

Together, We Can Achieve Unity

Shared Learning Paper from the Ministry of Housing,
Communities and Local Government's Race, Faith and
Hate Crime Programme 2020-2021

Authors: Naomi Tyrrell, Jo Broadwood and Kaya Davies Hayon
Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network
July 2021



ANTHONY WALKER
FOUNDATION



NEW VIC



Acknowledgements and Thanks

On behalf of the organisations funded by the MHCLG's *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21* we would like to thank all of the young people and communities that participated in activities and projects across the country for their participation, insights, and creativity, and most of all for their commitment to building a kinder and more inclusive society.

We would also like to acknowledge the determination and creativity of facilitators and community partners who worked closely with the grantees to adapt and collaborate so that projects could go ahead during such a challenging time.

Grantees of the MHCLG's *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21* would like to thank the team at MHCLG for their support for the programme itself and for working with grantees to flex and adapt programmes so they could continue delivery and achieve impact.

Finally *Belong* – The Cohesion and Integration Network would like to thank staff and colleagues from the delivery organisations for sharing their insight, knowledge, reflections and contributions that have informed the development of this shared learning paper.

Belong – *The Cohesion and Integration Network* is a charity and membership organisation. Our vision is a more integrated and less divided society. We bring people and organisations together across sectors and regions to improve integration and cohesion practice and policy.

www.belongnetwork.co.uk

Belong was commissioned to develop this paper by: Anthony Walker Foundation; Manningham Housing Association; New Vic Theatre; Newcastle United Foundation; Solutions not Sides; The Anne Frank Trust; The Faith and Belief Forum; and Youth Sport Trust.

Front cover photo credit, Andrew Billington Photography.

Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented event which brought about changes to people's everyday lives in the UK that were almost unimaginable prior to March 2020. As well as the inspiring response to the crisis from people and communities who mobilised to support the most vulnerable across the UK, research has also highlighted that the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities, with those groups and communities experiencing multiple deprivation being hardest hit (JRF, 2021; ONS, 2020). Evidence has also emerged of increases in hate crime towards particular ethnic groups (Schumann & Moore, 2021), an increase in social isolation for people with particular characteristics (LGA, 2020), and of young people in particular suffering an increase in loneliness and mental health issues (Pierce et al., 2020).

This paper explores the shared learning and best practice examples from eight organisations that delivered projects focused on increasing social cohesion during the pandemic. They were funded under the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21*. The organisations were highly successful in their collective numerical and geographical reach, and in their impact.

Collective Reach and Impact - summary

- More than 48,300 people across England participated in the funded organisations' Programme activities. They brought people of different faiths, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, ages and incomes together, primarily through online interventions, at a time when there were severe restrictions on social interaction.
- Delivery organisations made good use of online showcases and events, and awareness-raising through social media, to widen access to their initiatives and to extend their reach even further. Hundreds of thousands of people engaged in the Programme in these ways.

Impact was measured in different ways by delivery organisations, according to the design and delivery of their activities and the needs of participants. It was not possible to aggregate results across all eight of the organisations' initiatives; however, organisations used a range of indicators and measures to assess impact.

- 90-95% of young people are more able to recognise prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour, and are more knowledgeable about what hate crime is having participated in the organisations' activities (in those that measured this outcome).
- Across the Programme activities, participants reported substantial increases in: openness towards other people; trust in people from different backgrounds and groups; increased knowledge about faith and race-based prejudice and discrimination; greater confidence to challenge prejudice and hate speech; and greater openness to mixing with people from different ethnic, faith and cultural backgrounds.

- Some participants were able to report substantial improvements in their confidence, health and wellbeing having participated in the organisations' funded initiatives.
- Some participants learnt skills that increased their employability and also their confidence in accessing training and future employment opportunities.

In this paper, the advantages and disadvantages of the online delivery of social cohesion interventions are examined, as are the ways in which organisations overcame the challenges they faced – such as online safety and digital exclusion. The organisations adapted their original in-person delivery plans, finding creative and innovative ways of engaging people in activities that enabled social mixing, increasing mutual understanding across potential social divides. Crucially, longer-term opportunities for shifting behaviours and attitudes that projects developed, such as embedding activities in communities and empowering individuals, are highlighted.

The paper makes practical recommendations for organisations delivering social cohesion interventions as British society adapts to living with Covid-19. Particular highlights are: partnership working, blended delivery models, reaching those who are digitally excluded, practical methods for embedding knowledge and skills in communities, and empowering individuals to continue the work.

The paper looks at the evidence and research on effective interventions to support social cohesion and argues that it needs to be attended to and maintained over time in order to support community resilience. It is therefore recommended that funders and commissioners of programmes think about this work as something that is going to require longer-term investment in order to achieve long-lasting results. Based on the shared learning and best practice of the organisations, the paper makes strategic recommendations for commissioning bodies that are seeking to optimise the impact of funding targeted at tackling race, faith and hate crime to improve social cohesion. In summary, these are:

- To create a lasting legacy of the work begun in the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme by investing in the ongoing delivery of programmes, particularly elements that embed trust, relationships, skills, capacity and resources within, and between, groups and communities themselves.
- To support networking, knowledge and information sharing early on between delivery organisations so that collaboration is encouraged across geographical areas and communities, and capacity for joint-working and partnership is harnessed from the start.

-
- To encourage commissioners to adopt a flexible approach, allowing more time for engagement, especially when delivery organisations are working in areas of multiple deprivation and poor social infrastructure as these areas often benefit the most from social cohesion programmes.
 - To consider how best to rebuild social cohesion in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, by focusing resources towards people most negatively impacted by the pandemic.
 - To ensure provision of digital equipment, and to factor in opportunities for digital skills training as a key element of programmes delivery for groups and communities at risk of digital exclusion.
 - To provide funding for in-person social cohesion programmes as these have a high impact, but also to consider online or blended programmes when these will increase the reach of activities and allow inclusion of particular groups.

Contents

Acknowledgements and Thanks	2
Executive Summary	3
Collective Reach and Impact - summary	3
Introduction	8
Delivering Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme Interventions During Covid-19	10
How can social cohesion and opportunities for all be encouraged in a time of crisis?	11
Collective Reach of the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme	14
Shared Learning and Best Practice from the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme	17
How can social cohesion interventions be delivered safely and inclusively online?	17
Safeguarding	17
Adapting for online facilitation	18
What are the advantages of online delivery?	21
Engaging with underserved and underrepresented groups	21
Delivering across a wider geographical area	21
Delivering bespoke activities	22
Using creative methods	22
What are the disadvantages of online delivery and how can they be overcome?	27
Overcoming digital exclusion	27
Activities best suited to in-person delivery	29
Digital Expertise	31

Encouraging online social mixing – what works?	32
Community skills-swaps and shared learning	32
Online engagement as a means of overcoming social isolation	32
How can we challenge and shift negative attitudes and behaviours?	33
Embedding activities in communities	33
Empowering individuals	34
How can we develop longer-term opportunities for social cohesion?	36
Conclusion	38
Recommendations	39
Practical recommendations for delivery organisations	39
Strategic recommendations for commissioners	40
Organisations funded by the MHCLG <i>Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21</i>	43
References	46

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented event which has brought about changes to people's everyday lives in the UK that were almost unimaginable prior to March 2020. As well as the inspiring response to the crisis from people and communities who mobilised to support the most vulnerable across the UK, research has also highlighted that the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities, with those groups and communities experiencing multiple deprivation being hardest hit (JRF, 2021; ONS, 2020). Evidence has also emerged of increases in hate crime towards particular ethnic groups (Schumann & Moore, 2021), an increase in social isolation for people with particular characteristics (LGA, 2020), and of young people in particular suffering an increase in loneliness and mental health issues (Pierce et al., 2020)

This paper draws together the shared learning from eight of the organisations¹ that were funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-2021*. The organisations carried out a range of different activities with children, young people and older adults across England between January and May 2021, with the majority of the projects focused on engaging with young people.

Organisations engaged people and groups through projects involving sports, arts, dialogue, skills training, film, performance, exhibitions, cookery and digital media. Some of the people involved in the projects had experienced discrimination or hate crime on the basis of their ethnicity or faith. Some had witnessed racism and hate crime in their communities; some had been perpetrators of racism, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Embedded in all of the approaches was a focus on social mixing (Hewstone et al., 2018) as a powerful way of reducing prejudice between different groups and increasing empathy. Bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to participate in activities that seek to encourage social cohesion and shift ideas about faith, race and hate crime can be challenging at any time, requiring careful preparation and skilled facilitation. Doing this during a pandemic with severe restrictions on any form of social mixing presented another layer of challenge for organisations.

MHCLG's (2019) outcome indicators for integrated communities were:

- increase in social cohesion;
- increase in social trust at a neighbourhood level, and between faith and race communities and local governance representatives;
- increase in social capital or sense of responsibility to neighbourhood and local area;
- increase in a sense of belonging.

¹ The organisations were: Anthony Walker Foundation, Manningham Housing Association, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle United Foundation, Solutions Not Sides, The Anne Frank Trust, The Faith & Belief Forum and Youth Sport Trust. The English Football League Trust also received funding but were unable to participate directly in this shared paper. They provided their full project evaluation report with permission to include any content which supported the wider findings.

The organisations funded through the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme* submitted their applications to the fund based on the delivery of in-person activities. However, the second and third Covid-19 lockdowns from (November – December 2020 and January – March² 2021) meant that the organisations had to consider how to adapt their programmes in order to meet their project goals.

Six organisations adapted their programmes so that they could be delivered online; two organisations negotiated with local partners and delayed their programmes so that they could be delivered in-person between March and May 2021.

This short paper lays out the lessons learned by the Programme's delivery organisations on both the opportunities and challenges of having to adapt their project activities. It explores whether despite the challenges they achieved their overall aims, and assesses the shared reach and impact of their interventions. At the end of the paper, recommendations are made for delivery organisations and commissioners of programmes that are aimed at reducing prejudice, reducing hate crime and increasing social cohesion.

² Primary and secondary schools returned on 4th March 2021.

Delivering *Race, Faith and Hate Crime* Programme Interventions During Covid-19

What happens to social cohesion when a crisis strikes? Research shows that social cohesion can increase in the aftermath of large-scale events or tragedies, but that it is often short-lived (for a discussion of this see Lalot et al., 2021). In the early days of the pandemic in the UK we saw an increase in community engagement and support, with people coming together to engage in remarkable acts of solidarity, mutual support and help (Grasso et al., 2021). However, as the crisis has unfolded a more complex picture has emerged.

Research shows that threatening events – such as outbreaks of infectious viruses – can be associated with increases in racist attitudes and discriminatory practices (for a discussion of this see Luthra and Nandi, 2020). For example, studies conducted during Covid-19 show that there has been an increase in reported hate crimes against Chinese and East Asian people in the UK, linked to the understanding that the virus originated in China (Hansen and Gray, 2020; Schumann and Moore, 2021).

Borkowska and Laurence's (2020) study of pre-pandemic and pandemic longitudinal data raises concerns about the levels of social cohesion in England since the start of the pandemic. Their study has shown that overall levels of social cohesion were lower in June 2020 compared to all of the examined pre-pandemic periods. Of particular concern is their finding that social cohesion had declined most in the most deprived communities, particularly among certain ethnic minority groups and people with a lower level of skills.

How can social cohesion be encouraged in a time of crisis?

Recent findings from the *'Beyond Us and Them'* research project (a partnership between Belong and the University of Kent funded by the Nuffield Foundation) offers some hope. It shows that local areas that had invested in programmes focused on social cohesion prior to the pandemic were more resilient during the crisis than elsewhere. (This included the five Integration Areas that were funded by MHCLG through the Integration Area Programme.) People living in those areas reported higher levels of neighbourliness, trust in others, and optimism, despite some of those areas experiencing longer lockdowns and higher infection levels (Broadwood et al., 2021). People living in those areas were also twice as likely to engage in social action to help others, such as volunteering.

Key elements of those areas social cohesion programmes were: a focus on social mixing – bringing people together to forge connections, and build trust, across sociocultural and ethnic divides; proactively tackling barriers to inclusion; and, addressing race, faith and hate crime by bringing people together in shared activities with common goals.

The projects that were funded by the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-2021* were successful in bringing people together at a time when there were severe restrictions on people's ability to mix or interact with others. The projects focused on promoting shared values among people of all backgrounds, through sustainable social integration initiatives and meaningful civic participations.

Each of the organisations has produced their own separate evaluation report of their MHCLG-funded projects, outlining the impacts of the activities on the participants and their communities. Therefore, based on the learning outcomes from the projects, and emerging research on the social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the purpose of this shared learning paper is to:

- highlight the collective reach of all of the projects.
- highlight the shared learning outcomes.
- highlight best practice examples.
- make practical recommendations for delivery organisations.
- make strategic recommendations for commissioning bodies.

Table 1 presents some selected highlights from the feedback participants gave after they had engaged in the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme* activities.

Table 1. Selected Highlights from the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme Participant Feedback

Organisation	Name of Programme	Selected Highlights from Participant Feedback ³
Anthony Walker Foundation	The R Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99.1% of train-the-trainer respondents and 100% of 'Session 1' school-age young people respondents agree or strongly agree they are now able to recognise what a hate crime or incident is. • 45% of the Agent Academy learners have found full-time employment just six weeks after finishing their training in the Agent Academy programme.
Manningham Housing Association	Building Bridges Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 1258 beneficiaries in the improving mental health programme had benefited from direct support, with over 65% reporting seeing improvement in health and wellbeing. • 40 service users were supported in the employment project, benefiting from employment support such as CV and interview support, with 7 service users moving into full-time paid employment and 14 into volunteering roles.
New Vic Theatre	Unite: It's Not as Simple as Black and White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the programme, 66% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'If a close friend/relative expressed a negative view about someone because they were from a different background, I would want to challenge them'. • Feedback from a member of the audience: 'Well done everyone, this is an absolutely vital piece of work, and so relevant right now. Young people need to feel empowered to stand up to racism and not feel alone. Theatre like this is utterly fantastic in opening up a dialogue that everyone can get involved in. Keep up the good work! The more we shine a light on this, the awful stuff can't hide in the dark and in silence.'
Newcastle United Foundation	United as One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After participating in the programme, out of 1032 primary school children, 91% could define what discrimination is. • After participating in the programme, out of 1032 primary school children, 96% of participants could demonstrate how to report a hate crime.

³ All of the organisations' evaluation data can be found in their individual final reports to MHCLG.

Solutions Not Sides	Pathway of Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost 80% of participants agreed with the statement that they had become more open-minded about the issues since participating in the activities. • Young people showed a high appreciation of the way the sessions were run, in terms of being non-biased and allowing for questions to be asked and answered in depth.
The Anne Frank Trust	Back Together, Stronger Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The activities exceeded my expectations. The children were not only ‘told’ but they were able to feel and express their opinions regularly. Constantly considering their story alongside Anne’s...a wonderful exploration into such sensitive subjects made very relevant and appropriate for primary aged children.’ • ‘As an Anne Frank Ambassador, I will try to make sure that everyone is included in society and make sure that people are educated about prejudice and discrimination.’
The English Football League Trust	Communities United	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After participating in the activities, 99% of participants agreed that with the statement: ‘I try to look at everybody’s side of an argument before I make a decision’. • After participating in the activities, 96% of participants agreed with the statement: ‘I always try to understand people who have different cultures or traditions to mine’.
The Faith & Belief Forum	Building Closer Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘there are opportunities for contact with other faith and belief communities within my neighbourhood’ after they had participated in the community dialogues. • 82% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I feel a greater sense of trust towards people in my neighbourhood from different faith or ethnic backgrounds’ after they had participated in the community dialogues.
Youth Sport Trust	Unified Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of young Ambassadors felt that they gained more knowledge about how to be an inclusive leader since participating in the Ambassador programme. • 94% of young Ambassadors are more confident to use their voice and take action to influence change since participating in the programme.

Collective Reach of the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme*

The projects in the Programme were designed to reduce religiously and racially motivated hate crime by tackling underlying issues, raising awareness, encouraging social mixing between communities, and helping people to shift attitudes and behaviours. Through online and in-person activities, the organisations were able to overcome the lack of social contact between people in the communities they worked with, raise awareness, facilitate meaningful conversations and build relationships.

Between January and May 2021, the organisations enabled more than **48,300 people** to participate in activities aimed at increasing social cohesion in communities across the UK (see Table 2). In addition, many more were impacted through livestreaming and social media coverage of the activities. The collective numerical reach of the organisations funded by the Programme during a time of crisis and challenge, and over a short period, is a significant achievement.

The number of participants reached by each project varied because of the types of activities and modes of delivery. Some of the organisations' projects involved many weeks of activities with the same participants, aimed at in-depth understanding, building relationships, skills and employability. Some organisations offered one-off activities with different participants each time, focused on raising intercultural awareness and understanding. A few organisations delivered both; a combination of in-depth and one-off activities, according to the needs of the participants.

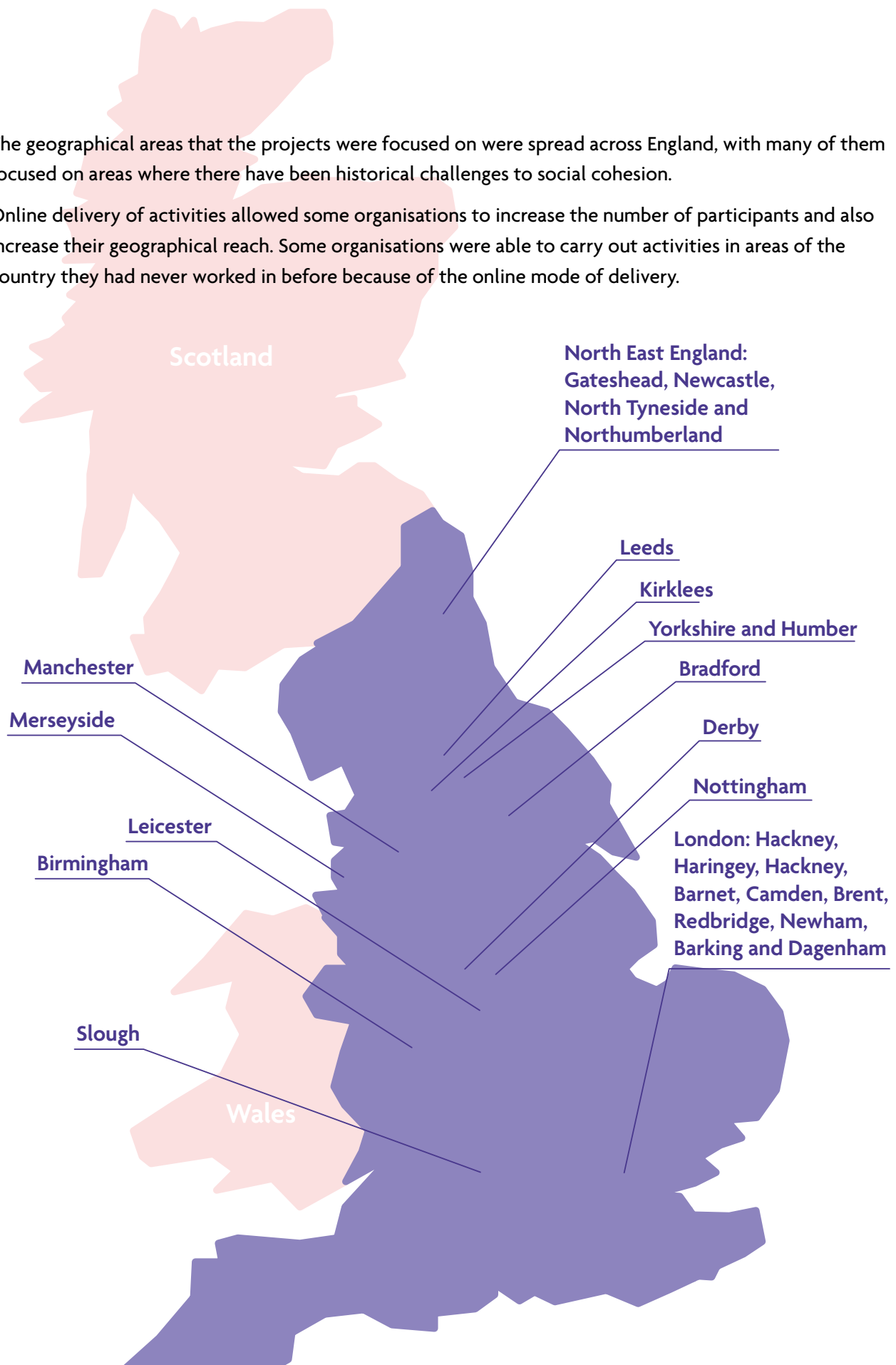
Table 2. Collective Reach of the Organisations in the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme*

Organisation	Name of Programme	Number of participants ⁴	Geographical area
Anthony Walker Foundation	The R Project	6,300	Merseyside
Manningham Housing Association	Building Bridges Bradford	2,240	Bradford
New Vic Theatre	Unite: It's Not as Simple as Black and White	14,315	Staffordshire
Newcastle United Foundation	United as One	2,459	North East England: Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland
Solutions Not Sides	Pathway of Understanding	3,512	London: Hackney, Haringey, Hackney, Barnet, Camden, Brent, Redbridge, Newham. Other areas in England: Bradford, Birmingham, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Manchester, Leeds, Kirklees
The Anne Frank Trust	Back Together, Stronger Together	14,143	London, Yorkshire & Humber, North East, North West and East of England
The Faith & Belief Forum	Building Closer Communities	1253	Birmingham, Barking and Dagenham
The English Football League Trust	Communities United	257	North West region
Youth Sport Trust	Unified Action	4,562	Manchester, Barking and Dagenham, Slough, Birmingham and Bradford

⁴ The number of participants means the number of people who were directly involved in the activities. Many more were impacted by the *Programme* through livestreaming and social media coverage.

The geographical areas that the projects were focused on were spread across England, with many of them focused on areas where there have been historical challenges to social cohesion.

Online delivery of activities allowed some organisations to increase the number of participants and also increase their geographical reach. Some organisations were able to carry out activities in areas of the country they had never worked in before because of the online mode of delivery.



Shared Learning and Best Practice from the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme

The following sections of this paper explore the shared learning outcomes and impact of the projects funded by the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme*. Examples of best practice across the organisations are highlighted and discussed, with a view to making recommendations that inform future programme commissioning and delivery.

Facilitating safe and beneficial activities on the topics of faith, race and hate crime with people in diverse, and sometimes divided communities, can be challenging. Achieving this during Covid-19 and the third major lockdown in England, when many people were experiencing anxiety, isolation and hardship, made delivery of programmes even more so.

The majority of the organisations had to switch to online delivery for their activities for the first time. This raised new issues for the organisations to consider, such as online safety, facilitating safe conversations, ensuring inclusion, as well as making sure the projects met their goals. These issues are discussed in the following sections.

How can social cohesion interventions be delivered safely and inclusively online?

Six out of the eight organisations delivered their activities online during the lockdown period January -March 2021.⁵ The quick switch to online activities that the third Covid-19 lockdown initiated presented challenges and some substantial adaptations had to be made to original delivery plans.

Safeguarding

The first step was to assess what activities and level of support could be provided safely for participants through online delivery. As many people were at home for large periods of time during the lockdowns, participants could find it hard to have a private space from which to engage in the activities and personal conversations. Other household members could be present, which could be distracting and/or reduce the participants' privacy. Therefore, a key issue for the organisations who delivered their interventions online was digital safety. Some of the organisations adapted their existing face-to-face safeguarding policies to suit online delivery. Others worked in partnership and adhered to the existing online safeguarding policies of their partners.

⁵ Two of the organisations – New Vic Theatre and Newcastle United Foundation – postponed the start-date of their activities so that they could be delivered in-person from mid-March to end of May 2021.

Solutions Not Sides and *The Anne Frank Trust* both worked in partnership with other service providers in order to ensure their activities were digitally safe. They worked with schools in different geographical areas in order to deliver their project content.

The Faith & Belief Forum worked with *The Feast*, a youth organisation, to facilitate online community dialogues.

Anthony Walker Foundation collaborated with *Agent Academy CIC* to deliver social media marketing training and discussion groups with young people.

In all of these cases, the organisations adhered to the online safeguarding policies of the organisations they were collaborating with which enabled a quick adaptation to safe online delivery.

Adapting for online facilitation

The second step was to train staff in online facilitation and moderation, whilst ensuring the best use of staff-time across the different activities. Discussions on race, faith and hate crime with people who have a range of characteristics and from a range of backgrounds need to be facilitated in sensitive and appropriate ways.

The organisations recognised that online delivery forced some changes in facilitation and moderation of discussions. Topics that would have been discussed in face-to-face sessions needed to be adapted to suit an online format because race, faith and hate crime discussions can be present challenges for people.

A recurring theme across the organisations was that it can be much harder to facilitate discussion groups on sensitive topics online compared to in-person. One of the challenges for facilitators was that it was *'harder to read the room'* using an online platform. Online facilitation requires careful monitoring and skilled intervention when necessary.

There was deep consideration by the organisations as to how to ensure the best possible involvement experience for participants. They achieved this through various approaches, such as: clear participation guidelines, peer-to-peer facilitation, breakout rooms, and flexible delivery.

Building Closer Communities – The Faith & Belief Forum developed specific guidelines to assert and reassert that the online discussion space was a safe space. They adapted their in-person guidelines for online discussions and developed an acronym for online discussions called RADIO: R for respect, A for awareness of others, D for dialogue, I for ‘I’ statements (rather than making assumptions about the greater group or what everyone else thinks), and O for ‘ouch’ or ‘oops’ statements where people can say ‘I made a mistake’ or ‘That comment hurt me’.



‘The R Project’ – Anthony Walker Foundation developed the themes of authentic allyship and courageous conversations between young people participating in their Agent Academy Programme. Young people discussed racial slurs and their own experiences of hate crime (as victim, bystander or perpetrator) and were part of a professional facilitation session. They had open discussions and challenged the idea of ‘white saviourism’.

Young people were enabled to have conversations about racism and hate crime without having the emotional labour of having to explain everything to each other because there was a trained courageous conversations facilitator. This conversation was then transformed into a series of images that were used in the ‘Speak Out, Stop Hate’ social media campaign which encourages young people to report hate crime.

The young people hosted the launch event of the campaign, which aims to tackle young people’s under-reporting of hate crime (see <https://anthonywalkerfoundation.com/speak-out-stop-hate/>).



Have you witnessed or been a victim of a race or religious hate incident? By reporting it, you're helping us to make a change.

What are the advantages of online delivery?

Most of the organisations adapted their project activities so that they were able to deliver interventions online during the third lockdown in England (January 2021-March 2021). It reflects the dedication of the organisations that they ensured that their funded activities met the original Programme goals through online delivery. Despite the challenges they faced in having to quickly pivot to online delivery, organisations reflected on the process and discovered some practical and strategic advantages.

Engaging with underserved and underrepresented groups

Organisations found that facilitating discussions online, whilst ensuring safety for participants, had some advantages. Some of the organisations were able to engage with members of communities they had previously struggled to engage with in face-to-face work, such as:

- mothers with young children who were able to join activities online from home and therefore not need childcare;
- people with mobility issues who could join online events and not need to attend potentially difficult to access locations/venues;
- women from particular faith groups;
- people who did not feel safe going out after dark.

The increased access to activities for people with particular characteristics and backgrounds is an important learning outcome from the online delivery of the organisations' programmes.

Delivering across a wider geographical area

Staffing levels and locations can impact on the reach of in-person delivery. Online delivery of activities gave organisations opportunities to reach people across a wider geographical area as they could deliver activities online to higher numbers of people in many different places, some of which they had never accessed before. Online delivery is particularly useful for working with people living in more remote and harder to access geographical locations.

Delivering bespoke activities

The flexible ways in which organisations delivered their activities online also presented opportunities for bespoke activities to meet the needs of the communities at a specific point in time. For example, being able to adapt their content to focus on issues being experienced by participants at the time, such as anti-Semitism or Covid-19 related hate crime.

Back Together, Stronger Together – The Anne Frank Trust increased their reach because of online delivery. They were able to deliver their activities in a higher number of primary schools than ever before and across a wider geographical area. In-person delivery is dependent on the location of staff who are trained to deliver the activities but pivoting to online delivery opened up new opportunities for school engagement. They also found that schools who joined in with activities as part of their core programme, such as Holocaust Memorial Day, have asked for further activities for key events in the school calendar such as World Book Day, or workshops on specific themes pertinent to their communities such as anti-Semitism.

Using creative methods

Despite early concerns, online delivery did not decrease opportunities for creative methods of engaging with participants on the themes of race, faith and hate crime. These often had to be altered and adapted for an online format but were highly successful.

For example, some organisations provided opportunities for participants to write and perform songs, create new artwork and make films focused on the themes and their experiences. Often, these outputs were then showcased in online celebration events and the end of the programmes' activities and/or were made available on the organisations' websites.

A rap produced by a participant in *Building Bridges Bradford – Manningham Housing Association*

(You can listen to the rap and watch more about the project in the community case study section [here](#))

Unity

*How many times do we have to say the same message
And it's like we're not interested
There's no investment
Talk about your hashtags in all your quotes
But make sure that you meant it
I mean it's hectic*

Chorus

*Two steps forward
But it's like we're in the same place
We're all here with one message
So make sure that it's a safe space
All we know is diversity
All we bring is Unity*

Verse 2

*In everything x2
You can hate, you can take a step back
Bleed the same blood you know my God made that
Hard to put in words
So I put in a track
Had opinions
So we came with facts

I remember when they used to laugh at my skin
So now I've got to look within
Gotta pull out this sin
Cause this ice is getting thin*

(Please don't be like that, don't stab us in the back)

Chorus

*Two steps forward
But it's like we're in the same place
We're all here with one message
So make sure that it's a safe space
All we know is diversity
All we bring is Unity*

In everything x2

Unity x2

You and me x2

*I don't know what it be
Maybe it's jealousy*

Chorus

*Two steps forward
But it's like we're in the same place
We're all here with one message
So make sure that it's a safe space
All we know is diversity
All we bring is Unity*

In everything x2

Created by Musumba, Bradford

Musumba is a 17-year-old Christian singer, rapper, songwriter + producer hailing from Bradford, West Yorkshire with heritage from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Experimenting with the fusion of African rhythms and R&B vocals and rap.

She took the challenge to write about "Unity" and forgiveness. This topic was important as it highlights past experiences and how one can move on and forgive those that may have been prejudice, racist, sexist etc. She used Afro centric elements to complement her heritage.

A creative response by a young participant in *Back Together, Stronger Together – The Anne Frank Trust*

'Equality is the soul of liberty; there is, in fact, no liberty without it'

Everyone's human

Whoever they are

You can't judge people for just,

What they are

Equality

The word we should all use

To describe ourselves

No odd ones out

No outsiders

There are far more good people

Than there are bad

Everyone can make a difference

If together or alone

Everyone can make a difference

Home is in the heart

It's not about who we are

Or what we are

It's about unity

And the support of others

Sometimes that is all we need

We are all united

All linked in some kind of way

We are united,

And we will not be divided!!!

A poem created by a participant in the project *Unified Action – Youth Sport Trust*

(You can watch the performance [here](#))

Speak out, help out, find out

Three things we all have the power to do

But there's no harm in sharing it too

Our true strength lies in the community

We can do this together and achieve unity

Don't be shy if you're young or old

Stand tall as a leader and people will do what they're told

Stand tall as a leader and fight against hate

Nurture your talents now no need to wait

Stand tall as a leader and fight against crime

Don't listen to hate as this is your time

Created by Desire, Unified Action Ambassador (Barking and Dagenham)

What are the disadvantages of online delivery and how can they be overcome?

Online delivery presented some difficulties related to the reach of some projects and digital exclusion of potential participants. Research shows that digital exclusion commonly affects older people, but it also affects people on low incomes and those who are financially vulnerable (BSG, 2020). In addition, some activities do not lend themselves to successful online delivery, such as sport and performance, so two organisations decided to delay delivery until after the lockdown had eased in March-May 2021.

Overcoming digital exclusion

The organisations utilised a range of approaches for overcoming digital exclusion in communities, for example, by providing offline resources, purchasing digital equipment for distribution and increasing participants' digital skills. Many of these were successful as reported above bringing new groups into engagement with projects. However, sometimes the prevalence of digital exclusion with particular communities remained a barrier. In these cases, in-person activities were arranged after lockdown.

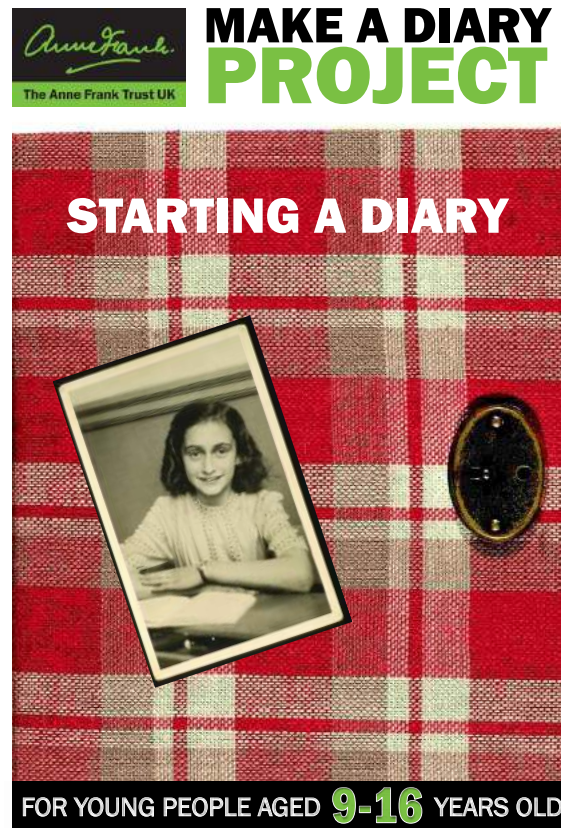
The Anne Frank Trust and Solutions Not Sides delivered their activities through schools, some of which already had tried to overcome digital exclusion of pupils through provision of extra equipment. However, both of the organisations provided home learning packs on the projects' themes so that young people who did not have sufficient access to online technologies could still participate in the activities to some degree.

'So we also produced home learning packs, which schools could request and then send out to their students so they could just have some basic knowledge about prejudice and discrimination.'

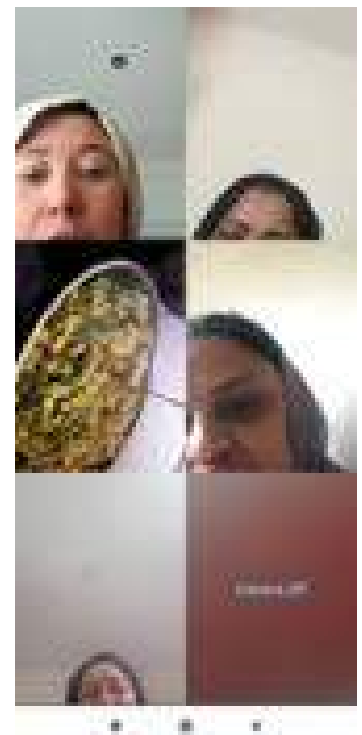
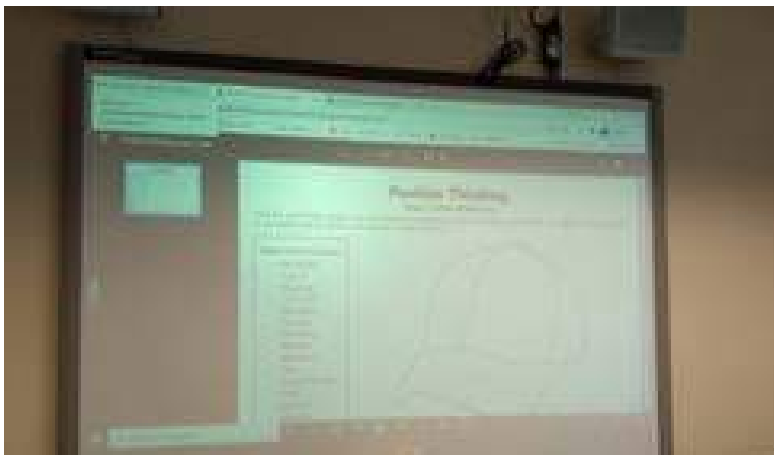
Solutions Not Sides – example of home-learning resource (<https://solutionsnotsides.co.uk/learning-resources>)



The Anne Frank Trust – example of home-learning resource
 (<https://annefrank.org.uk/anne-frank-inspired-diary-writing-activity/>)



Manningham Housing Association used some of their budget to purchase digital equipment for participants on their community programmes, such as confidence through cooking and seated exercise.



'The R Project' – Anthony Walker Foundation worked in partnership with a local social enterprise Agent Academy CIC to focus on increasing young people's digital skills whilst facilitating conversations about their experiences of race, faith and hate crime. Their 12-week programme brought together young people from diverse backgrounds to learn new digital skills, work on a social media campaign together focused on combatting hate crime and engage in important conversations. The training element of the programme focused on ensuring that as many young people as possible gained employment in the creative digital industries because of their learning and direct experience of running a social media campaign.

Some of the organisations realised that online delivery excluded the Roma community in particular. Discussion with community workers who support the Roma community suggested that provision of digital equipment was unlikely to increase their participation in online activities. These organisations felt that face-to-face activities after the end of lockdown was the most suitable way of engaging with members of the Roma community.

Building Closer Communities – The Faith & Belief Forum – members of the Roma community showed interest in participating in the community dialogues but then everything had to be delivered online which is likely to have excluded them because of digital poverty.

Activities best suited to in-person delivery

Two organisations felt that the specific delivery activities they specialised in (performance and sport) were not deliverable online. They therefore arranged face-to-face activities. Previous evidence suggests that both sport and performance activities can be highly successful at fostering greater empathy and understanding between different groups but are more difficult to deliver online.

Unite: 'It's Not as Simple as Black and White' – New Vic Theatre collaborated with Port Vale FC Foundation to bring community members and young people together to produce a powerful documentary-drama. They combined the power of sport and theatre with the aim of uniting communities and preventing discrimination and prejudice. Real-life experiences and ideas from hundreds of local people inspired the 45-minute play, which was performed multiple times in the theatre and streamed online. Each performance was followed by a 45min interactive workshop. An on-line resource UNITE: It's Not as Simple as Black and White will be made freely available



*Credit: Andrew Billington
Photography*



United As One – Newcastle United Foundation used funding from the Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme to provide workshops for young people enrolled on their Prince's Trust programmes to explore issues around race, faith and hate crime. For the Social Action Project, the young people involved in the workshops made a film to raise awareness about their experiences of discrimination and hate crime. (You can see the film [here](#)).

Digital Expertise

Early on a key concern for delivery organisations was whether they had the necessary digital expertise to deliver their projects online. For the six organisations that pivoted to online activities their reflection was that it was better to deliver what was possible online in a safe manner, and adjust their activities accordingly, than be put-off by not being online delivery experts:

'You don't have to be digital experts but you do need to be digitally safe.'

'Be flexible with delivery but not quality.'

Online delivery required a significant amount of flexibility in terms of design of content and activities. However, organisations that did deliver online felt they were still able to deliver high quality, high impact projects.

Encouraging online social mixing – what works?

Projects used various techniques to help people achieve meaningful civic participation that increased social mixing and led to positive relationships being developed online.

Community skills-swaps and shared learning

Community skills-swaps and shared learning are examples of ways in which sustainable social integration can be developed. Organisations identify the needs of the communities they work with, such as digital skills, literacy, exercise, healthy eating, etc. They then develop suitable programmes that address those needs and facilitate groups of people coming together. The participants learn and/or share skills and the events encourage social mixing. Community skills-swaps can be developed as standalone events or in conjunction with activities that overtly focus on race, faith and hate crime.

Building Bridges Bradford – Manningham Housing Association realised that there was a need for older people within their communities to have access to digital skills training if they were going to be able to join the online community activities that were being delivered as part of the project. The organisation arranged informal digital-skills training sessions between younger and older members of the community. This enabled social mixing across several potential socio-cultural divides as well as generations. Young people increased in confidence and older people gained new digital skills.

Online engagement as a means of overcoming social isolation

Limited social contact as a result of lockdown meant that for some participants engagement in a programme of online activities was a source of enjoyment at a difficult time. This perhaps meant that overcoming social isolation was a shared need for participants coming together from diverse backgrounds:

‘Lockdown, and COVID, has exacerbated the sense of othering. So, it’s really important that we reflect on how we come back together again. So, we were reflecting on what are our shared values, regardless of our different religious beliefs, our different races.’

‘The feedback we’ve got is that people welcomed being part of something and to be with like-minded individuals from across the country and being on this journey together, especially at a time when they were more isolated than ever.’

Some of the participants commented that they would not normally have met or interacted with people of particular faiths or ethnicities if it had not been for their participation in the organisations' activities online. In some communities, online delivery enhanced opportunities for social mixing for people who would not have otherwise participated in the organisations' events or interacted beyond their usual social environment.

How can we challenge and shift negative attitudes and behaviours?

A developing body of research suggests that a person's willingness to give to and support their communities is not only influenced by social cohesion but it also helps to generate social cohesion (Zischka, 2019). The pandemic and associated lockdowns have presented new opportunities for people to support each other in their communities, as its impact has unfolded.

All of the organisations were able to show the benefits of bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. They delivered increased opportunities for social mixing and developed the potential for strengthening social connections and trust in others locally at a time of heightened social isolation, anxiety, and potential increased fear of 'the other'.

Strengthening resilience to hatred and prejudice within communities is an ongoing process and requires attention over time to see lasting shifts in attitudes and behaviours. Despite the challenges of delivering a longer-term change programme in a relatively short (six month) period the delivery organisations are able to report significant shifts in attitudes and behaviours of programme participants.

Delivery organisations recognised that sustaining these shifts beyond the life of the programme requires an ongoing programme of work. Because of the short-term nature of the funding delivery organisations actively sought to leave a legacy within communities through embedding activities in communities and empowering participants.

Embedding activities in communities

Organisations embedded successful activities in communities in various ways but their purpose was the same: to build relationships, increase trust and encourage social cohesion. Some organisations trained people within the communities to continue the conversations around the themes of race, faith and hate crime and/or to continue to bring people from diverse backgrounds together for activities and conversations.

Some organisations teamed up with other community organisations to develop and expand their activities, in order to develop lasting relationships. They then planned to organise face-to-face activities, working together to meet the needs of the community whilst also bringing together people from a range of backgrounds.

Building Closer Communities – The Faith & Belief Forum provided packs for communities to continue the dialogues they were having online during the pandemic. They have provided facilitation tools and resources for the communities to use now the project has finished, and focussed on training up ‘Community Connectors’ from each group through the project, who could continue to take a leading role. Some of the communities are keen to set up social justice projects, such as a food bank and arrange volunteers for it. In one community, the church and mosque are opposite each other. The project introduced members of both religious communities and they are hoping to continue their conversations in a general meet-up or cultural food event. In this project, 86% of participants felt more strongly that ‘there are opportunities for contact with other faith and belief communities within my neighbourhood’ following the Building Closer Community dialogue sessions.

Empowering individuals

In order for activities to make a longer-term difference, participants were enabled to develop a sense of civic engagement and critical awareness which went beyond the activity itself (for example, sport or community development). In this way sport is the vehicle to encourage bridging capital and for young people to be supported to use their voice in community decision making (Meir and Fletcher, 2019; Richardson and Fletcher, 2020).

United as One – Newcastle United Foundation young people took part in a social action project in their community. As a result, all of the young people said that they felt proud of the work they had done in their communities. 91% felt that they had a good understanding of people of different faiths/races. 87% felt that they are more likely to positively engage with people from different races/faiths in the future.

Unified Action – Youth Sport Trust trained and encouraged young people to influence people around them. Young people's voices are really powerful and through personalised online coaching by athlete mentors the young people started to believe that they could have a powerful and influential voice in their communities. The programme worked with the athlete mentors to create new opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making in their communities. The Athlete Mentor stories brought to life how the values of sport link intrinsically to British values and how sport can develop the necessary life skills and build confidence for all young people. Evaluation of the programme showed that 90% of participants had learnt the importance of social inclusion. 93% said they had learnt how storytelling and lived experience can be used to inspire change a lot.

Ambassador: "I learnt that you don't need to have every skill or be perfect at something, to influence that thing or make decisions about it. I have also learnt to keep going and never give up."

Mentor: "Everyone has a great story to tell that motivates and inspires others. Great leadership tips on how to be a good leader and create change within our communities that encourages all groups from different backgrounds of faith, religion, disability etc."

How can we develop longer-term opportunities for social cohesion?

The amount of work involved in achieving successful online delivery of the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme* should not be underestimated, and some of the delivery organisations are building on this for the longer-term.

For example, some are planning to incorporate the most positive elements of online delivery into their future projects by using a combination of online and offline delivery or having standalone online elements. They recognised the increased numerical and geographical reach that online activities achieved.

'We've had a unique element built into the programme, which has come about as a result of COVID.'

Pathway of Understanding – Solutions Not Sides created personal story films with children living in Palestine. These films were shown to young people in their online sessions with schools in England. These films were really well received by young people and their teachers; they were a very deep and powerful way of highlighting the impacts of faith and conflict, linking in with discussions of faith, race and social cohesion.

Solutions Not Sides' in-person sessions in schools (their normal delivery method) would normally involve a young person from Palestine being in the classroom telling their story. The organisation now plans to play the personal story film to the young people in the classroom and then invite the 'star' of the film into the classroom to discuss their issues raised with the young people face-to-face after they have watched the film.



The need to adapt their activities quickly and deliver them in an alternative format led some organisations to be more innovative in relation to longer-term opportunities and participant experience. Some of the organisations developed new methods for engagement and online delivery which they intend to continue with. However, in-person delivery presents opportunities for ongoing dialogue and the creation of safe conversation spaces that cannot always be replicated online.

‘Some of the issues that we could be talking about online are actually quite controversial, or they could be quite difficult and challenging. And we were very conscious that there could be people in the room that could be quite upset by online talks.’

For some organisations, one of the legacies of online delivery is the opportunity participants were given to learn new skills. This can increase their employability and was particularly helpful for some members of communities who are often excluded from employment outside of the home. Training events and employment can encourage greater social mixing and connection between people from different backgrounds. It is important for the organisations to continue to evaluate these initiatives and the longer-term impact.

Building Bridges Bradford – Manningham Housing Association organised a wide range of online activities that made attendance possible for members of communities who would not usually be able to participate, such as women with young children, people with mobility difficulties and those who would not go out of their home after dark. Some of the women who participated in the activities gained confidence and a social network, and are now engaging in a home-based business together in their community.

The R Project – Anthony Walker Foundation encouraged young people enrolled in their programme to gain skills in creative digital marketing through their engagement with the 12-week Agent Academy – a training programme that enabled the young people to create a social media campaign for the ‘Speak Out, Stop Hate’ hate crime online reporting tool for young people. By having a concrete example of a campaign that they had worked on, as well as 12 weeks of training, young people’s employability was increased. One young person gained new employment before they had completed the programme.

Conclusion

Research carried out by *Belong* and presented in the *Beyond Us and Them Reports* (Abrams et al., 2020; Broadwood et al., 2021) into the various impacts of the pandemic suggests that the benefits of social cohesion initiatives can be observed in local authorities that have invested in social cohesion initiatives in previous years (this includes the five Integration Areas that received funding via the MHCLG Integration Area programme). The reports show that compared to people living in other parts of the UK, residents of local authorities investing in social cohesion schemes were:

- twice as likely to volunteer compared to people living elsewhere;
- had a higher sense of neighbourliness (9.9 per cent higher);
- had a higher level of trust in local government's response to Covid-19 (8.2% higher);
- maintained positive attitudes toward migrants to the UK;
- were more likely to donate money to charity;
- were more likely to engage in positive social actions.

The MHCLG-funded initiatives discussed in this paper highlight the ways in which these tangible results have been developed in some of the communities at risk from socio-cultural divisions.

All of the organisations brought people together at a time of increased social isolation, potential anxiety and mistrust. Through their online (and, later, in-person) activities organisations were able to facilitate increased communication within diverse communities and, crucially, go a stage further in the advancement of social cohesion by fostering shared understandings for the longer-term.

The organisations that rooted their activities in communities brought people together and encouraged mutual support through the meeting of specific community needs arising from the pandemic. The best practice examples in this paper support the findings of the *'The Beyond Us and Them'* research by exemplifying how MHCLG-funded social cohesion initiatives work successfully in practice and the positive differences that can be made to people's lives.

Recommendations

The work of tackling issues in communities related to race, faith and hate crime can be challenging and complex. Bringing people together across divides to engage them in activities and meaningful dialogue requires thorough preparation in order to build trust and relationships, as well as skilled facilitation and high-quality resources. Programmes are much more likely to achieve benefits and long-lasting impact when these relationships are invested in over time, when people with lived experience are involved in the co-production of programmes, and when delivery organisations build local agency so that practical skills for dealing with issues are embedded in local communities.

Tackling race, faith and hate crime is an ongoing challenge in some localities and for some communities. National and international situations and events can trigger spikes in hate crime towards specific groups and communities locally, and indeed this was the case during the delivery period of this programme. It is important work that requires continued investment in order to strengthen social cohesion and resilience to prejudice and hatred.

The shared learning and examples of best practice highlighted in this paper enable practical recommendations to be made for delivery organisations and strategic recommendations for MHCLG as a commissioning body. By highlighting the shared learning, outcomes and impact of the activities, priority areas for future funding are also suggested.

Practical recommendations for delivery organisations

Based on the successes of the projects highlighted in this shared learning paper, delivery organisations may want to consider the following recommendations:

- Prioritise collaboration and working in partnership with local groups and organisations, specifically those with lived experience of the forms of prejudice the programme is designed to tackle. This includes taking time to build partnerships before delivery begins so that the programme is designed and delivered in collaboration with them.
- Develop policies and procedures for staff and volunteers to ensure the safety of online spaces for delivery.
- Consider blended delivery models (a mixture of in-person and online activities) as having the potential to widen access especially for those who might find in-person attendance a barrier to engagement.
- Design online delivery to meet the needs of participants and local partners and be prepared to adapt to changing local circumstances and challenges.
- Extend reach and engagement through dissemination events, which can showcase achievements and can widen access and engagement with programmes both numerically and geographically, potentially reaching a more diverse audience.

- Understand the many barriers to digital inclusion and make specific efforts to include those who are digitally excluded.
- Give attention to legacy planning, especially where the funding is short term. This means leaving groups and communities with increased capacity, skills and resources to tackle future challenges by, for example:
 - empowering individuals within communities through training and mentorship
 - harnessing online delivery as an opportunity to increase participants' skills and employability.

Delivery organisations also may want to consider focusing their activities towards people who have been particularly badly affected by the pandemic, in order to try to counteract its differential effects on communities across the UK. Emerging research suggests these are: children and young people; people who are under financial pressure, unemployed or have heavy workloads (often mothers); people in ethnic minority groups; people with migratory backgrounds; and people living in the most deprived areas of the UK (Borowska and Laurence, 2020; Grasso et al., 2021; Murji and Picker, 2020; Shen and Bartram, 2020).

Strategic recommendations for commissioners

The organisations that were funded under the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21* grounded their activities in MHCLG's (2019) outcome indicators for 'integrated communities'. Accordingly, the majority of the organisations worked in partnership with other community organisations, schools or businesses with highly successful outcomes. In the time between submitting their applications, programme ideas and delivery, the external environment had changed dramatically due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Delivery organisations are grateful to MHCLG for supporting them to flex and adapt their programmes to meet the new challenges posed by the crisis.

It does take time, however, to establish and build relationships of mutual trust between diverse groups and communities, who may be wary of engaging with each other either because of previous experience of prejudice and hate crime, or just because of a lack of previous positive contact. Social cohesion can be conceived of as a bank of local trust and social connections providing resilience in times of crisis, but just as you cannot continuously draw on a bank without running into deficit, social cohesion needs to be attended to and maintained over time in order to continue to provide that community resilience.

Funders and commissioners of programmes should think about this work as something that is going to require longer-term investment in order to achieve long-lasting results. The delivery organisations represented in this paper have achieved excellent outcomes, reach and impact against considerable

challenges in a short period of time. In order for these results to continue to have impact for the groups and communities involved, further investment will be required in order to build a longer lasting legacy.

Based on the shared learning and best practices examples from the *Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21*, MHCLG and other commissioners and funders may want to consider the following:

- In order to achieve long-lasting and impactful change in communities, build on the work begun through this programme by supporting the ongoing delivery of programmes. In particular, invest in those elements of programmes that embed trust, relationships, skills, capacity and resources within, and between, the groups and communities themselves in order to deepen resilience to future race, faith and hate crime.
- Support networking, knowledge and information sharing early on between delivery organisations so that collaboration is encouraged across geographical areas and communities, and capacity for joint-working and partnership is harnessed from the start.
- In areas where there was little social infrastructure, or the capacity of local groups and communities was stretched, relationship building and engagement was more challenging. However, these localities were often the areas which benefited most from a programme focusing on social cohesion. Commissioners of programmes should factor this in and adopt a flexible approach, allowing more time for engagement when delivery organisations are working in areas of multiple deprivation and poor social infrastructure.
- Consider how best to rebuild social cohesion in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic by, for example, focusing social cohesion initiatives and resources towards those groups most negatively impacted by the pandemic, such as children and young people, people on the lowest incomes, people living in the most deprived areas, and people from particular ethnic groups.
- The impact of digital exclusion on particular groups and communities was highlighted during the pandemic. Provision of digital equipment and informal and/or formal digital skills training should be factored in as a key element of programmes delivery for groups and communities at risk of digital exclusion. Increasing digital inclusion has the potential to develop skills, increase employability, and potentially increase intergenerational social and cultural mixing.
- Delivery organisations have demonstrated that tackling race, faith and hate crime programmes can be delivered successfully online provided excellent safeguarding is put in place and delivery staff are trained and equipped for online delivery. However, organisations' experiences are that the benefits of in-person delivery far outweigh online delivery and therefore the recommendation is for blended programmes when online delivery is likely to engage groups who would otherwise struggle to attend in-person.

- There are some groups who will struggle to engage via online initiatives, either because of digital exclusion, poverty or cultural norms, and therefore in-person delivery will be vital to ensure they are reached and engaged.

The ongoing pandemic, and its aftermath, has presented unique opportunities to orientate towards improving British society for the common good – an essential element of social cohesion (Schiefer and Van der Noll, 2017). The development of initiatives that encourage mutual support will enable increased social cohesion to be one of the positive aspects emerging from the pandemic period.

Everyone wants to live in an area where they get on with their neighbours, where they, their family and their community are treated with dignity and respect, and where they feel they belong. The best practice examples highlighted in this shared learning paper demonstrate how successful social cohesion interventions can lead to multiple benefits for individuals and communities, increasing trust and social connections between groups, developing skills and strengthening community resilience to shock and crisis. As well as tackling race, faith and hate crime, social cohesion is key to tackling a wider range of social ills such as polarisation, divisions and disconnection. Social cohesion is a process; it encourages community togetherness, increases well-being, reduces loneliness and improves mental health (British Academy, 2021). As such, initiatives that strengthen social cohesion should lie at the heart of national policies and programmes for pandemic recovery and renewal.

Organisations funded by the MHCLG Race, Faith and Hate Crime Programme 2020-21

Anthony Walker Foundation (www.anthonywalkerfoundation.com)

The Anthony Walker Foundation was established following the racially motivated murder of Anthony in Merseyside in 2005. The Foundation works to tackle racism through education and community development programmes, supports victims of hate crime and works with partner agencies to create safer and stronger communities for all. Recently, the Anthony Walker Foundation has seen an increase 126% in those experiencing race hate crime accessing support services. The AWF also works with employers in the public and private sector to help them become actively anti-racist and creating safer, more inclusive workforces and working environments.

Manningham Housing Association (www.manninghamhousing.co.uk)

Manningham Housing Association (MHA) has a proud track record of delivering homes and services to the communities in Bradford and Keighley. MHA came into existence in 1986, following a piece of research undertaken into the housing needs of Black and Asian Communities in Bradford by the Bangladeshi Youth Organisation. This research proved that the needs of the South Asian Community were not being addressed and the government and the council supported MHA growing from an organisation with two properties to one that now has over 1400 homes and houses over 6000 residents.

New Vic Theatre (www.newvictheatre.org.uk)

New Vic *Borderlines* is the award-winning initiative using theatre in social contexts. It works regionally, nationally and internationally, and is acknowledged as a national model for the ways theatre can be used to work within the community. It uses theatre to help people find new and positive ways to understand themselves, their communities and their responsibilities, challenging destructive attitudes and behaviour, building positive futures.

“New Vic Borderlines is Saving Lives”

Nazir Afzal Chief Crown Prosecutor 2011

Borderlines creates partnerships to work within communities facing challenges – social and economic disadvantage, and prejudice, including individuals and communities at risk of being marginalised.

Newcastle United Foundation (www.nufoundation.org.uk)

Newcastle United Foundation is an independent registered charity supported by Newcastle United Football Club. We exist to take the club into the local community. Quite simply, we use the local passion for football to make a difference and help people achieve their goals, on the pitch, in the classroom, in life.

The Foundation is now working with 50,000 people across Newcastle and the surrounding areas each year. Every day we see that, with the right support, there is incredible scope to stimulate participation in sport, schools and local communities, to enable people of all ages to flourish on and off the pitch.

Solutions Not Sides (www.solutionsnotsides.co.uk)

Solutions Not Sides is an education programme that exists to provide humanising encounters, diverse narratives and critical-thinking tools in order to empower young people with the knowledge, empathy and skills to promote dialogue and conflict resolution, and to challenge prejudice in the UK.

The Anne Frank Trust (www.annefrank.org.uk)

We are an education charity that empowers 10 to 15-year-olds to challenge all forms of prejudice, inspired by the life and work of Anne Frank. Anne Frank is uniquely powerful as a catalyst for learning and reflection about prejudice. Through our programmes, young people gain the knowledge, motivation and skills to make a real difference. We focus on 10 to 15-year-olds because they can relate to Anne, and because this age is crucial to the formation of values and beliefs.

We offer three strands of learning:

- Online learning including resources and events open to all.
- Our schools programme: Classroom workshops using Anne Frank's experience of antisemitism as the springboard for understanding prejudice of all kinds today. Young people are then empowered to share their learning across their school through peer education.
- Anne Frank Ambassadors – around 6 young people in each school are trained to disseminate their anti-prejudice message in their communities and online.

The Faith & Belief Forum (www.faithbeliefforum.org)

In a diverse society, positive relations between people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures are essential. The Faith & Belief Forum has worked tirelessly for over 20 years to build good relations between people of all faiths and beliefs, and to create a society where difference is celebrated.

The Faith & Belief Forum creates spaces in schools, universities, workplaces, and the wider community where people can engage with questions of belief and identify and meet people different from themselves. By enabling people to learn from and about each other we tackle ignorance and challenge stereotypes – and create understanding and trust between people.

The English Football League Trust (www.efltrust.com)

The EFL Trust is the charitable arm of the English Football League (EFL) and is a national charity that uses the power of football to change people's lives. Over 36.6 million people live within ten miles of an EFL Club and the EFL Trust unites the inspirational work delivered across England and Wales by the dedicated network of Football Club Community Organisations associated to these Clubs.

The EFL Trust's vision is to create stronger, healthier, more active communities. Last year, the network engaged over 880, 000 people, using the power of football to improve health and wellbeing, raise aspirations, realise potential and build stronger, more cohesive communities.

Youth Sport Trust (www.youthsporttrust.org)

The Youth Sport Trust is a children's charity working to ensure every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. It has 25 years of expertise in pioneering new ways of using sport to improve children's wellbeing and give them a brighter future.

The charity works with more than 20,000 schools across the UK and operates on a local, national and global level. It harnesses the power of sport, physical activity and PE to build life skills, connections between people and support networks which increase young people's life chances through improved wellbeing, greater attainment and healthier lifestyles.

References

- Abrams, D., Lalot, F., Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., & Platts-Dunn, I. (2020). *Community, Connection and Cohesion During COVID-19: Beyond Us and Them Report*. Available at: https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Belong_InterimReport_FINAL-1.pdf
- Borkowska, M., & Laurence, J. (2021). Coming together or coming apart? Changes in social cohesion during the Covid-19 pandemic in England. *European Societies*, 23(sup1), S618-S636.
- British Academy (2021) *The COVID decade: Understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19*. The British Academy: London. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/covid-decade-understanding-the-long-term-societal-impacts-of-covid-19/>
- Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., Abrams, D. & Lalot, F. (2021) *Beyond Us and Them: Policy and Practice for Strengthening Social Cohesion in Local Areas*. Available at: <https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Belong-Policy-Paper-March-2021.pdf>
- BSG (2020) *Ofcom Publishes Digital Exclusion Analysis*. Available at Ofcom publishes digital exclusion analysis – Broadband Stakeholder Group (broadbanduk.org)
- Grasso, M., Klicperová-Baker, M., Koos, S., Kosyakova, Y., Petrillo, A., & Vlase, I. (2021). The impact of the coronavirus crisis on European societies. What have we learnt and where do we go from here? Introduction to the COVID volume. *European Societies*, 23:sup1, S2-S32, DOI: 10.1080/14616696.2020.1869283
- Hansen, C. & Gray, K. (2020) 'Did Covid-19 lead to an increase in hate crimes towards Chinese people in London?' *UCL Quantitative Social Science Working Paper No. 20-05 August 2020*. Available at <http://repec.ioe.ac.uk/REPEc/pdf/qsswp2005.pdf>
- Hewstone, M., Ramiah, AA., Schmid, K., et al. (2018) 'Influence of segregation versus mixing: Intergroup contact and attitudes among White-British and Asian-British students in high schools in Oldham, England.' *Theory and Research in Education*. 16(2):179-203.
- JRF (2021) *UK Poverty 2020-21: The leading Independent Report*. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2020-21>
- Lalot, F., Abrams, D., Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., & Platts-Dunn, I. (2021). The social cohesion investment: Communities that invested in integration programmes are showing greater social cohesion in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*. Early View Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2522>
- LGA (2020) *Loneliness, Social Isolation and Covid-19*. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/loneliness-social-isolation-and-covid-19>
- Luthra, R. & Nandi, A. (2020). *Is Hate Crime Rising During the Covid-19 Crisis?* Available at: <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/blog/2020/07/29/is-hate-crime-rising-during-the-covid-19-crisis>

Meir, D. & Fletcher, T. (2019). The transformative potential of using participatory community sport initiatives to promote social cohesion in divided community contexts. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 54(2), 218-238.

MHCLG (2019). *Measuring Outcomes for Integrated Communities: Technical Note*. UK Government Website. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819701/Integrated_Communities_Measurement_Technical_Note.pdf.

Murji, K., & Picker, G. (2021). 'Racist morbidities: a conjunctural analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic'. *European Societies*, 23(sup1), S307-S320.

ONS (2020) *Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and socioeconomic deprivation: deaths occurring between 1 March and 31 July 2020*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolvingcovid19bylocalareasanddeprivation/deathsoccurringbetween1marchand31july2020>

Pierce, M., Hope, H., Ford, T., Hatch, S., Hotopf, M., John, A., et al. 'Mental health before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: a longitudinal probability sample survey of the UK population'. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 7 (10): 883-892.

Richardson, K., & Fletcher, T. (2020). 'Community sport development events, social capital and social mobility: a case study of Premier League Kicks and young black and minoritized ethnic males in England'. *Soccer & Society*, 21(1), 79-95.

Schiefer, D., & Van der Noll, J. (2017). 'The essentials of social cohesion: A literature review'. *Social Indicators Research*, 132(2), 579-603.

Schumann, S. & Moore, Y. (2021) 'Timing is Everything: The COVID-19 Outbreak as a Trigger Event for Sinophobic Hate Crimes in the United Kingdom'. *CRIMRXVI Working Paper April 2021*. Available at: <https://www.crimrxiv.com/pub/covidhatecrime/release/1>.

Shen, J., & Bartram, D. (2021). 'Fare differently, feel differently: mental well-being of UK-born and foreign-born working men during the COVID-19 pandemic'. *European Societies*, 23(sup1), S370-S383.

Zischka, L. (2019). *Giving Behaviours and Social Cohesion: How People Who 'Give' Make Better Communities*. Edward Elgar Publishing.