



## COMMUNITIES: Community Cohesion

### Equality and diversity

Diversity refers to the differences between people and groups. These differences should not be ignored, but respected and celebrated. Everyone has different needs, as well as different knowledge and skills to bring to society. Just as there are different roles and responsibilities within a family, there are also different roles and responsibilities within a community.

Equality is about fairness – making sure that everyone feels included and is given opportunities to participate in the community and achieve their full potential. This includes breaking down discrimination and stereotyping, and encouraging people to engage with and learn from people of different backgrounds and cultures.

Today, most schools, work places and communities have a policy of 'equal opportunities', which means that people cannot be discriminated against because of race, gender, age, disability, social class, sexuality, marital status, or religion.

### Human rights

The UK's Human Rights Act is an Act of Parliament that sets out the rights of every citizen, which must be respected by all. These rights include things like the right to live, freedom from torture or slavery, the right to a fair trial, the right to an education, freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination.

### The judicial system

UK law has been put in place to protect human rights and it is divided into criminal law (dealing with crimes) and civil law (which tries to settle disputes between people or organisations, such as cases where money is owed). For example, harassing or insulting someone because of their ethnic origin is a criminal offence in the UK and people who do so can be prosecuted. Depending on the type and severity of crime someone has committed, they might be arrested and taken to court and fined, made to do community service, given curfew orders, or made to serve a sentence in a young offenders' institution or prison. These punishments are necessary to deter crime and keep a community safe and sustainable.

### Cohesive communities

'Cohesive' communities are ones in which all members feel included and valued, and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. A community that is cohesive will be more likely to be sustainable, as it will be a desirable place to live.



Cont'd



## COMMUNITIES: Community Cohesion cont'd

### What influences cohesion?

Lack of cohesion can be influenced by a number of things (e.g. high crime rate, mistrust of certain groups or the belief that they have an unfair advantage, poor services and facilities, lack of community spirit). One of the biggest factors resulting in a lack of cohesion in many communities is prejudice (e.g. against people of a certain race, religion or socioeconomic background). This is usually due to ignorance and can lead to tensions between groups and even riots and attacks.



### Cohesive schools

As with the wider community, the Government encourages schools to be cohesive environments. This is achieved in a number of ways:

- The school curriculum: should promote equality and allow pupils to learn about people from different backgrounds and value diversity (e.g. through subjects like religious education, personal development and citizenship)
- School policies: should break down barriers and make sure that all pupils feel included and are given equal opportunity to succeed
- Schools should also build links with the wider community, such as giving pupils the chance to meet and work with local charities and businesses



### Did you know?

The current Human Rights Act in the UK dates from 1998, and came into force on 2nd October 2000.