



Migration and Community Cohesion in Wales

Key points

- Although policy on migration is not devolved, the Welsh Government has responsibility towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees living in Wales under its **housing, health, education, social service functions** and through its **community cohesion agenda**.
- The **public sector equality duty** including a requirement for public bodies to foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those that do not. Work around 'fostering good relations' is about **tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups**.
- There is no single universally shared definition of what community cohesion means but according to the Welsh Government **community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together**.
- The Welsh Government Community Cohesion Strategy **Getting on Together** was launched in 2009 and focuses on policy and service areas that have a significant impact on how well a community gets on together including housing, learning, community, equality and the prevention of extremism.
- A number of different and interrelated factors that can impact on community cohesion at the local level, including **perceived competition over resources, increased immigration into the UK, most recently from EU accession states, additional housing pressures** created by inward migration into rural areas, **perceptions of increased competition for employment and services** and concerns that demographic changes in rural areas could impact on the **sustainability of predominantly Welsh-speaking communities**.
- The existing evidence indicates that there is **no straightforward relationship between the number of migrants in a particular community and levels of cohesion**. Tensions in areas of new migration are often a reflection of broader issues including poverty, deprivation and racism.
- Existing evidence suggests that attitudes to migration in the UK are generally negative. There is **some evidence that attitudes in Wales are more favourable compared with other areas of the UK**, although recent research has found that attitudes towards migrants, particularly refugees, are more negative in Wales than elsewhere.
- **There is evidence of racism and discrimination in Wales**. More than two thirds from ethnic minority backgrounds report experiences of racism in Wales and around **three quarters of all hate crimes in Wales are race hate crimes**.

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The policy context

Although powers relating to asylum and migration are not devolved, the Welsh Government has responsibility to migrants living in Wales under its housing, health, education and social service functions and through its community cohesion agenda. As a result **the Welsh Government is a key player in relation to the inclusion of migrants in Welsh society.**

Policies towards migrants in Wales are developed in the context of the Welsh Government's strategic agenda, specifically the Programme for Government (2011), and within the framework of UK, European and international legislation.

The Programme for Government sets out specific actions the Welsh Government is taking to 'create a fair society free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation with cohesive and inclusive communities' (Welsh Government 2011a). The Government aims to do this by reducing inequality in education and skills, health, housing and employment outcomes for people with protected characteristics (including race), increasing public services satisfaction rates and reducing the incidence of hate crime.

The **public sector equality duty** (Equality Act 2010), also referred to as the 'general duty', came into force in April 2011 and aims to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society in their day to day activities through paying due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those that do not.

Work around 'fostering good relations' is about tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and is therefore directly relevant to ensuring community cohesion in Wales.

The concept of 'community cohesion'

There is no single universally shared understanding of what community cohesion means. The term 'community' itself is used in different contexts including to describe people living alongside each other in a residential area (even where they have little interaction) and to refer to particular groups of people who come together because of shared interests and experience. The definition of community can also convey a sense of local, regional and national identity.

At its simplest, the term 'community cohesion' is used by the Welsh Government to describe how everyone in a geographical area lives alongside each other with

mutual understanding and respect, where every person has the equal chance to participate and has equal access to services. It is about integration, valuing difference and focusing on the shared values that join people together. It conveys a sense of acceptance and integration and of developing shared values. It is also concerned with supporting communities to be resilient when problems and tensions arise (WAG 2009).

This vision of a cohesive society is based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities;
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities; and
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And on three ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging;
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity; and
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

There is no single universally shared understanding of what community cohesion means. According to the Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales (2009), community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together

Community cohesion policy in Wales

The Welsh Government launched **Getting on Together: A Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales** in 2009 (WAG 2009).

The Strategy recognises that community cohesion is a cross-cutting issue relevant to all policy areas and focuses on some of the main issues that can impact on community cohesion at the local level. A Community Cohesion Unit was established in the Welsh Government and charged with overseeing delivery of the strategy. This involved setting out a framework supporting a partnership approach to community cohesion at the local level, as well as promoting a more joined-up approach to cohesion across departmental boundaries within the Welsh Government. Local authorities were identified as best placed to take the lead on promoting community cohesion at the local level (Robinson et al. 2013).

The Strategy focuses on policy and service areas that research has shown can have a significant impact on how well a community gets on together:

- Housing
- Learning
- Communication skills
- Equality and social inclusion
- Preventing violent extremism

Between 2009 and 2012 the Welsh Government provided £5 million of funding via the **Community Cohesion Fund** which was allocated directly to all 22 local authorities on a formula based on deprivation and the number of Communities First areas. Local authorities were required to develop a strategic approach to community cohesion and to put in initiatives to enhance local cohesion. The funding resulted in over 500 projects during the 3 year period.

The Community Cohesion Strategy also emphasised the need for local **Community Mapping** and guidance produced by Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned by the Welsh Government and published in August 2011 (Welsh Government 2011c).

The Welsh Government has also produced guidance for schools entitled **Respect and resilience: Developing Community Cohesion – A Common Understanding for Schools and their Communities** (Welsh Government 2011) which sets out the role that schools have in developing and supporting strategic approaches to promoting and maintaining community cohesion and preventing violent extremism. The Welsh Government believes that schools directly support local community cohesion by providing children and young people with strong and positive messages to encourage mutual understanding and respect. This is not only through the curriculum but also in creating a positive ethos in the community life of the school. Schools can promote respect for local cultural history and work to build respect for cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity amongst the school community. They have an important role in developing children and young people as active citizens.

In addition, the Welsh Government has produced policy to promote the inclusion of particular groups of migrants, including a **Refugee Inclusion Strategy** (Welsh Assembly Government 2008) which sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's vision of refugee inclusion in Wales and a **Refugee Inclusion Strategy Action Plan** (2013) (see briefing on **Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Wales** for further information).

In 2010 a team of researchers from Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales (Robinson et al. 2013). Their report concludes that significant strides have been made in promoting

community cohesion since the Strategy was launched, and that a more joined-up approach to community cohesion has been nurtured across department boundaries within the Welsh Government. Local authorities and their partners have been provided with a framework to support the development of a local approach and local authorities in Wales have delivered hundreds of projects in a bid to strengthen community cohesion in Wales.

Following the evaluation of the Community Cohesion Strategy, **regional Community Cohesion Co-ordinator posts** were appointed from April 2012-March 2014 throughout Wales across regional areas, in line with the Welsh Government's public service footprint for regional collaboration. This role was intended to help to mainstream community cohesion by developing a sustainable and strategic approach.

Sheffield Hallam University were commissioned to complete **mainstreaming guidance** for local authorities (Bashir et al. 2012). This has built on good examples across Wales and the UK and identifies practical steps to be taken across policy areas to ensure that community cohesion can be delivered on a localised basis. This supports local authorities and will also look at practical ways to mainstream cohesion with the development of single planning processes and within community strategies.

The Welsh Government has announced a further £300,000 of **funding** over the next two years (2014-2016) so the Community Cohesion Coordinators across Wales can continue their work. Their role over the next two years includes hate crime, modern slavery, Gypsies and Travellers, migration, Communities First, mainstreaming community cohesion and tension monitoring.

Evidence about community cohesion in Wales

According to the Welsh Assembly Government (2009) it is important to develop a strategic approach to community cohesion in Wales. **Communities are becoming increasingly diverse as a result of migration and other demographic trends.** Experience in Wales shows that on the rare occasions when local tensions arise they can quickly escalate into disturbances. Communities in Wales may also have particular cohesion priorities, for example relating to the impact of poverty and deprivation or the growing influence of far right extremism in some areas.

The Welsh Assembly Government (2009) maintains that there is a high degree of integration in most Welsh communities but accepts that not everyone has a positive experience and identifies a number

of different and interrelated factors that can impact on community cohesion at the local level. These include:

- **Perceived competition over resources.** The experience of poverty and social exclusion can be linked to lower levels of cohesion within economically deprived communities;
- **Increased immigration into the UK, most recently from EU accession states.** This may have increased uncertainty and apprehension as communities become more diverse, particularly where previously there has been limited change in the composition of the community;
- **Additional housing pressures** created by inward migration into rural areas where there may already be high demand for affordable homes;
- **Perceptions of increased competition for employment and services** between new arrivals and the settled population leading to an increase in community tensions;
- Concerns that demographic changes in rural areas could impact on the **sustainability of predominantly Welsh-speaking communities.**

Individual experience relating to gender, ethnic background, disability, age, religion/belief and sexual orientation can have a significant impact on perceptions and experience of cohesion.

The existing evidence indicates that there is no straightforward relationship between the number of migrants in a particular community and levels of cohesion

The existing evidence on community cohesion in Wales presents a mixed picture and suggests that there is **no straightforward relationship between the number of migrants in a particular community and levels of cohesion.**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales has undertaken research on attitudes around social cohesion (EHRC 2008). It found that **overall the people of Wales feel a strong sense of togetherness and are largely comfortable with those from different backgrounds.** However serious negative perceptions and significant prejudice were highlighted in relation to some people and communities.

Research by Threadgold et al (2008) explores the impact of new migration on established communities in South East Wales and found **no evidence that community tensions are an inevitable consequence of new immigration.** Instead they suggest that tensions in areas of new migration are a

reflection of **poverty, deprivation and racism.** The research found that minority ethnic groups are no more 'segregated' than other communities. Those able to work are viewed more favorably by settled populations but economic integration is no guarantee. The authors also highlighted the complex interrelationship between class and immigration, noting that the segregation and lack of social mobility were experienced by white working class people as well as by immigrants.

A study by Cooper and Innes (2009) uses two large scale surveys of the public living in Wales to empirically investigate the parameters and distribution of cohesion within diverse communities and how cohesion links with public perceptions of crime, policing and victimisation. The research found that there are healthy levels of community cohesion overall in Wales, with the majority endorsing the 'classic' cohesion statement of 'this neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together'. However when community cohesion is analysed using a question about being treated with 'respect and consideration' – a measure which is more likely to tap into peoples' interactions with strangers in their local area – the authors find that it is a problem for one in three living in Wales. The report identifies social groups and areas where community cohesion is lacking in Wales. These include respondents in social housing or in areas characterised by multiple deprivation. A consistent picture emerges of low community cohesiveness in the Gwent police force area, particularly among men.

Robinson et al. (2013) conclude that **perceptions of community cohesion have generally been higher in Wales than in England,** but that there has been some convergence in more recent years. They suggest that this may be related to the increase in migration in the context of higher levels of poverty and deprivation in some communities.

According to a survey by British Future (2013), 20% of people in Wales identified immigration as the top source of local tension even though the proportion of migrants living in Wales is relatively small and geographically concentrated.

Finally, it should be noted that the largest number of migrants to Wales are from England and that this can also have implications for community cohesion. The **impact of English migration into Wales** upon Welsh language and culture, especially in the rural areas, has been a topic of considerable political and academic debate. Day et al. (2008) examine the experiences of a sample of English migrants to north-west Wales. Although scenic and environmental benefits were important in explaining their decision to move, many stressed a sense of affinity to and social connection with Wales, and

most described a positive experience of local community relations. Attitudes towards bilingualism were supportive, although few migrants had learned Welsh. Many had underestimated the distinctive Welshness of the area, and were aware of points of continuing separation between the Welsh and the English.

Public attitudes towards migrants and migration

Rising levels of international migration, together with heightened public debates around the impacts, have combined to make immigration and asylum amongst the most important political issues in the UK, as well as in many other European countries. However **attitudes towards immigration, including to different types of migrants, vary widely since they are influenced by many factors**. In particular, the formation of people's attitudes depends on a complex mix of personal circumstances, values and the external environment and challenging these often requires action at the local and national level (Crawley 2009; Blinder 2011, 2012).

Despite uncertainties involved in measuring and interpreting public opinion, the evidence clearly shows **high levels of opposition to immigration in the UK** (Migration Observatory 2012). In recent surveys, majorities of respondents think that there are too many migrants in the UK, that fewer migrants should be let in to the country, and that legal restrictions on immigration should be tighter. Approximately three quarters of British people favour reducing immigration, on most recent surveys and polls. General reactions to immigration can be examined by using public opinion data, but such responses may be based in part upon confusion about categories of migrants both among the public and in the questions they are asked.

There is limited evidence specifically on attitudes to migration in Wales: most research is focused on the UK as a whole. The evidence that exists is mixed.

Lewis (2005) reports that attitudes to asylum seekers in Wales are more favourable than in other parts of the UK, and cites the Welsh Assembly Government's Refugee Forum and various strategies on refugees and asylum seekers as key influences.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2008) found that more than a quarter of people interviewed were worried about ethnic minority groups coming to live in Wales, especially people from Eastern Europe (which worried 32% of respondents), Muslims (30%) and Black and Asian people (25%). 16% of respondents were worried about more English people coming to Wales.

By contrast, a study by Mann and Tommis (2012) found an increasing tendency for less positive views towards immigrants in Wales. The study, based on

secondary analysis of the European Social Survey and Citizenship Survey (approx. 700 respondents in total), found that in 2010 nearly half (45%) of respondents stated that immigrants make the country worse to either the degree of 'very bad' or 'bad'. A larger percentage of people in Wales hold negative views on immigration than in Scotland, Northern Ireland or parts of South East of England and London.

Research by Crawley et al (2013) looking specifically at regional attitudes to refugees has identified **significant differences in attitudes to refugees by region of residence**. In particular, people living in Wales, the Midlands, the North and the South of England are significantly more likely to report more negative attitudes towards refugees than those residing in London or Scotland. Moreover graduates are significantly more likely to have tolerant views towards refugees in all areas apart from Wales. This finding reinforces earlier research on the experiences of refugees living in Wales (Crawley and Crimes 2009).

Racism and race equality

Older studies of migrant workers in Conwy and Flintshire (Turunen et al, 2005; Hold et al, 2005) have found relatively low levels of racism in Wales, although those who were non-White were more likely to have experienced racism than White migrant workers. By contrast Threadgold et al (2005) undertook a series of focus group discussions with refugees in Wales and found that racism, anti-refugeeism and Islamophobia were common experiences for refugees.

These findings are reflected in research by Crawley and Crimes (2009) which found that **more than half of all refugees have experienced negative public attitudes and racism whilst living in Wales**. These figures are significantly higher than for the population of Wales as a whole. A significant number of hate crime incidents were described by survey respondents, many involving verbal and physical abuse, often by teenagers and youths. Damage to property was also widely reported. Some respondents reported discrimination in the workplace and in dealings with agencies and service providers, including the police. Many racist incidents are not reported due to concerns about the consequences. Research by the EHRC (2010) has identified a wide range of street-level abuse and violence reported by asylum seekers and refugees who said it made them feel unwanted and inhuman.

Research by Crawley (2012) for Race Council Cymru has also found evidence of 'everyday racism' among those from ethnic minority backgrounds, with **more than two thirds of respondents reporting experiences of racism**.

Among members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, some of whom are migrants, there are perceptions of racial inequality in the delivery of public services including housing, healthcare and education. Perceptions of discrimination are particularly clear in relation to employment.

Most recently the **All Wales Hate Crime Research Project** has investigated the nature and impact of hate crime in Wales (Williams and Tregidga 2013). The project was led by Race Equality First in partnership with Cardiff University. The primary aim of the research was to generate robust data on both the nature of hate crime and hate related incidents in Wales and the impact of that victimisation on individuals, their families and local communities. The research found that in England and Wales the protected characteristic most commonly perceived by the victim as an offender's motivation for committing a crime was the victim's race (accounting for an estimated 136,000 incidents on average per year). In the period 2011/2012 **three quarters of all hate crimes in Wales were race hate crimes**. The research also identifies significant impacts on those who experience race hate crime.

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About the briefing paper series

This briefing paper is one of a series produced by Professor Heaven Crawley, Director of the Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR) at Swansea University to improve knowledge and understanding of migration issues in Wales. The papers set out the evidence on migration to Wales in relation to key issues and themes that are of public and policy concern and provide up-to-date information about the composition and experiences of migrant, asylum seeking and refugee populations living in Wales.

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