development as part of the Annual Plan. Web links and some 'in practice' examples are included for further information and ideas.

Introduction

The Experienced, Evidenced, Potential model is only as useful as the quality of the information fed into it. Given the vast amount of information that exists, the vexed question is - what information is useful and how can it be handled in a manner that is manageable?

First, it is important to recognise that information is different from intelligence. 'Information' - in this context - includes anything that may be in the public domain, whether it is true or not. False information can be as useful as true information, especially in the sphere of tension monitoring, where myth and rumour are powerful forces. When information gleaned from communities is analysed alongside other pieces of information and its relevance and resonance triangulated, then it may become 'intelligence' which might be used to inform assessments and interventions.

This part of the guide looks at information held by the range of individuals working in and with communities and how to capture this, better use of 'open source' of information and the shortcomings and opportunities of population data.

Most importantly, it considers the vital aspects of building relationships with and between communities and building community cohesion.

The tools are about understanding more about community dynamics and cover:

- Understanding how people are feeling
- Capturing and pooling what we know
- Making the best use of open sources
- Using data more effectively
- Advice for managers briefing front-line staff

Tool one: Knowing the community - understanding how people are feeling

Experience indicates that the best solutions to tensions and conflicts can be found inside communities and by communities themselves.

Public agencies have recognised, increasingly, the need to work alongside individuals, groups and organisations to tackle inequalities and build networks across communities so that people have more influence over decisions that affect their lives and a greater capacity to resolve conflicts themselves.

This section describes some of the techniques practitioners use:

- To get to know communities
- To support communities
- To understand the priorities and solutions communities identify

The section includes:

- A brief introduction
- Some techniques
- Some 'in practice' examples

Introduction

Community engagement is a means of preventing tensions from escalating. A by-product of being in either contact or relationship with communities is the informal information that can be gathered. In relation to tensions, that information can assist in our understanding of and response to:

- The community's perception of an area as a place to live; and
- The tension issues as they are emerging
- The impact of an event or incident on a community

The purpose of the work is to build cohesion and to build either contact or relationships that can withstand possible build up of community tension. We can predict that there are likely to be tensions within that process, as well as unpredictable tension in communities more generally.

Communities may be:

- **A geographical** community – locality based, neighbourhoods, estates, villages
- A community of **interest** – as in 'business community' or characteristics as in 'traveller community'
- **A virtual** community – electronic interactions, often enabling people to seek out those who espouse similar beliefs – as in the National Front website, designed to build a community of support for the repatriation of 'non-whites'.

Understanding how people are feeling requires sustained effort and commitment on the part of agencies and a willingness to learn from the experience developed by community development practitioners over many decades. In some ways our organisations have signed up to community engagement being ‘everyone’s job.’ The Metropolitan Police, for example, have a strategy that says community engagement is designed to improve decision making and enhance citizenship. It is:

“The proactive harnessing of the energies, knowledge and skills of communities and partners not merely to identify problems but also to navigate priorities for action and shape and deliver outcomes.”

The outcomes may include influencing how policing is delivered or youth services, housing, schools or health services. Understanding how people are feeling and the potential for tension is at the heart of better public services, demanding a **mainstream approach** and not something to be relegated to the margins, funded solely by external regeneration funds and operated on a ‘project’ basis.

As important as the outcomes are the values and methods of community development. There is body and depth of knowledge, practice and research in organisations such as the Community Development Foundation, Commission for Racial Equality and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

www.cdf.org.uk/default.asp

www.cre.gov.uk/

www.jrf.org.uk/

The core human rights values of dignity, respect, equality and fairness underpin the approach to engaging with communities. Each area will need to develop its own values and approaches to community engagement. Those leading the community engagement strategy for the council or local strategic partnership should share the principles, values and methods and the connections with the tensions monitoring group as a part of the annual plan. Clearly, a common and co-ordinated approach makes sense both to giving consistent messages to communities and to best use of resources.

A locally shared understanding will be an important aspect of the local neighbourhood policing strategy and neighbourhood management approaches. The Metropolitan Police have adopted the following seven stages towards Safer Neighbourhoods:

- Research the local neighbourhood
- Engage with the local community
- Identify public preferences for action
- Investigate and analyse public preferences
- Identify priorities for action
- Plan and act
- Review

The techniques in this section support and underpin the Safer Neighbourhoods approach as well as contributing to tension monitoring.

Some techniques

Basic contact - The benefits to contact with communities are that you can get a view of how they are feeling in a fairly objective way, without them particularly knowing your 'agenda' or telling you 'what you want to hear'. You may understand the community better by consulting:

- Residents' surveys – can include cohesion questions such as 'how well do people from different backgrounds tend to get on in this area?' They are useful for an overview of a borough and are also broken down by ward. The trend over the years – these tend to be annual surveys - can also be useful.
- Community panels– Safer Neighbourhood Panels including youth panels, Independent Advisory Groups, Police Community Consultative Groups,
- Forums – such as pensioners, disabled people, refugees, LGBT, residents' or neighbourhood forums
- Topic specific community groups or forums
- Consultation documents
- Crime/Fear of Crime Surveys
- Community councils
- Focus groups

The following documents suggest questions for surveys for community cohesion and race relations:

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/690/BuildingaPictureofCommunityCohesion_id1502690.pdf

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/33/2005CitizenshipSurveyCrosscuttingthemes_id1501033.pdf

Building relationships – longer term engagement, patiently building trust over time requires a greater investment of time and professional commitment. Building trust will include:

- Translating yourself – making sure people understand the way you work, what you need and what you offer
- Working alongside – letting people diagnose their own problems and find their own solutions
- Managing the tension between support and interference
- Taking time to build informal relationships without a set outcome – so that, in times of tension, you can co-operate formally and effectively. Safer Neighbourhoods teams build 'Key Individual Networks' for this purpose
- Letting the outcomes be set by the community. This will improve the co-operation when priorities get dictated by circumstances such as a criminal investigation
- Community meetings being led by the community, especially in times of tension
- Having two-way relationships – that there is both give and take
- Acknowledging tensions within communities - starting 'where people are really at'

Reaching 'wide and deep' – reaching those who are 'furthest away' from contact with public agencies and listening to those whose voices are least heard, perhaps least understood or are most disaffected is a key challenge, but crucial. Thoughtful and creative approaches could include:

- Peer outreach and engagement – train young people or members of particular communities to broker relationships, appoint permanent 'community brokers'
- Avoiding the 'gatekeepers' and finding the 'gateways' in community leaders
- Involve women and young people in ways that are acceptable to them – demonstrating genuine listening and avoiding tokenism
- Be available at times that suit the community, beyond 'office hours'
- Innovative approaches using the arts or social activities as a means of reaching people and facilitating communication
- Recruiting staff who reflect the community they serve
- Involving people in the wider agenda of the area – beyond their 'special interest' to encourage fuller integration

Action research - This technique is a way of building relationship with communities, building their capacity and co-operating to determine solutions to agreed problems. It is particularly effective with members of so called 'hard to reach' communities.

Building capacity - involves activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills, abilities and confidence of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities. This includes:

- Supporting the development of structures and support groups
- Small grants schemes – with cohesion criteria that encourage working across divides – work to ensure funding is not divisive
- Training and support – through Councils for Voluntary Service or similar

Acting together – bringing different sections of the community together and different agencies to work on projects or issues:

- Community events, festivals and celebrations
- Addressing specific problems and causes of tension
- Community campaigns, clean ups and environmental projects
- Local newsletters that different sections of the community can contribute to

Promoting belonging – supporting active citizenship through:

- Training for underrepresented groups to become school governors, magistrates
- Encouraging people to engage with the democratic process – as representatives or voters
- Developing and promoting a shared vision for the local area
- Involving all sections of the community in everyday processes, eg – through Planning for Real, engagement of local people in the (land use) planning process

In practice

In practice: Community brokers - acting together in Harrow

Concerned residents in Brooke Avenue, South Harrow contacted Harrow Council when groups of men began to gather at the end of the street for several hours a day. Some residents did not understand why the groups were constantly there, and found their presence threatening.

Local police started to monitor activity in the area, and soon established that men were gathering in numbers to visit a nearby shop to purchase and chew Khat, a legal substance that can produce a temporary 'high'. This is a social pastime in Somalia, akin to drinking alcohol in the UK.

At first owners of the building denied the activity was going on, and progress was only made when representatives from the local Harrow Association of Somali Volunteer Organisations (HASVO) got involved, offering to act as mediators.

Harrow Council and police set up a meeting for Brook Avenue residents, Somali community representatives and local traders. HASVO was able to reassure the owners of the building that the council and police were coming to talk to them, but were not looking to threaten or alienate anyone.

Feedback from the meeting was that matters had improved significantly and that a better understanding of each other is beginning to result in greater tolerance.

www.rota.org.uk/pages/publications/briefings.htm

In practice: Action research - the Building Bridges Project (BBP)

BBP is carried out by 16-25 year olds, and is hosted and managed by Race on the Agenda (ROTA) and two other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. BBP mentors and trains a group of young BME and White British people (16-25 years old) to conduct fieldwork with young BME and White British Londoners who live in deprived London areas high in gun/knife crime. BBP aims to raise the group's awareness of ethics and human rights (i.e. respect, dignity, fairness, equality) and engage its members in research, diverting them from harmful activities. BBP also gives both of these two young groups a voice in the policymaking of an issue that involves them and their lives. While doing so, the young people involved: (a) conduct fieldwork with qualitative methodologies (b) receive human rights training (c) receive ethical fitness training (d) learn how to develop their thoughts in a written format (final report) (e) present their work to an audience and (f) produce a short film recording their findings. Ultimately, BBP helps all young participants to see things from a new perspective, promoting diversity, respect and community cohesion.

[www.rota.org.uk/downloads/ROTA%20-%20LVSC%20response%20to%20COIC%20\(final\).pdf](http://www.rota.org.uk/downloads/ROTA%20-%20LVSC%20response%20to%20COIC%20(final).pdf)

In practice: Building contact with young people in Waltham Forest - Defendin' Da Hood

Defendin' Da Hood was set up to help the Council and its partners to engage with disaffected young people in a way that meant genuine involvement for them. It also meant the Council had to show young people that they were really listening to them and that their views made a difference. Six events have been held so far, with young people enjoying entertainment and music, but always having to discuss a serious topic first - with the Council and its partners committed to listening to what they say.

Following the July 7 bombings in London, the Council was asked by community leaders to organise an event to enable young Asian people to build better communications links with their elders. Other topics have included teenage pregnancy, gun crime, a missing teenager appeal, Christmas celebrations and community tolerance. There is now a large database of young people who have signed up to a text service, where the Council sends information and alerts about events and other issues.

Defendin' Da Hood has also resulted in the development of a radio station, and a group of young people have been trained to become a young people's independent advisory group. The most dramatic outcome was a 40% reduction in violent crime around the time of the first event. We are supporting a group called Parents Against Violence and, perhaps most importantly, we have a database of 950 young people previously involved in or on the edge of gang culture who want to improve their life chances.

The programme is now a prominent mechanism for engaging in a two-way communication process with young people who would previously have been described as 'hard to reach'. Through the programme, young people have begun to experience having a positive impact upon issues of direct concern to them and are seen as our partners in seeking solutions to the issues that affect their lives.

Putting Respect Back Onto the Streets - A hard hitting play written and performed by young people highlighting examines gun crime and social exclusion. It follows the stories of a number of young people to give the audience a perspective on how a young person can become both a perpetrator and victim of crime. 14 young people wrote, directed and act in the play. It is the second play that the award winning Defending Da Hood project has produced. They first examined the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy as part of the joint Council and NHS "Let's Talk About Sex" campaign.

Waltham Forest Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Cllr Afzal Akram, said: "This play is just one of the ways that we are helping young people to understand that there are serious consequences attached to breaking the law, both for themselves and their families. We will continue to look for new and innovative ways of communicating with our young people to ensure they have all the support and guidance they need to make informed life choices."

In practice: collaboration in Southwark – faith in the neighbourhood

The Southwark faith in the neighbourhood Co-ordinator says: “I realised that whilst Safer Neighbourhoods teams were making an effort to speak to particular organisations and groups within their ward, contact with religious groups was much less regular. I devised a scheme which promotes communication between all faith groups and their local police. The scheme includes:

1. Face-to-face communication between all local faith groups and Safer Neighbourhood Teams
2. Prayer points for Christian communities and other relevant means of engaging other faith traditions
3. Community events, a newsletter
4. Training for police officers
5. Information disseminated on general community and safety issues.

Participants say “Community members now enjoy a more relaxed feeling of confidence and a better understanding of how police work. The Community Police and Neighbourhood scheme is very much appreciated. It is now much easier to co-operate and participate.”

Bankim Gossai MBE Maha Lakshmi Vidya Bhavan

Tool two: Capturing and pooling what we know

In this section we look at ways of capturing informal information and pool it, then devise methods of analysing it in order to take appropriate action. It includes:

- Introduction
- Some techniques for capturing and pooling information
- Some 'in practice' examples

Introduction

In any locality the list of people with tension relevant information is vast. Any worker with face-to-face contact with the public is likely to hear or be told things during the course of their daily work which may contribute to a better 'real-time' picture of the way people are feeling. Local councillors also have information from their surgeries and daily contacts.

Each locality might start capturing and pooling what they know by thinking about who it is that residents tell when there are issues that may move from concern to conflict. Personnel who may hold information in isolation that might contribute to building a bigger picture include:

- Ward councillors
- Youth workers
- Head teachers and school staff including police liaison officers
- Caretakers, cleaners and other 'street' staff
- Housing officers and resident involvement teams
- Community development and neighbourhood staff
- Community Support Officers and beat officers
- Voluntary Organisations – Citizens' Advice Bureau, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support, Race Equality Council
- Street leaders, community wardens
- Faith leaders

Techniques vary from relatively simple means of collecting information on a personal basis to more sophisticated technology based methods. Areas will need to consider the level of investment that is proportionate to the level of tension in their locality.

Some techniques

A single email address – Some areas have set up one central email address where frontline staff, particularly estate-based workers, can send in information they glean in the course of their everyday work. The information may help in building a picture of community tensions without using extra resources.

It can be hard for staff to see how important seemingly trivial/'common knowledge' information could be in preventing an escalation of tension into conflict. So, the system requires training and support to become common practice.

Debrief after every engagement - task staff to ask set questions or have standing agenda items about community tensions to use in community encounters.

- How are people feeling? Or how are people feeling about...?
- What are people concerned about at the moment?
- How are relations between... and ...?

Encourage staff to reflect on discussions and to 'deconstruct conversations' for useful information.

Staff asking about community concerns will then need to report what they have been told to the nominated community tensions lead officer. The lead officer will need to understand the key messages coming from residents in order to pass them on through the appropriate channel for a response to be made.

The lead officer may find it useful to conduct a 'Friday ring around' each week to ask key contacts for a 'tensions update' and pass on the information for action by relevant players as well as collating this for the tensions monitoring system.

Use the joint tasking arrangements - Many areas are reducing crime by pooling data and (human) resources so that wardens, police, licensing, street care and community safety staff are tasked at the same time to tackle priority issues and respond to community concerns. These groups could enhance their existing role in relation to community tensions by putting the question "How are communities feeling?" at the beginning of their meetings. In any event, this may impact on how they respond to other hot spots or problems identified through the National Intelligence Model information and influence the responses that are identified. Another enhancement to this approach could be the closer involvement of community development practitioners in the tasking groups.

Non-police reporting schemes – staff at non-police (or 'third party') sites for reporting hate crime, including bullying and domestic violence, are important sources of information. These initially followed a recommendation of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry to encourage the reporting of racist incidents and crimes, the ability to report at locations other than police stations and the ability to report 24 hours a day. Information collected through this system is a vital contributor to tensions monitoring.

Regional multi-agency monitoring and networking groups – there are a number of such groups which have been set up to monitor activity that may increase tensions, for example, racist groups. One such group in the Midlands defines its role as:

- To **share information** and **agree action** on combating racist groups
- To gather and share **robust intelligence** on community tensions
- To **respond quickly to rising tensions**
- To get agreement for a joint party statement in the **run up to elections**
- To work effectively with the **media**
- To be a catalyst for **joined up action** at regional and sub-regional levels

Technology-based solutions

- **Turning informal conversations and meeting notes into intelligence**

If captured by minutes which are sent to an agreed folder in an organisation's IT network, or if written as notes into the agreed folder, the information can be scanned by pointing Google (an internal search mechanism) at the resulting collection for internal staff use only. Knowledge Management staff say that users of a system can have areas that are identified by business say **'Community Tension'** and are available to users via the Google search interface. Then decisions are needed about sharing this information with external partners.

A prerequisite of this method of capturing what we know is an agreed classification scheme as a template for folder structures (as well as established folders).

This method of copying existing minutes or writing notes to a central point may not be too onerous on staff but training and support are required, as well as stage-by-stage consultation in order to assist with this new practice becoming second nature to already busy staff.

- **Concept mapping software - analysing tensions data**

There may be an alternative non-human means of analysing community tension data using concept mapping software. One US-based software supplier of this is Autonomy - **www.autonomy.com**. There will be other suppliers to explore.

London based knowledge management staff are already planning the link between informal information, analysis and action and could pilot the community tension technology, subject to resources.

The technology minimises the need to have employees and partners manually categorise, tag and insert hypertext links between related content. For example, as new information is created by a local government, the software analyses the main concepts and then automatically categorises it and inserts links to related content in real-time. At the heart of Autonomy's software is its ability to analyse text and voice (in any language) and identify and rank the main concepts within it. It can then automatically categorise, link, personalise and deliver that information.

- **Using wireless CCTV**

Local problem solving partnerships have found wireless CCTV easy to use and helpful in gathering information and responding to incidents.

In practice: non-police reporting scheme - Waltham Forest

Launched in March 2000 initially with 6 pilot sites, the Waltham Forest scheme now has 20 centres which have been assessed for their appropriateness for someone wanting to report a hate incident/crime. The non-police reporting centres currently include: places of worship, young people's services, advice centres, gender based and sexual orientation organisations, educational establishments and registered social landlords. A directory of these organisations has been published.

As well as encouraging people to come forward so that victims can be supported, a key rationale for Waltham Forest 'is that recording all such incidents allows the police and other agencies to identify tension indicators early on which can be used to prevent further incidents of crime or can provide useful information if the incidents later escalate to the level of crime. The aim is to identify underlying trends and build up a picture of hate-motivated incidents/crimes in the borough'.

In practice: Using wireless CCTV - Westminster's Wireless City and reduced crime

Westminster City Council and Vertex, are delivering a wireless technology project that transmits data over radio waves using standard protocols at broadband speeds. The system involves establishing the infrastructure for a Wireless Metropolitan Area Network (WMAN) includes CCTV and noise monitoring devices and is interconnected with the City Council's corporate network. The network allows web-based remote monitoring and management systems, integrated with mobile devices including pan tilt and zone video cameras, laptops and handheld devices.

The pilot has centred around three different areas of service delivery: the wider use of CCTV to help in the management of a 24 hour city; the use of a wireless network to support more productive mobile working and various other applications such as remote noise monitoring.

The impact on crime and disorder is reported as positive and significant and the cameras had a deterrent effect immediately after installation.

In practice: Regional multi-agency monitoring - Commission for Racial Equality Midlands Office: Safe Communities Initiative on the far right

The CRE Midlands Office was concerned about the effect which the racist far right were having on community tensions in the Midlands region. Many areas in the region were electoral targets for racist political parties and leaflets had been circulated exploiting community concerns and misrepresenting facts, particularly about asylum seekers.

CRE Midlands organised a conference in Walsall in March 2004: "Combating Racism through the Ballot Box: Meeting the Challenges of the Racist Far Right". It was attended by 200 people from local organisations, received a large amount of positive press coverage and made a big impression locally. It was followed up by a conference report concentrating on the practical action which local organisations can take to counter the myths spread by racist organisations.

The conference identified a need to bring local agencies together to look more systematically at organised racist activity and working in partnership to tackle it. To fill this gap, the CRE Midlands Office decided to establish the Midlands Monitoring and Networking Group on the Far Right.

The membership list for the group includes: Race Equality West Midlands, West Midlands Police, Regional TUC, Regional Action West Midlands, EMBRACE, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Midlands Race Equality Councils, Crown Prosecution Service, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Government Offices for the Regions, Wolverhampton City-wide Black and Minority Ethnic Community Forum, Regional Development Agency, organisations which work with asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants, representatives of faith groups

The group meets every three months and meetings are usually attended by around 12-20 people. They agreed to widen their original aims to look at general community tensions and religious, as well as racist, extremism. The meetings provide an opportunity for sharing information on community tensions, potential hotspots and good practice in tackling racial hatred. They exchange advice and agree ways to work together to achieve the aims which their organisations have in common. Meetings also provide an opportunity for representatives of different communities to share their views on the effect which racist activity is having on them.

Achievements:

- Provided robust intelligence on community tensions in the Midlands
- Acted as a think tank, advising on the development of Safer Communities Initiative's agenda.
- Able to respond quickly to rising tensions in the Midlands region. Following the London bombings on 7 July 2005, the group met promptly to share information
- Produced an outline joint party statement for local areas to adopt in the run up to elections. The statement provided an opportunity for local politicians to make a commitment to the multicultural make up of their area and to making sure that their political campaign is conducted fairly and free from racial hatred and prejudice. The statement was adopted by many areas in the region.

Lesson: Tackling racial hatred can involve challenging political parties, particularly the racist far right but sometimes mainstream parties as well. Make sure you are aware of how far your organisation can go and take legal advice if necessary.

Tool three: Making the best use of ‘open sources’

There is a vast amount of information in the public domain, freely available, which can be a cause or an expression of tension or aggravate matters. This is a brief section, but its importance in understanding and monitoring tension is significant.

It includes

- An introduction to open sources
- The kinds of open sources to explore
- Tips on collecting open source information
- What the information looks like ‘in practice’

Introduction

‘The ambassadors of 10 Muslim countries have complained to the Danish Prime Minister about a major newspaper’s cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad’ (BBC News)

‘It all began with a rumour that an African Caribbean teenage girl was gang raped ...on Tuesday 18th October the allegations were given even wider circulation on a pirate radio station . . . ‘ (UK Indy Media Website – re: Lozells).

Cartoons in a Danish newspaper and a local rumour that was never substantiated - just two examples of sparks fanned by media activity, turning tensions into disorder and loss of life. Regardless of our views of the actual events, the issues and players involved, both the mass media and the plethora of information sources available contribute significantly to community dynamics.

The Metropolitan Police and the National Community Tensions Team provide a weekly ‘open source digest’ which distils notable articles and main news items relating to Faith, Race and Extremism, locally, nationally and internationally which may have an impact on community tension. These reports are collated for Borough, Operational and Area Police Commands to inform tensions monitoring meetings. They are made available to local police services and can be shared through the Tensions Monitoring Group.

This ‘open source digest’ should be supplemented with information in circulation locally, collated at a central point – either the police or local authority press office or nominated tensions monitoring officer. Press officers will already be scanning local media - make them aware of the need to be alert to stories and issues which might affect community tension.

Open sources to be alert to include:

- Local newspapers, including free papers – how particular events are being reported, the letters page, opinion columns
- Radio – including phone ins and pirate radio
- TV channels – eg Sky 813 reports news from a Muslim perspective
- Newsletters from local organisations, protest groups, campaigns
- Websites such as YouTube, youth sites, right wing and extremist organisations – and their guest books flyposting and handouts in the street or around clubs or places of worship
- Music press, gay press, BME publications

All of these help add to the information from other sources and assist in knowing the temperature, identifying potential problems and adding to the knowledge of forthcoming events. Literature which may be deemed to be inciting racial or religious hatred should be passed to the police immediately for investigation.

Information gleaned from open sources needs to be combined with other community information to build the intelligence picture.

Tips:

- ▶▶ ask your press office to inform you on a daily basis of stories in the local media which may impact on tension
- ▶▶ nominate one person to whom information from open sources should be sent
- ▶▶ acknowledge all contributions – people need to know that the information is useful
- ▶▶ allocate a couple of hours per week to check out websites which may have a bearing on what's happening in your area
- ▶▶ bring 'inflammatory' material to the attention of the police and your legal departments

In practice

In practice: Some examples of the information included in the NCTT Open Source Digest

Racist attacker tried to rip veil off Muslim woman

An attacker tried to rip off the veil of a Muslim woman while racially abusing her, police said today. The 37 year old woman was crossing a busy park near Solent University in Southampton on Thursday when a white man aged in his 20s approached her. He started shouting racial abuse and told her to remove her veil.

13/01/2007 www.thisishampshire.net/news

Italian gays protest at the Vatican

A group of around 150 protesters attended a rally in St Peters Square on Saturday to protest against the anti-gay stance of Pope Benedict XVI. The protest, organised by gay rights group Arcigay, was held on the ninth anniversary of the suicide of writer Alfredo Ormando. He doused himself in petrol and set himself alight in St Peters Square in 1998 in protest at the Roman Catholic Church's attitude towards gay people.

16/01/2007

Muslim barred in extremism probe

An alleged Islamic extremist who said non-Muslim Britons were dirty and unclean has been banned from attending prayer meetings in Sutton. Abdul Lateef has been barred from meetings of the Muslim Cultural and Welfare Association of Sutton (MCWAS) after he was accused of using them to stir up religious hatred. He is also to be interrogated by Sutton Council who rent buildings to MWCAS and another local Muslim group – Companions of the Mosque – in which Mr Lateef plays a key role.

19/01/2007 www.thisislondon.co.uk/news

Big Brother crashes into politics

The power of Big Brother to turn people – even individuals who wear their ignorance like a badge of honour – into overnight celebrities in the UK is legendary. It can now add causing a diplomatic incident and damaging Britain's reputation abroad to its list of achievements. That is thanks to the uproar over the alleged bullying and racism being inflicted on one of the contestants, Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty, by the likes of Jade Goody – whose fame was built on things such as saying she thought East Anglia was a foreign country.

17/01/2007 news.bbc.co.uk

Tool four: Using data more effectively

This section provides some introductory material regarding:

- Using data sources to keep track of demographic changes and community dynamics
- Models to measure, assess or identify priority areas for attention

Introduction

Knowing who lives in the community, their age and ethnicity, the faiths they follow and the languages they speak, their health and employment status, are integral to our understanding of and ability to serve communities. The primary purpose of this information is not in order to assess the tensions within communities, nor should it be. It is the basis of the delivery of services that best meet needs. However, in order to understand the community with a view to addressing current and potential tensions, this section describes how demographic data can help.

Using data sources to keep track of demographic changes and community dynamics

The census still provides the most comprehensive snapshot of the population, but the 10 year cycle limits its usefulness. Keeping track of ongoing demographic change requires the use of other data sources. The sources in question are the administrative data sets held by a range of agencies locally and can include:

- GP registrations
- Council tax records and benefits
- Social housing records
- Private landlord registrations/orders
- Births, deaths and marriages
- Electoral register records
- Housing waiting list
- PLASC i.e. Pupil Level Annual School Census info gathered by schools
- Crime data
- Local property gazetteer
- National Insurance registrations
- Information from local employers

(for a full set of local data sources and agencies, see the iCoCo Cohesion mapping of community dynamics (COHDMAP) project)

In combination such data can provide rich and timely information on the composition and well being of a community. Because the data is available locally and by its very nature changes over time, it also provides a means of understanding local population mobility. However, whilst the information may help in providing cohesion information, it will not necessarily be a tensions predictor.

The following table shows how a range of data sources can be brought together to build a picture of an area. They are a selection of indicators to which those listed above could be added.

Table 1: Specimen indicators, sources and spatial units

Note: LSOA=Lower-tier Super Output Area PLASC=Pupil Level Annual Schools Census
 RIMS=Racist Incident Monitoring System CDRP=Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership

Domain	Sub-category	Indicator	Source	Lowest spatial unit available
Social inclusion	Unemployment	Claimant count benefits	ONS/DWP DWP	Ward LSOA
	Labour market exclusion	Incapacity benefit	DWP	LSOA LSOA
	Teenage motherhood	Birth statistics Abortions	ONS ONS	Ward Ward
	Illness	Mortality statistics Disability benefit	ONS DWP	Ward LSOA
	Housing deprivation	Tenancies Homelessness House prices	CORE/LA CORE/LA Land registry/ banks/ODPM	District District Postcode sector
Segregation	Population	Census	ONS	OA
	School	PLASC	DfES/LEA	Unit postcode
Equal opportunities	Employment	Ethnic monitoring of all employment	ONS Annual Population Survey	Larger districts
Educational attainment	Percent achieving success	Key stage 1 & 2 GCSE A-level	DfES/LEA	School/ward/ LEA
Community Safety	Crime statistics	Type of crime by location	Police/CDRP	Varies – postcode for mapping
	Racist incidents	Type of incident	Police (RIMS)	District/Police Force Area
	Fear of crime	Perception of change	Best Value Survey	District
Population dynamics	Population turnover	Migration estimates Change in electoral register	ONS Local authority	District Ward
Social networks	Contact with neighbours/ other ethnic/social groups	How often talk to neighbours Which ethnic or social groups come into contact with	Community Cohesion Survey (sample)	District
Political participation	Electoral registration	Electoral register statistics	ONS./Local authority	Ward
	Voting patterns	Election results	Local authority	Ward
Community engagement	Volunteering	Membership of voluntary organisations	LOVAS surveys, HO citizenship survey	Some districts, otherwise national
	Density of community organisations	Database of voluntary bodies, clubs	Local authority	District
Identification with a locality	Neighbourhood identification	Which geographical scale Friends/family in area	Community Cohesion Survey (sample)	District

Source: Cohesion mapping of community dynamics (COHDMAP) – iCoCo

Models to measure, assess or identify priority areas for attention

There are a number of academic studies and research programmes underway to explore whether community tension can be predicted from demographic information. In reality, data alone cannot predict community tension - it is the combination of quantitative and qualitative information which is valuable in enriching the picture of community dynamics.

The Home Office has published a review of GIS information systems developed by different regions and used generally in relation to crime though having some potential application to tensions monitoring. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/rdsolr0206.pdf

Three models are outlined here have been developed in partnership between academics and practitioners and one development with some commercial input.

The Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI)

www.jdi.ucl.ac.uk/crime_mapping/vulnerable_localities/index.php

Police methods of mapping crime and cohesion have included an experiment with the Vulnerable Localities Index, developed by the Jill Dando Institute at the UCL Centre for Security and Crime Science, which selects six indicators for identifying neighbourhoods that required attention. While the research has not been widely published and the planned handbook has not yet appeared, certain areas have found this approach useful to assist their Neighbourhood Policing Initiatives.

The VLI does not just identify high crime neighbourhoods but was designed to help identify the worst affected communities for breakdown, tension, and fragmentation. This meant that deprivation, anti-social behaviour, disorder, socio-economic conditions and demographic characteristics were considered alongside crime data as indicators that could be used for identifying priority neighbourhoods.

Six indicators were chosen – two were crime-based and could be extracted from the local Police crime recording system (burglary to a dwelling and criminal damage to a dwelling); two were sourced from deprivation variables (income deprivation and employment deprivation available in the Index of Deprivation from the online Neighbourhood Statistics Service), one was based on educational attainment (also available from the Neighbourhood Statistics Service), and a demographic statistic on the population of young people (available from the Neighbourhood Statistics Service).

What the VLI aims to do is ‘point the suggestive finger’ to priority areas that can then be qualified with further analysis using additional locally accessible data and intelligence to understand and explain the problems that contribute to why a prioritised area may require specific attention.

The VLI was successfully pilot tested at eight sites and began to gain wider interest from those implementing neighbourhood policing programmes where there was a need to identify priority neighbourhoods. As a result, researchers say that the VLI is now seen as one of a number of measures that can be effectively used to support Neighbourhood Policing requirements. Some experience of using the VLI can be found at:

Assessing the level of community cohesion within the Pennine Division of Lancashire Constabulary by Mark Dallison, Lancashire Constabulary

www.jdi.ucl.ac.uk/downloads/conferences/third_nat_map_conf/mark_dallison.pdf

Experian Mosaic

Mosaic Public Sector provides a classification system to support public sector policy decisions, communications activity and resource strategies. It provides a comprehensive analysis of citizens at postcode and household level providing insight into socio-demographics, lifestyles, culture and behaviour of UK citizens. It uses data from health, education, criminal justice and local and central government and can be used to give a clear picture of every citizen in terms of their requirements for these services. It aims to provide a 'common currency' that enables citizens to be served in a joined up way by partners.

Of particular interest in this classification are:

- Household type – this identifies 61 household types such as:
 - E28 – Neighbourhoods with transient singles living in multiply occupied large old houses
 - F35 – Young people renting hard to let social housing often in disadvantaged inner city locations
 - F36 – High density social housing, mostly in inner London, with high levels of diversity
- Ethnicity at the local level - this uses personal and family name and appends the most likely cultural, ethnic and linguistic type and group and a measure of the relative strength of association between the name and type, then the classification provides the most likely country of origin, cultural group and language. Alternatively the classification can provide a dominant cultural, ethnic and linguistic type at postcode level.
- Understanding deprivation and inequalities – at a much more local level than the Indices of Deprivation
- Police - identifying the characteristics of victims of specific crimes, knowing where fear of crime is highest – to inform strategic and tactical policing

www.business-strategies.co.uk/upload/downloads/mosaic%20public%20sector%20factsheet%20for%20website.pdf

The Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC) in practice example combines the Vulnerable Localities Index and the Mosaic method.

Neighbourhood security and urban change: risk, resilience and recovery

This research develops an innovative framework for understanding with clarity and precision how the drivers of neighbourhood security and insecurity impact on urban neighbourhood change trajectories. It analyses the ways crime, disorder, fear of crime and social control impact on neighbourhood security, thereby influencing how places and the people in them change over time. To better understand such processes, the concepts of risk, resilience and recovery ('the 3Rs' of urban change) are introduced.

- **Risk** factors are insecurity-generating conditions that increase the likelihood of an area decaying and declining. They are risk factors because, while crime and disorder can corrode security leading to decline in some localities, in other areas this does not happen because of the presence of resilience factors.
- **Resilience** factors enable some places to withstand and mitigate the risks and threats to which they are exposed. A neighbourhood's resilience capacity reflects the distribution of economic and social capital, and is connected to the presence or absence of collective efficacy.
- **Recovery** factors promote and propagate enhanced security and in the process contribute to an overall material improvement in a neighbourhood's situation.

The data for the study are drawn from four of the 16 trial sites for the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP) that ran in England between April 2003 and March 2005. Although both quantitative and qualitative data are used in this report, the qualitative findings are especially illuminating in detailing how respondents accounted for any changes they were experiencing in their neighbourhoods.

www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1938-neighbourhood-security-change.pdf

In practice: Southwark Neighbourhood Analytical Project (SNAP)

A partnership between Southwark Council, Southwark PCT and Mayhew Associates was established in 2006 to make better use of locally available administrative data to:

- Improve local knowledge
- Aid decision making, planning and policy analysis; and
- Support the provision of analysis and information required by central government.

A unique feature of Mayhew Associates' approach is the matching and geo-referencing of data at the household level. Systematic analyses are adopted to pinpoint key features of local areas in terms of services provided, crime, health, educational or other outcomes.

The first stage of the project was to acquire various datasets including: PLASC i.e. Pupil level Annual School Census, GP register, Council Tax, Local Property Gazetteer, Housing tenure, Electoral Roll and births and deaths.

The results are still coming through but so far the Southwark neighbourhood analytical project (SNAP) has provided a comprehensive demographic picture of the borough, which indicates that Southwark's population is higher than that estimated by the Office of National Statistics. This is an important finding not least because one of the factors that might account for the disparity is the way in which migration is estimated.

Southwark is now layering additional data on the basic population analysis to better understand its communities, particularly looking at children and young people.

In the medium term Southwark is building an enterprise data warehouse (EDW) which will be an integrated collection of historical data and associated applications across an entire organisation. This will enable Southwark to get a multiple view of the customer and will support an automated approach to understanding the composition of the community.

The administrative data discussed above provides a tangible evidence base. However, on its own it is not sufficient to satisfy the need to understand communities. Authorities need also to gather and use information on how communities perceive their areas and how relationships between communities are progressing. Typically this information would be gathered through an annual residents survey. However, in very diverse areas, there is an argument for undertaking 'cohesion' surveys more locally – say at estate level —to understand how people are feeling about their area in more detail.

In Southwark, 'cohesion' surveys are being piloted on two local authority housing estates. The aim is to interview as many residents on the estates as possible in order to develop a baseline and assess change over time. Residents are being asked questions relating to their sense of satisfaction with their community, life opportunities, respect for diversity, their sense of belonging and some demographic details. A tension question, 'How much tension between different people from different ethnic groups would you say there is in this estate?' is included and results will inform locality plans.

In practice: Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC): using the VLI and Experian Mosaic

For the past 12 months GMAC have been piloting a project in Bolton to develop analytical techniques and new methods to understand communities. The project brief centred around the following statement:

“It is widely recognised that communities are not equally vulnerable to crime. However even after demographic and economic factors are taken into account, communities with similar population profiles still have different levels of vulnerability to crime, anti-social behaviour and feelings of insecurity. If these differences of vulnerability can be understood, more effective interventions can be implemented to reduce crime, improve security and improve cohesion with communities”

GMAC used both the Vulnerable Localities Index and Experian Mosaic to analyse their communities.

The GMAC system emphasises the generation of good quality analysis products. To do this GMAC has ensured the ingredients of appropriate resourcing are all in place; skilled and trained analytical staff, and training for decision-makers to ensure they understand the role of analysis; good quality data; and a robust IT solution and appropriate analytical tools. GMAC’s commissioning approach for the generation of analytical products is also providing an effective model for working:

- It helps to ensure that the focus of the analytical request is maintained on partnership priorities
- It ensures that careful and deliberate thought is given to identifying the questions that require answering from analysis
- It provides direction – the analyst is clear on what information is required
- It identifies which analytical resource is most appropriate to answer the question, or part of the question
- Commissioning helps to manage the workload of analysts

From an analyst’s viewpoint, commissioning also enables an analyst to identify and collect relevant data and information, identify relevant support from the panel of experts that exists across GMAC, identifies the limitations of data and can help point to the adoption of alternative methods of collating information. The strength in GMAC’s analytical framework is demonstrated by the content of its analytical products. These are already showing problem oriented content (rather than being purely descriptive reports).

GMAC has achieved a great deal in a short period of time. It has commendably captured a clear vision, achieved significant buy-in and enthusiasm from Greater Manchester’s CDRP partners and is effectively resourced for supporting the analytical requirements of the partnerships. Its comprehensive documentation provides a strong foundation and its planned evaluation is an example to other systems of the need for regular review.

In practice: Camden social capital survey 2002 & 2005

The Office for Public Management carried out surveys in 2002 and 2005 to measure the impact of the Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Strategies on life in Camden, and particularly on levels of social capital. The key findings were:

Quality of life: Over half of Camden residents say that they feel that their neighbourhood is improving - car crime, volume and speed of traffic, and rubbish and litter all decreasing. Noise, however, is seen as an increasingly significant problem.

Neighbourhood Renewal: A majority feel that their area is improving. However, residents in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) still tend to experience more difficulties than those in non-NRAs eg drug use and youth-related problems

Community Cohesion: A sense of community appears to be growing across Camden. People generally wish to remain living in their neighbourhood and more people are interested in its long-term future.

Neighbourhood Renewal: Levels of satisfaction with local services are high. Trust in the council, police and GPs has risen and the number of people who know how to contact the council and the police has gone up. The visibility of the police has increased and some important public health and public safety messages appear to be positively affecting behaviour. [Summary of key findings \(PDF 51KB\)](#) [Full social capital report \(PDF 444KB\)](#)

Using the research - A joint publication with the IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) based on the Camden social capital surveys was published assessing the significance of the findings and ways to develop policies in response to them. It covers why social capital matters and what can be done to promote it.

[“Sticking Together: social capital and local government” \(PDF 356KB\)](#)

Tool five: Advice for managers briefing front-line staff

What kind of information should be reported? This tool gives some practical examples of some of the potential indicators of tension. It is designed to be copied and your local contact details added. You can reproduce it with your own logos and branding on it, just acknowledge iCoCo on the back. It includes some information from the first part of the guide for completeness as a Briefing Note.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Briefing Note is to support managers of front-line staff to identify and report information that may be relevant to community tensions or indicate potential problems or difficulties which could threaten the peace and stability of the area.

Public services have a very large number of staff with face-to-face contact with the public and the local environment and their 'eyes and ears' are of great importance in keeping an up-to-date picture of what is happening in local communities and particularly where there are issues that might move from concern to conflict.

Community tensions may arise as a result of international, national or local events or activities. This Briefing Note is concerned with local events and activities and indicators in local neighbourhoods, estates or town centres. Some of these local issues could be in response to national and international incidents and as such are important in gauging the local impact.

The Briefing Note is also concerned about **identifying and reporting** information and not about deciding upon interventions – that is the job of the service manager or the Tension Monitoring Group.

2. What is community tension and why should we monitor it?

Our **definition** of community tension is:

Community tension is a state of community dynamics which may lead to disorder, threaten the peace and stability of communities, or raise the levels of fear and anxiety in the whole, or a part of, the local community

We monitor community tension because:

- Public bodies have general and specific legal duties with regard to the safety and well-being of communities and promoting 'good relations'
- Failure to respond may result in damage to property, injury and loss of life
- To prevent the serious impact of criminal activity
- To promote positive community relations and well-being where the whole community can feel safe and able to participate in everyday activities

- To understand potential conflict and minimise the risk of disorder, violence or crime, rather than to 'spy' on particular individuals and communities
- To keep a check on the 'temperature' in communities even when tensions are generally perceived as low – complacency and not listening are not responsible or accountable approaches
- To manage a community incident well, tensions need to be monitored and assessed to broker the best responses
- To enable effective problem solving and appropriate management and interventions
- **And**, to recognise that large disorder on any significant scale will severely damage the local reputation and could result in the curtailing of investment in jobs, housing and employment

In short, it is the duty of public bodies to keep their communities safe, harmonious and promote well-being.

Frequently the signals of community breakdown, conflict and disorder are apparent well before incidents occur. This process is about identifying those signals and seeking to anticipate and prevent problems before they escalate. It is about protecting and supporting communities and keeping them safe.

3. What kind of information should be reported?

It can be hard for staff to see how important seemingly trivial or 'common knowledge' information could be in preventing an escalation of tension into conflict. Many incidents may appear to be a 'one-off' and, though damaging, may not cause wider repercussions, tensions or lead to disorder. It can be a matter of judgement about what to report but it is better to err on the side of caution and report such issues rather than not to do so. Sometimes a piece of information may, in itself, seem to have limited relevance, but when put together with other pieces of information from other sources it may assume much greater significance. So, the system requires training and support to become common practice.

Below are a series of the kinds of signs or signals which may have relevance to community tensions which should be reported. They are illustrative only – you must use your own judgement to add other signs. They are grouped by service areas, though there are cross-overs between services. For example, many of the signs relevant to housing staff will also apply to environmental services. There may be other indicators specific to your local area which will need drawing out.

Housing

- Neighbour disputes that may have the potential to escalate and involve other families or groups
- Negative activity regarding a new tenant or resident, particularly where that person or family is from a 'different' community, race or nation
- Use of flags, posters or other symbols in individual houses or groups of houses, indicating particular allegiances, views or identities
- Bail hostels can be a source of tension, particularly where there are rumours that there are sex offenders in them – whether these rumours are founded or otherwise
- Houses in multiple occupancy, particularly where there are regular changes in tenancy, may a lack of ownership or sense of belonging
- High population turnover can be both a sign and a cause of tension. It can threaten cohesion where residents, who are transitory, have a lower sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. Other signals in such neighbourhoods – physical appearance of the neighbourhood and complaints from residents – are important to feed in to a wider picture of monitoring
- Physical signs could include deterioration of individual or groups of properties or streets, the build-up of rubbish, vehicles parked inconsiderately, graffiti, drugs paraphernalia or other detritus
- Feedback from residents could include complaints (informal as much as formal) about other residents, how they feel about what's happening in the neighbourhood, negative comments based on race or religion, hearsay, urban myths and rumours – perception is more important than reality
- Congregations of groups of people in public places - these may be perfectly permissible and legal, but if they represent potential for gang activity, competition, or territorial behaviour they need to be monitored
- Be alert to unreported hate crime – which can be gleaned from informal conversations to physical indicators

Education (schools, colleges and universities)

- Racial, religious or homophobic incidents that are potentially more than 'one-off' or isolated
- Evidence of groups forming strong identities and hostility towards other groups, including self-segregating into separate groups, 'badges' or symbols, name calling and 'lower level' physical aggression
- An increase in bullying, harassment and general intolerance towards others
- Increased exclusions of students in schools and colleges, based upon particular communities or groups
- Community complaints around access to the school and other public places, particularly where this is attributed to new communities in the area
- Information passed on by students about activity which is likely to affect the peace and stability of the area
- International students in areas unused to people from other cultures
- Issues or concerns within the student population and between the student population and local residents

Environmental services

- Leaflets containing controversial, offensive or inflammatory issues strewn about, flyposted, or even dumped
- Offensive graffiti – most councils have rapid response services for removal of certain types of graffiti. However it is important that it is not only removed but that the content, place, style and frequency are recorded. Some graffiti may not be overtly offensive but may be symbols of 'claiming' territory
- Accumulation of 'unusual' types of rubbish at homes or other venues, such as abnormal amounts of hydrogen peroxide bottles (bleaches – such as hair bleach), gas cylinders, chemicals, fertilizer bags, sugar and bottles. These could be indicators of destructive devices being prepared
- Damage to properties, particularly places of worship or pubs associated with a specific clientele, or minority businesses, which may indicate some form of attack but which may not have been reported
- Evidence of groups gathering in parks, wasteland or other places for drinking or drug taking

Youth and community work

- Debriefing from meetings and encounters in the community is a key tool. Questions to consider are:
 - How are people feeling? Or how are people feeling about...?
 - What are people concerned about at the moment?
 - How are relations between... and ...?
- Concerns in a community about an issue, situation or event should be passed on. Concerns which can lead to tensions can range from longer-term underlying issues such as the perception of the share of resources going to different communities, unemployment and racial, religious or intergenerational tensions, to specific events or circumstances, such as recent arrests or forthcoming trials, particular crimes or increase in anti-social behaviour, closing facilities or reduction in public services.
- Voluntary organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support and the Race Equality Council will have information on specific issues and trends. Community groups and faith leaders have insights into community concerns. Regular informal as well as formal contact is important.
- Rumours circulating in a community are as relevant as facts – rumours can increase tensions and have frequently been the cause of 'sparking off' incidents
- Sometimes relationships between men and women from different cultural backgrounds can spark tensions within and between those groups

Health and social care

- People presenting with injuries at local hospitals and surgeries, where there may appear to be potential that there are patterns of non-accidental injuries sustained by particular groups of people and these are unreported to the police
- Fire and rescue services will pick up on a range of community issues and signs through their activities
- The Supporting People team will pick up on potential harassment or targeting of vulnerable individuals who may become the focus of unwanted attention or activity
- Child protection issues are subject to other reporting routes. This is also the case for domestic violence and individual incidents of antisocial behaviour. So, when reporting it is helpful to refer back to the definition of community tension and consider whether the activity has the potential to affect community dynamics and lead to disorder, threaten the peace and stability of communities, or raise the levels of fear and anxiety in the whole, or a part of, the local community.

4. How should the information be passed on and what will happen to it?

- Information should be passed on the same day as it is heard or observed.
- It should be passed to your manager or supervisor – in person, by telephone or email – whichever is most used in your service area.
- Keep a record of the information passed on to your manager but otherwise treat it as confidential.
- There is also an email in the council for such issues which you can use if your manager is not available: (local details to be inserted)
- The information will be received by the manager, acknowledged, recorded and collated with other information that may be submitted to them from other staff in the service area. It will be fed into the 'Tension Monitoring Group' which is considering information from a range of partners and organisations including the police and local authority.
- From this and other sources of information, the Tension Monitoring Group will assess whether there are patterns or indicators of increasing tension and will make decisions on possible interventions.
- Where possible, managers will feed back to you what has happened regarding the information you have passed on. On occasions this may not be possible where Data Protection of personal information applies.
- If you have any doubts about anything you see or hear – report it. If you want to follow this up in any way, discuss it with your manager.

Appendix: Advice on how all communities can help police defeat extremist violence and terrorism

Remember – extremist violence and terrorism can come from any area or any community, it is important to keep an open mind and be alert to all possible threats.

Monitoring community tension is not the same as preventing extremist violence and terrorism but there are opportunities to involve staff and the public in knowing what might be regarded as suspicious and to use our collective resources to look out for these.

The following advice is provided by the Metropolitan Police for all members of the public. There may be a local equivalent version that you would like to substitute for this.

What suspicious activity should I be looking for?

We want to encourage the public to be aware of what is happening around them and think about anything or anybody that has struck them as unusual in their day-to-day lives. We would ask people to think carefully about anyone they know whose behaviour has changed suddenly. What has changed – could it be significant? What about the people they associate with? Have you noticed activity where you live which is not the norm? We want people to have the confidence to trust their instincts. If you suspect it, report it to the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321. By doing this the public can help to make this a hostile place for terrorists.

Terrorists need storage – Lock-ups, garages and sheds can all be used by terrorists to store equipment. Are you suspicious of anyone renting commercial property?

Terrorists use chemicals – Do you know someone buying large or unusual quantities of chemicals for no obvious reason?

Terrorists use protective equipment – Handling chemicals is dangerous. Maybe you've seen goggles or masks dumped somewhere?

Terrorists need funding – Cheque and credit card fraud are ways of generating cash. Have you seen any suspicious transactions?

Terrorists use multiple identities – Do you know someone with documents in different names for no obvious reason?

Terrorists need information – Observation and surveillance help terrorists plan attacks. Have you seen anyone taking pictures of security arrangements?

Terrorists need transport – If you work in commercial vehicle hire or sales, has a sale or rental made you suspicious?

Terrorists need to travel – Meetings, training and planning can take place anywhere. Do you know someone who travels but is vague about where they're going?

Terrorists need communication – Anonymous, pay-as-you-go and stolen mobiles are typical. Have you seen someone with large quantities of mobiles? Has it made you suspicious?

Terrorists use computers – Do you know someone who visits terrorist-related websites?

If you notice suspicious bags, behaviour or vehicles which pose an imminent threat you should **call 999** immediately.

Part three

Responding to tensions – interventions

There are no blueprints or ‘off the shelf’ solutions to address community tensions or their consequences. Every area, community and set of circumstances is unique and will require a ‘bespoke’ approach. Something as simple as ‘Let’s hold a community meeting’ could be positive and productive or could give a focus for negative activities, disorder or exacerbate the problem. However there are lessons and good practice and a menu of options to consider.

Ultimately it will be the work undertaken in relation to the previous sections of this guide which will determine the range and likely success of interventions in the event of tensions rising above normal. It is essential to have networks of people who know and trust each other already established – they cannot be created after tensions have emerged. Thereafter, identifying medium and longer term solutions to building resilience and recovery are required.

Part Three covers:

- Introduction – ‘proportionate, legal, accountable, and necessary’
- Community-led solutions
- Partnership and agency interventions
- Communications

Introduction

Where community tensions are above normal (that is anything above 6) – using the ‘Experienced, Evidenced and Potential’ framework – the Community Impact Assessment process would consider a range of interventions. These will generate **options – not recommendations**. Interventions must be developed based on the Risk Assessments and a structured analysis of the problem, based on the Community Impact Assessment.

No intervention is risk free and could have the effect of raising the temperature so needs to be carefully considered even though timescales might be very short. This is where good community networks, good relationships between agencies and contingency planning comes into play.

Interventions need to be proportionate to the situation. All interventions, but particularly those involving the use of specific powers must be proportionate, legal, accountable and necessary.

The aim is to reduce tension and/or deal with its manifestations.

Interventions need to be sensitive to all sections of the community.

Interventions need to be monitored and updated as circumstances change.

Doing nothing is not usually an option.

The interventions below list some options based around community-led solutions, inter-agency interventions and communications. In reality, these three elements are inextricably linked and are critical to the success of managing any interventions where tensions are raised above normal. These interventions generally relate to tensions at level 5 or above, though levels 1 and 2 will require additional specialist responses.

Community-led solutions

Problem solving – analysing the current state of conflict, understanding the history and why it has changed or become ‘hot’, determine actions that could be taken to address the issues. A simple approach – the ‘Conflict tree’ - uses five steps:

- Describe the conflict
- Identify its causes
- Acknowledge its impact
- Identify actions to address the causes
- Identify actions to address the impacts

Community meetings – generally best led by community or faith leaders with respect from different sections of the community. Preparatory work with different ‘factions’ or representatives of those in conflict and clear objectives for such meetings will assist in helping such meetings contribute to solutions rather than adding to the problems. People usually want to have an opportunity to air their differences and the main protagonists may not turn up, so there can be limitations, especially where differences are long-standing.

Community facilitators and ‘honest brokers’ – many communities have ‘community entrepreneurs’, local volunteers or paid professionals, who are seen to have no vested interest other than the good of the whole community.

Conflict resolution – communities may wish to bring in external support from a voluntary sector organisation specialising in conflict resolution. This is a highly skilled practice, with a body of literature developed through work on international conflicts or for example, in Northern Ireland. Conflict resolution approaches seek to identify common ground and, if differences persist, to encourage empathy about other perspectives. It may involve:

- The facilitation of communication between parties in conflict when levels of antagonism make normal communication difficult or impossible
- The facilitation of an analysis of the causes of conflict, preferably as a joint effort involving all the relevant participants
- The creation of a safe environment that will enable participants to test their own assumptions and explore different options
- Broadening the range of options by facilitating the exploration of approaches in other places and historical experience of the resolution of conflict
- The provision of training in conflict resolution skills, including skills to deal with deeply ingrained perceptions
- The facilitation of opportunities to reflect on participants’ experiences in the past and to draw lessons from that

Mediation – community mediation services may, similarly, be engaged, and this also requires bringing in specialist expertise. Mediation has traditionally been used in one-to-one neighbour disputes but is beginning to be used in community conflicts. Mediation is ‘a process in which the parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a neutral third party (the mediator), identify the disputed issues, develop options, consider alternatives and endeavour to reach agreement. The mediator has no advisory or determinative role in regard to the content of the dispute, but may advise on or determine the process of mediations whereby resolution is attempted’. (Source: National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council 1997)

Single or inter-agency interventions

Support for community-led solutions – agencies can support in very basic practical ways such as providing venues, refreshments, help with publicity or translation – to assist the community to organise meetings or discussion sessions.

Having a visible senior presence in support but not taking control is often welcome – even if there is some antagonism towards agencies. Being present in the area, taking some of the heat and listening to what people have to say can, in itself help matters, as well as adding to the information picture.

Joint meetings and action planning – agencies working together with community leaders can share the analysing of the problems and consider joint actions. Where levels of trust have been built over time, local partners and community leaders can get together quickly, identify facts and myths and plan together. Joint action plans, with different partners taking responsibility for aspects of activity, generally produce the most effective approaches.

Identify necessary resources – timely decisions to deploy the right people with the right support and adequate resources need to be made as early as possible when tensions rise above normal. Anyone in the centre of things will need appropriate support and reassurance of organisational understanding of the circumstances and opportunities to debrief and reflect, particularly in serious and critical incidents.

A range of services may need to be brought into the frame – from highways, where road closures are required, environmental services for clearing areas of rubble or emptying bottle banks, to changing the patrols of community wardens or police community support officers. Does the Youth Offending Service need to be involved? Are there people with particular vulnerabilities requiring input from Adult Services?

As well as people there may be a need to consider other resources for such things as communications, remedial work, overtime, translation services, security.

Avoid ‘too little - too late’, especially as this is now a situation of above normal tension.

Ensure people available for contingency plans – linked to the above, agencies need to ensure that the people required in relation to their civil contingencies plan and cohesion contingencies plan are in a state of preparedness.

Media Management Plan – an agreed interagency communications plan and a specific media management plan should be produced.

Policing options – police will be engaged in all of the above but some specific interventions may be needed:

- High visibility policing and reassurance
- Specialist resources or patrols
- Law enforcement, arrests of individuals and ringleaders
- Forming an intelligence cell
- Forming a gold group

Again, it is highly likely that all of these will involve working with communities and partners.

Communications

Communication is at the heart of promoting cohesion, preventing tensions from developing or escalating, monitoring and managing interventions and in the aftermath of incidents, after the operational/acute phases.

Promoting Cohesion – The Institute for Community Cohesion has developed a communications toolkit to support their leadership role in breaking down barriers and building relationships between communities. The toolkit advocates a strategic approach to communications around the cohesion agenda.

- Talk about it – create opportunities for people to talk frankly about their experiences and concerns and give space for people to air their views.
- Communicate all the time – use every opportunity to promote positive messages and images of your communities and individuals
- Bust the myths – stop rumours and provide correct information to counteract divisive myths – for example in relation to refugees and asylum seekers
- Make the media your friend – develop relationships with the local media, organise background briefings and give them regular stories.

www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/resources/toolkits/communications

Communicating during an incident

- Keep close contact with communities involved and affected
- Be sensitive to the effects of a 'crisis' on different parts of the community – for example this will be especially pertinent if the incident relates to counter terrorism activity
- Continually collect information to enable accurate monitoring of tension and develop sensitive and effective responses.
- Update Community Impact Assessments frequently – up to 3 times per day during critical incidents
- Keep communities informed, let them know what's happening – distribute leaflets if necessary
- Use personal contacts to disseminate key messages face-to-face in communities
- Engage with people who don't speak English via interpreters or people within that community who can translate
- Be honest, don't promise what you can't deliver
- Keep colleagues and those working on the ground informed
- Provide support for colleagues in stressful situations

Media relations

- Have a media strategy in relation to incidents and events
- Identify clear key messages at each stage
- Identify spokespeople and try to have a protocol or understanding in place that directs the media to the agreed spokespersons (difficult but worth a try). Have a united front across agencies and an agreement on the most appropriate communications lead
- Be proactive and go on radio phone-ins or arrange a press briefing whenever possible
- Provide media training to community leaders and keep employees informed as they have a key role in helping to counter rumours and misinformation

The IDeA – Improvement and Development Agency for local government have an excellent toolkit on building a relationship with the media. Its guidelines to managing bad news and crises includes:

- Act quickly – a speedy response and a good council statement will help limit the damage
- Never say ‘no comment’ – if there isn’t enough factual information to give out
- Build up background briefings and key facts for big stories in advance
- Be honest and open and do not try to deceive the media
- Issue the news in a planned and managed way – rather than just react
- Ensure officers and members are aware of media guidelines and media protocol

There are many other tips, guidance, good practice examples and links in www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=4451961

UK Resilience also has an excellent ‘Information and the Media’ section aimed at supporting key communications objectives in emergency response – to deliver accurate, clear and timely information to the public so that they feel confident, safe and well informed.

www.ukresilience.info/response/media.aspx

After an incident

When the incident or event completes its operational/acute phases, police and partners should ensure that activity is reduced in a phased way rather than ceasing suddenly or without warning.

Let people know what’s happening.

There may still be ongoing events relating to what has occurred which will need monitoring – eg funerals, people being detained or released from custody and their family needs, re-opening of facilities which have been damaged. **Keep people informed.**

The debrief process should be multi-agency and within single agencies and it should seek to identify lessons learned, actions needed to amend processes or ways of working and actions needed to respond to the issues raised through the incident. **Share the learning.**

In practice

In practice: Using mediation and an interagency approach to conflict between gypsies and travellers and the local community

Inadequate site provision for gypsies and travellers in an English county resulted in an unauthorised encampment. Tensions between the local community and gypsies and travellers led to an incident in which an effigy of a caravan with a gypsy family painted on the side was torched. The police subsequently arrested several people on suspicion of inciting racial hatred, and referred the case to the Crown Prosecution Service and the director of public prosecutions to consider prosecution under the Public Order Act.

Following the incident, external organisations with experience of similar situations were asked to get involved as mediators. A meeting was held for local authorities and community representatives. Following the meeting, an action plan was drawn up to help local authorities deal with potential conflict in the community. The local council agreed to improve its provision of services and sites for gypsies and travellers, and decided that it needed to increase involvement by all members of the community in its work and its consultations, including gypsies and travellers. The council reinstated its gypsy and traveller multi-agency forum, and employed a permanent liaison officer to work with gypsies and travellers in the area. Plans have been drawn up for permanent and transitory site provision across the county.

www.catalystmagazine.org/duty/grr/general_case4.html.pr

Case study supplied by the Commission for Racial Equality

In practice: reassurance and communication - Southwark Partnership Operations Group

The Southwark Partnership Operations Group meets on a two-weekly basis to share police and partnership intelligence. This tasking group is attended by over 18 different services, including voluntary providers, and co-ordinated joint activity to tackle crime antisocial behaviour and plans for emerging events which could cause increases in crime or potential tensions.

There is a protocol for 'managing serious violent incidents' including to respond to gang gun and knife crime. This includes a communications plan which is activated in a similar way to an emergency response.

After the bombings on 7/7, a decision was taken by the Partnership Operations Group (POG), to use the extra police presence at transport hubs which we had been allocated not only to provide a visible presence, but also to talk to the community. This was partly reassurance but also enabled information from the community to be communicated and it meant community messages were heard. This supported the POG in their engagement with faith groups and reassurance work continued. There were no racially motivated attacks in the borough in the wake of 7/7 accordingly. The effectiveness of this activity means that when we are allocated resources for a large visible presence, we use it to engage with our communities as well.

In practice: joint action planning - learning lessons from football related tensions in Boston

Following disturbances during the Euro 2004 tournament, the police and local authority in Boston planned early to prevent similar occurrences during the 2006 World Cup. Local residents feared a repeat of the disorder. In January 2006 a partnership group was formed. This group planned a range of actions and interventions including:

- Identified critical games in the schedule and checked with pubs which games they would be screening
- Put stickers on glasses in pubs with a hotline number for community information about anyone planning trouble
- A poster and beer mat campaign in pubs 'Enjoy the world cup in bars not behind bars'
- Early identification of potential trouble makers and issuing of Antisocial Behaviour Contracts or reinforced

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

- Ensuring bottle banks in the town centre emptied, skips moved and market stalls cleared
- Beat teams communicated with local Portuguese population
- Workforce planning to ensure availability of personnel
- Mobile CCTV in place

Appendix 1: Foundations for Prevention Checklist

Are these foundations in place and robust?

Local Strategic Partnership	✓	✗	?
o Community Strategy which sets vision and direction			
o Strong partnerships between agencies and communities			
o Co-ordinated approach to community cohesion			
o Data sharing and collation protocols			
o Shared information on major long-term developments			
o Plans to tackle deprivation and inequalities			
o Projections to understand and anticipate changes in the area			
o Regular open dialogue and debate			
Local Authority			
o Equality Plan			
o Civil Contingencies Plan			
o Cohesion Contingency Plan			
o Emergency Plan			
o In touch with communities – listening to different voices			
o Support for community led initiatives and capacity building			
o Mechanisms to promote local engagement in decision-making			
o Strategy to welcome and settle new arrivals and work with host community			
o Citizenship education in schools, supported in neighbourhood			
o Communications promote belonging and reflect the diversity of the population			
o Pre-existing networks of civil society and contacts			
Police			
o Neighbourhood policing			
o Community contact database			
o Overall crime reducing			
o Independent Advisory Groups, Community Police Consultative group, access to diverse communities at all levels			
o Monitoring of community tensions at a local, regional and national level			
o Briefing for colleagues with a community intelligence role promoting the value of 'deconstructed conversations' to tension monitoring			
o Processes to debrief colleagues in day-to-day contact with people at 'street' level			
o Local knowledge of community 'composition'			
o Local identification of vulnerable premises/environments			
o Local analysis of hate crime and intra-ethnic disorder			
o Tension monitoring should form an integral part of NIM products and processes			
o Contingency planning for specific local issues/risks			
o Specialist officers e.g. Gypsy Traveller liaison officers, Gay and Lesbian Liaison officers			
o Local and central pool of staff with valuable resources and skills including Faith, Language and Culture expertise			
o Intelligence and community practitioners to understand and practice the role of EEP in tension monitoring			

Appendix 2: Tension monitoring template

Tension return used by many police authorities and Tension Monitoring Groups

Borough Community Tension Assessment

Title & Version	Community Tension Assessment Return V.8
Protective Marking	Restricted
Publication Scheme	No
Summary/Purpose	To record and collate information regarding community tension

To be submitted before **12 noon on Wednesday** using:

Insert local email contact for Tension returns

Borough/OCU	
Date of assessment	
Submission authorised by	
Last IAG meeting (where applicable)	
Last Gold Group meeting (where applicable)	
Name and contact details of person compiling this report	

Further advice on the completion of this document may be obtained from:

Insert local contacts for advice or information

Guidance notes

Who should complete this report and when should it be submitted?

It is recommended that this document be completed by the person best placed to assess community tensions and bring together information from:

- CRIS (Crime Reporting Information System)
- CRIMINT (Criminal Intelligence System) and other intelligence systems
- Partners – through the Tension Monitoring Group with the Local Authority
- SNTs (Safer Neighbourhood Teams), PCCGs (Police Community Consultative Groups) and IAGs (Independent Advisory Groups)
- Open sources including local media
- Senior Management Team members

It is immaterial where within a BOCU/OCU the person completing the report is based.

On completion the report should be signed off and authorised by an SMT member for submission to the local contact in the police service before noon each Wednesday.

This document is suitable for use in local briefings with the local Tension Monitoring Team, however it should not be disseminated outside the police service or to people who are not allowed access to restricted material without consultation with the lead officer in the police service.

The document uses a nationally agreed scale for measuring community tension and forms the basis for setting the area and regional tension assessment level.

Additional reports may be requested prior to normal submission dates. These assessments are separate from the normal weekly assessments and should only address the issues mentioned in the requirement.

Assessing the grading

There are four assessment areas:

- Section 1 - Experienced
- Section 2 - Evidenced
- Section 3 - Potential
- Section 4 - Tension Summary Table

Experienced, Evidenced and Potential

Each of these sections requires the provision of a description of the information available to support the numerical assessment grading (1 – 6) and trend indicator (▲, ▼, ►) which is entered in the tension summary table found in section 4. The grading must be supported by information entered under each section heading. These sections must never be left blank, or contain the same information week on week.

The **tension summary table** in section 4 requires tension within specific groups to be assessed and a numerical grading and trend applied. This assessment is independent of the overall borough tension figure and trend indicator.

The assessment tension figures and their definitions can be found in Appendix A.

Section 1: Experienced – how do communities feel

- Must be assessed after consultation
- What do communities think is happening?
- Rumour and perception is as valuable as fact

This section can include information sourced from:

- IAG meetings that are not subject to CRIMINT, CRIS or CAD
- PCCG/CPCG meetings as above
- Local media and other local open sources
- SN Teams
- Information from partners, local authority, schools, housing, community development, health
- Post event feedback from communities
- Community conversation and rumour

NB – this list is not exhaustive

Information supporting borough numerical assessment:

Section 2: Evidenced – what do we know is happening

Usually factual but can be sourced from both police and partner systems.

The borough response from this section can include input from:

- CRIMINT
- CRIS
- CAD
- BOCU Stops Data
- Data from hot spot maps (do not include maps)
- Other local indices – including incidents in schools and from partners

NB – this list is not exhaustive

Information supporting borough numerical assessment:

Section 3: Potential – what might happen or has the potential to happen

This can include predicted or planned events by both police and communities.

List local events together with policing resources and Gold and Silver Commanders.

This section is intended to be speculative and/or predictive. It can be derived from the commentary on the two sections above taking into account:

- Community conversation and rumour
- Media speculation (local or national)
- BOCU events and planning calendar
- Input from BOCU OPS, partners and tension monitoring team
- SN teams
- CRIMINT
- CRIS
- How local/national or international events impact on the communities of the borough
- BOCU tasking meetings and relevant PATPs (ProActive Tasking Proformas)

NB – this list is not exhaustive

Information supporting borough numerical assessment:

Section 4: Tension summary table

For each assessment (faith, race, gang etc) enter in the box below a numerical grading (1 – 6) together with an indication of trend. The trend is derived by comparing last week's numerical grading, then assessing whether the trend has moved up or down.

If last week's figure is higher than this week's, the trend is raised (▲), if this week's figure is lower than last week's, the trend is falling (▼), if last week's figure is the same as this week's, the trend is static (►).

Please note, if an assessment grading of 4 or above is set, an indication of your borough's response should be included as an appendix to your report. This need not be a detailed report and can be as simple as stating "monitoring in place".

Please note neither the content of this box nor the BOCU three-figure assessment should be seen as a performance indicator.

BOCU summary assessment figures & trends

	Experienced	Evidenced	Potential
The assessment for faith communities is:			
The assessment for race is:			
The assessment in relation to gang activity is:			
The assessment for travelling communities is:			
The assessment for guns & knife related issues is:			
The assessment for LGBT communities is:			
The assessment related to disability issues:			
The BOCU three figure assessment and trend is:			

Trend assessments	
▼	Falling
►	Static
▲	Raised

See Appendix 2A for example of how a summary table might look.

Note: *At times of operational necessity, the above table could be added to or amended.*

In some areas, the Tension Monitoring Group has arranged its summary assessment on a geographical basis.

Appendix 2 A: Assessment figure definitions

Note: These definitions are updated for this edition and include **alternative scenarios** in relation to public order and levels of fear and anxiety in the community.

Assessment definitions – EXPERIENCED

1	Imminent	Corroborated evidence of preparation for crime and disorder – e.g. groups gathering, weapons being prepared etc; Widespread calls at national or international levels for explanation, action or sanction; Community fears are leading to threats and retaliation.
2	High	Substantial evidence of fear of crime and/or disorder along with evidence of preparations to deal with the consequences – e.g. boarding up of shops; Members of the public expressing critical concerns or questioning actions; Sections of the community do not feel able to go about their daily lives as they are very fearful of their treatment by others. Some sections of those communities may be increasingly aggressive.
3	Moderate (high)	Evidence of widespread alarm at current tension levels. Local media reporting that tension is raised with local opinion formers and/or local people stating their fears; Local and national media may have sustained coverage of the issues; Fear and anxiety is sustained and daily activities changed as a result. Communities are increasingly concerned and feelings are running high.
4	Moderate (low)	Corroborated evidence that a significant number of people in the community in question or across communities fear crime and/or disorder. They expect crime and disorder to happen if no action is taken to prevent it and/or another event serves to increase tension; There is widespread discussion of the issue, some polarisation of views is apparent, media interest is regular and may be at the local and/or national level; Fear and anxiety amongst some or all of the community is heightened and leading to changes in their behaviour and strong public statements from members of the community.
5	Above normal	Some corroborated evidence of fear of crime or disorder within the community. The crime and disorder feared would be of low intensity and/or experienced by a limited range of people; There is some evidence of growing levels of discussion, media interest is increasing, may be sporadic but remains at a local level; As a result of local, national or international events, there is an increase in the levels of fear and anxiety in some parts of the community.
6	Normal	Limited community concerns that tension will rise and that, even if it did, the impact will be minor; Discussion is confined to single interest groups with negligible or no media interest; There are no significant differences to the normal levels of fear and anxiety in the community. This may still require attention.

Assessment definitions – EVIDENCED

1	Imminent	Tension indicators indicating crime and/or disorder to be expected within hours – e.g. stockpiles of weapons discovered, groups gathering on streets, opposing groups planning to demonstrate. Community and/or criminal intelligence suggests disorder is likely to develop within hours; An incident, or rumour, is likely to spark disorder; Communities are no longer able to maintain collective restraint.
2	High	Levels of crime and/or disorder raised along with evidence of serious offences having been committed. Tension indicators showing sustained hostility between particular groups or towards police. There may be evidence of activity by extremists groups. Disorder may have happened in the recent past. Community and/or criminal intelligence suggests disorder or crime likely to develop within days; Very strong views being expressed in the community and via media coverage and increased polarisation apparent; Evidence of an increase in related disorder in other parts of the locality, country or world.
3	Moderate (high)	Substantial rise in crime and/or disorder combined with substantial corroborative evidence of other tension indicators. Particular communities may be targeted. Community and/or criminal intelligence suggests disorder or crime is likely to develop unless responses are developed; There is reporting of an increase in incidents from multiple sources; Communities are changing their behaviour – either by withdrawing from the streets or by expressing increased aggression.
4	Moderate (low)	Crime and/or disorder levels clearly raised above normal. Other tensions indicators – e.g. assaults on police, racist graffiti etc. – providing corroboration. Levels may indicate targeting of specific communities. Levels well above normal. Community and/or criminal intelligence suggests disorder or crime may develop but that steps can be taken to prevent such development. There is evidence of an increase in incidents and reporting of these resulting from the current situation; Information gives evidence of incidents in schools, on estates, in the streets and in community facilities that indicates an increasing level of conflict.
5	Above normal	Evidence that crime and/or disorder levels are raised when compared to the normal levels. Raised levels may indicate targeting of particular communities. Levels not substantially above the normal. Information sources do not suggest that crime and/or disorder will develop; There have been some incidents which are cause for concern in local communities and in the media; Something has happened to increase fear and anxiety in part of the community.
6	Normal	No indication in police crime and disorder reporting that tension is above normal; Media/local pronouncements on issues are minimal/ absent; The level of incidents in the community are similar to how they are normally. This may still require attention.

Assessment definitions – POTENTIAL

1	Imminent	Local, national or international events, taken alone or in combination, expected to lead to outbreaks of crime and/or disorder within hours; Reputational damage or other organisational damage is likely to be high and is unlikely to be significantly mitigated by intervention options; Community anxiety is leading to conflict.
2	High	Local, national or international events, taken alone or in combination, expected to lead to outbreaks of crime and/or disorder within days. Reputational damage or other organisational impact will potentially be significant and/or intervention options to date have been of limited value; Sections of the community may be seriously anxious about their safety and that of their families and property. A range of responses, including retaliation, could be possible.
3	Moderate (high)	Local, national or international events, taken alone or in combination, expected to raise substantially local experienced and evidenced tension. The expected rise in tension may be localised geographically or within communities; Potential reputational damage or other organisational impact. However this may be limited and may be managed by intervention options; Fear and anxiety is escalating.
4	Moderate (low)	Local, national or international events, taken alone or in combination, expected to raise local experienced and evidenced tension. The expected rise in tension may be localised geographically or within communities; It is likely that there will be a degree of reputational damage or other organisational impact but this is likely to be minimal; It is very likely that some sections of the community may be increasingly anxious or fearful.
5	Above normal	Local, national or international events, taken alone or in combination, may lead to limited experienced or evidenced raising of tension. Any expected tension may be localised geographically or within communities; There is some apparent danger of reputational damage or other organisational impact; Some sections of the community may be fearful of an issue or situation.
6	Normal	No issues locally, nationally or internationally that would impact on local communities sufficiently to cause abnormal tension levels; There is no apparent danger of any reputational or other organisational impact; The impact of existing experience and evidence, or forthcoming anniversaries or events is not considered problematic.

An example of how a tension summary table might look:

	Experienced	Evidenced	Potential
The assessment for faith communities is:	6 ▼	6 ▼	5 ▼
The assessment for race is:	6 ►	6 ►	6 ►
The assessment in relation to gang activity is:	5 ▲	5 ▲	5 ▲
The assessment for travelling communities is:	6 ▼	6 ▼	5 ▲
The assessment for guns & knife related issues is:	5 ►	5 ►	5 ▲
The assessment for LGBT communities is:	5 ▲	6 ►	6 ►
The assessment related to disability issues:	6 ►	6 ►	6 ►
The BOCU three figure assessment and trend is:	6 ►	6 ►	5 ▲

Appendix 3: Template for returns to government offices

Assessment returns from local authorities to government offices – template used by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Monthly tension monitoring return:

GO Region	
Cohesion challenges and local issues <ul style="list-style-type: none">list specific places – either at LA or ward/ neighbourhood level and issue; be as specific as possible	
	Local specific issues
	Risk assessment
What's changed (either existing issues that have been resolved, or new and emerging risks, and describe actions)	
Risks (flag those issues of greatest concern, what the government office or others are doing to support - or where further support might be helpful/necessary)	

Lead Contact:

Notes

‘The iCoCo guide (coupled with training from iCoCo), has been very useful for Bristol’s Tension Monitoring Group in reviewing ways we monitor city wide tensions. The multi-agency approach has become sharper by us reviewing/refreshing our Terms of Reference, clarifying Governance, as well as Reporting arrangements.

We have adapted the EEP system of recording to suit our city’s geographical base and will continue to use the Annual Plan process to ensure that we are pro-active as a group.’

Mobs Timi-Biu, Hate Crime Projects Officer, Safer Bristol Partnership

‘The Tension Monitoring Guide has proven to be an indispensable tool that has enabled the organisation to more accurately determine the issues that constitute a community tension. The Guide has also assisted in identifying systems that can be deployed that have maximised the quality of the information captured.’

Don John, Race Development Officer, Stronger Communities and Equalities Team, Southampton City Council

‘Belfast Community Safety Partnership has worked closely with iCoCo over the last year to embed a localised version of tension monitoring that can best meet our needs. Our aim has been to build on the skills and practices of both statutory partners and the community/voluntary sector, learning from our recent past. The introduction of a tension monitoring process has given us the opportunity to build structures and processes that can address issues on an ongoing and coordinated basis. We are pleased to endorse this guide as a thorough and effective tool in building effective partnerships to address tensions.’

Richard McLernon, Community Safety Coordinator, Belfast City Council

‘Personally, I think this is a first-rate guide to community tension monitoring, which covers all the important ground in the field, and does so succinctly, uses helpful examples and illustrations, presumes little in the way of prior knowledge, and is readily adaptable to local circumstances and needs.

The tone of the ‘No Surprises’ approach to community tension monitoring, according to which rumour and misinformation is as important as fact, is spot on.’

Andy Hull, MPA Oversight & Review Officer



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