

Community Cohesion: Faith & Hope Conference report

'Partnership working to support local communities'

The event was a great success with new information and insights shared by all! We are looking to build on that success and maintain the momentum. We had over 75 people from different communities, faiths and services attending. A special thank you to Crewe faith and community groups that were involved in the planning and day event including;

Pastor David Edwards and Linda Edwards (Lighthouse Centre)

Rev Jenny Wakefield (Chair of Churches Together)

Rev Jennifer Matthews (St Peter's Church and All Saints Church)

Lindsey Tough (Baha'i faith)

Sally Graham (South Cheshire Methodist Circuit)

Rev Lynne Cullens (St Andrew's Church)

Phil Howell (Hope Church)



Responses to questions:
What does community mean to you?
What does faith and hope look like in your community?

*Living
shoulder to
shoulder*

*Feeling
connected*

*Unity in
diversity*

Everybody

*A sense of
belonging*

*Support where
it is needed*

All of us

Belonging

Acceptance

*Working
together*

*Welcoming
and
supporting
everyone*

*Meeting the
needs of local/
global community*

*Diversity
programmes*

*Love, fellowship,
friendship,
smiling people*

*Loving,
supportive
people in a
common space*

*Individuals and
everyone working
together for the
good of the
community*

*Belonging
without prejudice*

*Showing mutual
care, concern and
respect for each
other*

*You have the
support to do
things better*

*Respect,
tolerance,
neighbourliness*

*Something
bigger than
ourselves*

*Showing mutual
care, concern and
respect for each
other*

*A variety of
people
interacting*

*People living in
harmony,*

*Looking after the
needs of the
community and
caring for the
community*

*Support and
belonging.
Togetherness*

Successes of the Day

1. Large diverse number of people attended, which in itself was a success – Attendees recognised and appreciated the fact that this was the first time, such a conference was held and such large numbers of people had attended.
2. Networking opportunities – People were able to network, learn about what other people were doing and also build contacts and relationships.
3. Community cohesion perspective: Diverse people attending is a start of cohesive working and engaging people with the Community Cohesion Action Plan and Strategy.
4. The key note speaker, Rev Charles was able to share some of the work they are doing in Manchester, which was inspiring and gave all of us ideas of what we can do in our areas.
5. Emotional stories from Elena and Jubeyar, which were very insightful.



Reverend Charles Kwaku—Odoi (Manchester BME Network) with Cllr Liz Wardlaw (Cheshire East Council)



Jubeyar Ahmed (Crewe Mosque) with Rev David Edwards (Lighthouse Centre) and Cllr. Rachel Bailey (Cheshire East Council Leader)

Feedback from the workshops

1. Isolation and Loneliness

The groups had great feedback and wished they had more time to explore some of these points further.

Q1 Who is affected by Isolation and loneliness?

Reasons	Examples of groups
People feeling isolated due to life circumstances	Unemployed, people who are homeless, Divorced/ Widowed, Domestic abuse sufferers, carers, new parents / single parents
Health and well being related	People with mental health issues and other health issues like, Autism, cancer, dementia, Disabled, Mental health sufferers, people who may have special needs, people affected by drug and alcohol,
Reasons due to immigration and migration	Migrant workers, Non English speakers, Refugees migrant communities, BME communities, Travellers, people with uncertain immigration status unsure if they can remain in the country
Isolation and Loneliness due to Geographical location	People who live in rural areas
Age related	Young people, Children, elderly, Students, Young mothers,
Other	Vulnerable times – Christmas, people who maybe experiencing gender/ identity issues

Q2 What impact does Isolation and loneliness have on individuals, families and wider community?

- People become withdrawn, feeling like they are different
- Low mood, low self esteem, which can lead to suicidal thoughts
- Loss of personal sense of value/victims of abuse
- Loss of social skills/ Less contribution and fear of judgement
- Depression/ mental illness/ Eating disorders
- Lack of confidence/ self esteem
- Negative thinking, aggression
- Substance / alcohol misuse and poor health problems
- vulnerability / inappropriate relationships
- Unnecessary risk taking, poor judgement / decisions, Joining gangs
- Dependence on internet – chatrooms, social media, gambling, pornography

Q3 What current support is being provided for those in need?

- **Faith groups:** homeless programs working in collaboration
- **Supermarkets, Local industry – Bentley, CSR**
- **Community centre hubs**
- **Community champions** working in different communities across Cheshire East
- **Council –** Information, investment (where possible), networking, cooperation. Food banks and opportunities to collect and distribute clothes, etc., for those in need
- **Support groups-** Wishing well, Churches, YMCA, night shelter, substance misuse service, CWA, children centre, Pick mere, Acorns, Cheshire buddies, Young carers, Hope church, CAP.
Example of Oak hanger project, Alsager- provides different activities in the community to develop transferable skills; Breakfast clubs/ Coffee mornings, Food for the homeless, Men's breakfast – Public speaking development

2. Support and Advocacy

Q1 What are the barriers to accessing support?

- **Lack of knowledge on what services are available-** e.g. if someone has additional needs and needs help: Ask how we can help? If not, one need to know what else that is out there can help the person. For homeless people - What is the number that is accessing voluntary sector services?
- **In Crewe, people from deprived communities are mistrustful of the statutory services.**
- **Feeling of isolations**
- **Controlling environment**
- **Impact of Austerity on funding available**
- **Misconceptions about help available**
- **Mainstream media reinforcing wrong information**
- **Language barriers**
- **Fear of authority:** People more ready to access help from churches and voluntary bodies. Memorandum of agreement is a powerful instrument in this instant, as it helps build trust between services, faith and voluntary sector and communities.



Elena (Community connector) talking about some of the issues faced by migrant communities

Q2 How can we better provide support and advocacy?

- **Town council needs to create an environment to allow churches, community groups to work together;** to engage with residents and give everyone an equal voice.
- **Churches can help support people with additional needs,** e.g. epilepsy, autism, issues at home, domestic abuse
- **There needs to be audit of voluntary sector services and provision**
- **We need to have more information about who is in the community and work to understand our communities more.**
- **Less talking and more action** - Issue with Houses with Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)
- **More partnership working** between groups and people to increase understanding and building trust within communities. It gives various groups a voice and a wider sense of belonging / ownership.
- **Town council initiated work** to support the homeless.
- **Joint working; connection and relationships** with Mosque, Bentley support, Churches Together
- **Education to break down barriers;** Understanding and honesty will lessen fear which has to start in Schools
- **Practical clinics to follow services in church-** e.g. flu jabs, advice, credit union, debt counselling
- **People are being pulled in many different directions**
- **We must do more- DOING!** Do what we say we will do!

Q3 What more could we do to support those who are isolated and lonely and /or need support and an advocate?

- **Face to face advice and support**
- **Coordination and communication between those who provide services**
- **English language lessons** – Also thinking about from whom? Where?
- **Diversity café** (sharing of cultures with schools as well).
- **Community champions**
- **Trust** – share assets, people and resources.
- **Community cohesion: Respect must be mutual** – No more 'us' and 'them'
- **Share best practise;** communicate with each other
- **Communicate with and encourage younger generations**
- **Organise more multi- faith events and activities**
- **Develop projects where people who are isolated can use their skills**
- **Provide support for people who may want to volunteer in the first place** i.e. those that are retired.
- **Advocacy must give confidence for the future.**

Next Steps

1. Share current population data of our communities
2. To create Cheshire East Cohesion Strategy (draft by March 2018) with input from communities, faith groups and other stakeholders. The multi-faith conference feedback, community survey data will be used to help inform development of the strategy.
3. Rev Charles has kindly offered to support the faith groups in the community cohesion work. So, we will be meeting with him and Faye Bruce (Colleague and Manchester Metropolitan University lecture) to see if we can learn from the work they are doing with multi-faith groups on community cohesion and integration in Manchester.
4. Planning 'Know your neighbour' social events with faith groups across Cheshire East in 2018 to help engage with people in local neighbourhoods and encourage integration and networking.
5. Identify funding for such activities

If you are interested in taking part in any community cohesion activities, please do get in touch.

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Cllr. Diane Yates (Crewe Town Mayor) with Rev David Edwards (Lighthouse Centre)

