



'We need to find ways to have these difficult conversations'

Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service

Building a Stronger Britain Together Project

Research Report



Executive Summary

- A small qualitative study was undertaken between June and September 2017, with 30 people participating in key informant or small group interviews focused around Chopwell, Deckham, Elswick and Gosforth, seeking to reflect the range of communities and locations in Gateshead and Newcastle. The research engaged people on the ‘front-line’ in smaller community orientated organisations, asking their views on the question “**Is there an issue of right-wing extremism in our communities?**”
- Most participants had not directly experienced right-wing/white extremism and thus felt that this was not an emerging issue in their community. In most cases this was however directly linked with the experience of casual racism being widespread. Some people were concerned that such extremism could emerge. A minority stated it exists and that whilst it is not new, it may be becoming more of an issue.
- A wide range of responses were recorded, particularly the need to have difficult conversations, and the need to become skilled and practiced in doing this. The need to develop policy responses and for more community work were also identified. Beyond the voluntary and community sectors observations were recorded concerning particularly the police, local authorities, and housing providers.
- The role of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service in this area was explored. A range of responses were recorded, with important pointers on context, content and style for the current project. While some people thought that on-line resources would be of benefit, for many this needed to be as part of a broader response.
- A full copy of the report and accompanying appendices are available from Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service and will be available on the project specific website launching in early 2018.



Report of Research

This document reports findings from research aimed at informing the development of a Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service project funded by the Home Office's Counter-Extremism Programme 'Building a Stronger Britain Together'.

A small qualitative study asking the question “**Is there an issue of right-wing extremism in our communities?**” was undertaken between June and August 2017 using key informant and semi-structured group discussions. Voluntary and community organisations were approached in four purposively selected areas: Chopwell and Deckham in Gateshead, and Elswick and Gosforth in Newcastle. The choice sought to reflect the range of communities and locations in Gateshead and Newcastle without any claims to being representative; an ex-pit village on the urban fringe, two inner-city communities – one with a predominantly white population, the other with a more ethnically and racially mixed profile - and a more affluent area.

A total of 12 individual and 4 group interviews (19 people) were undertaken using purposive and opportunistic sampling. One person participated in both an individual and group interview. A further three people supported and informed the research less formally. An additional piece of work with two organisations that work with people with learning disabilities is currently being undertaken and will be reported separately.

The participants were volunteers (both formal and informal), paid workers and trustees of local community and voluntary organisations; some fulfilling multiple roles. There was an emphasis on interviewing people working on the 'front-line' in smaller community-orientated organisations, so as to get a sense of what they hear from service-users, rather than a detached management opinion. The organisations tended to be broadly-based although there were some with more focus including younger people, older people, women, sex industry workers, health, arts and faith organisations.

All interviews were noted, with the notes being returned to participants for amendment and confirmation. The bullet points in the report draw directly from these materials, being edited for relevance and arranged thematically to give some coherence.

This document outlines participants' responses to questions exploring their experiences and appropriate service or information responses. The shape and purpose of the resources being developed as part of the broader project were also considered. Significant additional materials were generated, which are reported in the appendices. These are available from Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service and will be available on the project specific website launching in early 2018.



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Thanks to all the participants for their time and insights; Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, Show Racism the Red Card and Gateshead Council for their support; and the Home Office Building a Stronger Britain Together Programme for funding the work.

Whilst best endeavours have been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents, all errors remain the author's.



Is there an issue of right-wing extremism in our communities?

Most participants concluded that from their own experience in community and voluntary organisations working directly with service-users, and from their knowledge of their communities, that there was not an issue of emerging right-wing extremism in their local area. In most cases, however, this was linked with the view that casual racism and intolerance is widespread and, for many, increasing following the EU referendum. Some people were concerned that right-wing extremism could emerge. A minority of respondents stated that it is occurring locally, and that whilst it is not new, it may be becoming more of an issue.

The following sections group together some insightful quotes from research participants that are ordered into the three main themes of responses:

Not an issue: “Discriminatory but not extremist”

- I’m not aware of any issues, beyond casual racism. There’s an invisible line beyond which views aren’t expressed, or if they are they’re challenged. 90% of the time. ‘Hey man you canna say that’ – but people will read newspapers that validate the point.
- It’s never explicitly mentioned. Most Asian and Black people that use the project are not from [the area]. Informal conversations with local residents indicates there may be an issue. Indirectly suggested that someone originally from Kurdistan does not have an easy time. Seen group of black kids pushed out of exterior play space by group of white kids... Have had a couple with clear drug and alcohol issues, leading to anti-social behaviour in the [area], using drugs in public. There was an aggressive reaction, almost a lynch mob being organised. They were trying to organise a meeting at the centre...
- UKIP has made it more acceptable to express extremist views; although there’s always underlying mistrust of people from other communities, racism – its fear, not hateful. ... Almost given a language to turn racist feelings into acceptable views. There was no awkwardness about it. Almost saying we were wrong about multi-culturalism, we should have [stayed] stuck in some mythical golden age. Fed by a simplistic Daily Mail line. When you challenge people they see the logic but are nervous about what it would mean for them.
- When I started working in [particular area], there was a lot of overtly racist language. Where was it coming from? People were discriminatory but not extremist. People are confused about what language they were meant to use but not a bad feeling in their



hearts.... Feels like there's a lot of muddle. Living in [other area], in an 8 year period have seen primary school go from all white to a very mixed community. There's lots of fear in people.

- People just come out with it, some people just say it. We're not brought up to be racist. I'd a childhood friend who was black and we played all sorts..
- You hear all sorts of people in [another area]. The North East hasn't got a problem compared to other areas. There are fewer black people.
- Not that I've encountered. People get called. "Going to the Paki's." It's not. They're Indian. Run the shop. It's very well received. Also a Chinese take-away and the paper shop. They're Sri Lankan. Other black people have moved in over the years.... They call it the Paki's shop. Won't use their names. We had the other shop so were rivals sort of. But we never fell out or undercut each other. Helped each other out sometimes. They're Indians, not 'Pakis'. Been here about 45 years. They came from Manchester. There's no malice in it. It's the phrasing. There's been a lot of it over the years but never heard anybody call them. People just say it – but wouldn't to their faces.
- I've got friends whose daughters are gay. Gay women are just accepted. Never heard anybody called. 15 or 20 years ago there was a lad who cross dressed. He wasn't good at it. The worst case I've ever seen, you see some of them... So he didn't help himself. He got lifted out of [the area]... If you're going to come into a tight knit area you've got to try and fit in. ... It annoys me when people are 'out and proud' on their T shirts. Its fine but doesn't need to be in your face. They'll get their heads kicked in. Not in [this area] but in town.
- The question assumes a narrative about working class issues including generalisations and politics around Brexit vote. This frames issues that are articulated as individual racism. We need to (re)humanise people. See 'England, Your England' (Orwell essay). Framing as Hate Crime closes down conversations, so stops people taking responsibility. The question legitimises an issue as important; and as it's given to us. Residents in [middle class area] do not need to deal with the issues on a daily basis. ... The simplicity of terms like 'racism' needs to be challenged. The problematisation is a problem – need to think about it differently at this level. How do we move beyond our comfort zones and patterns of thinking?... Working class, white, British/English identity means fascism will not happen. It's anti-authoritarian, with intrinsic small scale collectivism, unwritten rules, belief in rights but don't want them imposed.

Perhaps: "A Carpet of Potential"

- It probably is getting worse. Brexit has given permission to voice views people were quieter about before. It's not receded since the vote. And there is anti-Semitism.
- People are more astute than going with UKIP narrative. But need to start the positive conversations before there's [fascist] graffiti.



- In past 25 years not know of a racist incident or comment; have had disagreements but not come from a white-centric framework; had to ask an Asian family not to go onto bowling green – children at a family party. This was part of the agreement for hire. ..Recently discussed with a resident that she had noticed primary school going to swimming pool. There were only 2 white faces; we both agreed that we were appalled that we had noticed this. Loss of old fashioned culture of this place. Might not see it but there is a sense of change... Think maybe white supremacist won't happen in our life time; but it might in 10 years, or 2.... The pieces of the jigsaw may be there with Brexit, Trump, Bannon. ... Young British born Asians won't accept the discrimination that their parents lived with. My daughter has Asian friends who are as terrified as she is by reactionary extremist Muslims. And equally by white supremacists. ...Don't feel this in [area]... Not about white supremacism but a problem in the broadest sense.
- Are we on a cusp, where we need early intervention? I'm not sure if it is an issue, so the recognition thing is important. There is an issue and it's not getting better with the drawbridge going up... This work is quite unusual. There's not graffiti on the walls, but a successful UKIP candidate is too late... Need more intelligence on this. It would be interesting to see how people would rate it; is it 10 or 1? [interviewee] probably at 5 [or] 6. It's not immediately in your face but with big issues going on it wouldn't take much for it to blow up.
- The overwhelming anger, so out of control; what would push someone to this? Enough things are happening, it feels, that we are a carpet of potential for something else.

There is an issue: “Out of the Woodwork”

- Yes there is an issue; it concerns me greatly. Moved to [area] 20 years ago ... Very recently noticed - shocking although to be expected - what might describe as rise of alt-right. EDL marching in Newcastle... There's a trickle through to EDL posters and UKIP posters in [area]... It's all anecdotal; there's nothing very specific; it's a feeling. There's something in the air. What would not be acceptable before is acceptable to be public...
- Not necessarily emergent, it's always been here. The area has a reputation... On St George's Day it's like living in Ulster with the number of union flags... Historically has been NF graffiti; now EDL.
- It's always been there. With Brexit it's out of the woodwork, more people are thinking like this. It's not emerging, it's already here... People are not necessarily joining [EDL] but they are here. People's views resonate with white extremism. It's not Brexit; it came from terrorist attacks. It's a backlash from that... Normal people becoming extreme and it's directly linked to racism... Direct response of normal white people becoming extreme and violent – or at least sympathetic - in response to situations...



What should be done?

A wide range of responses were recorded. By far the most commonly identified was the need to have difficult conversations, and the need to become skilled and practiced in doing this. The need to develop policy responses and for more community work were also identified. There were also observations on responses of diverse agencies.

The role of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service in this area was explored, with important pointers on context, content and style. Whilst some people thought that on-line resources would be of benefit, for many this needed to be as part of a broader response.

Conversations

The need to have difficult conversations, and the need to become fluent in having such conversations with a wide range of people in a wide range of contexts was frequently recorded.

- We need to open conversations and give people space to have the conversations. Don't raise the issue and say 'you're on your own'.
- There are fewer spaces in which people can freely associate... People lose confidence to speak to each other. This is disappearing.
- At a Community Association level it's about challenging individual behaviours/attitudes as they arise. This needs confidence, skill, experience, knowledge but also about values – fairness and justice are also part of old fashioned working class culture. Teaching all this in a fun way. It requires de-mystifying of 'the other'. Discussions are about power as well as knowledge. Cannot fake this stuff; have to vomit it out and find way forward together.
- The hardest people to challenge are your closest friends; even harder than in own family. Disagree with what's said but people are entitled to their opinions and don't want to come across as 'I'm right; you're wrong'.
- This includes honest and direct conversations with all communities about the effect [broad changes] have had on folk of GB. We have to understand each other's cultures... There's a fear of engaging with this in case get stuff wrong, so don't get very far... It's about not being naïve, not assuming someone else will do it.
- A workshop engaging local residents to help people get through the thought processes. So around; morals of a multi-cultural society, how we became a multi-cultural society, how it's necessary to engage with people born elsewhere.
- They need to be listened to. It's ... austerity – not Syrians coming over here... We need to know why they believe this; they cannot just be bad people. We need to find ways to have these difficult conversations. The Syrians are probably as scared of him



as he is of them... Need a lead into introductory conversations, so can understand not fear...

- Trying to bridge this gap and want to be able to welcome refugees who have come to [our area]. If there's opposition to people coming then want to be able to handle that. In our own communities – so not confrontational – challenge in a safe way so not going to disengage people who feel anger and fear.
- Equalities and Diversity training is available through Gateshead College – so can send people on a basic course. This gives a basic understanding. More subtle interpersonal skills are learned by modelling, mentoring, reflective practice. Could do some interactive training – practitioner not policy led. .. More reflective, role play scenario – help to think through how you do this stuff with intentionally-used language. ... Language issue now is about transgender – generally now got language around BME Communities.
- Talk to people who have experience to do this, who have done it before. Is anybody else out there experiencing, feeling the same thing? Not necessarily around the far right... How to have really hard conversations.

Policy

Although one participant who described the work as being about “creating new normals” explicitly stated it could not be addressed by “policy and procedures”, others saw more opportunity for policy development as a vehicle for progressing the work:

- Could link to the organisational must-dos e.g. governance. Charity Commission and funders expect organisations to invest in governance, so there's an opportunity to link with policy and procedures.
- We assume that policy will be implemented. It can help focus the mind, and make small practical steps. It needs to be not too much work – templates are useful e.g. doing an audit of practice is a forum for discussion.... Policy implementation is another issue!
- As a trustee [I] can take it seriously or say it's not really important. It's about getting materials and re-presenting them: language is important here. It's very difficult to have this conversation in a committee meeting. It's easier with stuff [you] can look at beforehand (some people won't!) We don't employ people... It would be the same as issues around working with vulnerable people; we give the leader of the group a copy of policy/procedure so they have a clear idea. We hire space out to lots of people – lots of groups will have their own systems in place. They are free autonomous groups. It's very different if you have a community association worker in place...



Community-based work

Reflecting the organisational context of interviewees, comments on community organisations and community development work were noted, including the need for work focused on bringing different communities together. Two people stated that food, in one case linked with gardening, had been effective in this:

- Bengali and white English women are talking in school yard rather than standing at opposite ends of playground.
- Sufficiently resourced and supported high-quality community development work
- Inform, educate, eradicate poverty, work.
- It's about collective learning – leading through co-design.
- Integrated place-based work is [the] only thing that stops silo delivery.
- There's a lack of youth clubs ... With Brexit etc. are we in danger of sleep walking into youth riots? ... It's not a pop at the council, but who's picking up the pieces? The voluntary and community sector.
- No cheque explains why there's no youth service. It's [like] 'The Handmaid's Tale' – that's the scary bit.
- There's nothing specific here. As with all our work we need to play out scenarios and challenge people's views. [We] don't have issued-based discussions; it's not formalised... If [we're] supporting a youth club in [another area] it would be about visits and exchange of practice.
- I care what people think. It's necessary for long-term change in community... How people think informs people's behaviour; so need to do both. Operationally, behaviour is more of a focus – its 'easier' to manage; management of abusive behaviour is an issue independent of, e.g. race.
- The Community Association is well-off, got money in the bank. Not complacent but we're not struggling. Others are less well resourced. So anything that starts to look like more work for the VCS [voluntary and community sector] is a problem.
- How do I make sure I don't miss a problem; know whether I need to act on this urgently or not. Is it isolated cases or an underlying issue?
- Training programme for frontline workers might include reflecting [agency's] induction: cultural awareness, equality and diversity, non-violent communication, domestic violence, human trafficking, community cohesion, Prevent.
- Training for Community Association workers should include recognising signs of sexual exploitation and modern day slavery.
- Need to find ways to make sure people have the confidence to use the community centre; how to communicate better with non-white communities that we are there for them – need to do this implicitly. So we need tips on better engagement and adapt



activities to increase inclusiveness e.g. the lunch club usually includes pork on the menu. There's no thinking about this.

In several interviews the role community centres can play in being safe reporting centres for hate crime were discussed. It was notable that several of these people were not certain whether their centre was part of the scheme, others were aware their centre was, but not what it meant or how it operated.

The role of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service

Broad infrastructure work such as raising awareness, providing information, signposting, campaigning, enabling networking and communications, was identified.

- This work – raising the issue – is why NCVS is vital: beyond service-delivery, looking at the bigger issues... This work is quite unusual. There's no graffiti on the walls, but a successful UKIP candidate is too late.
- Linking top-down and grass-roots.
- Being a conduit for more of the joined-up working around a specific issue
- Organisations with like minds to do specific pieces of work.
- Programme of education to address these issues with NCVS member organisations.
- Being an independent organisation is really important. Lots of people don't trust the Council; experience as 'done to' rather than 'done with'.
- In terms of public services functions, these are increasingly being picked up by the VCS, which suggests an important area of work.
- Providing vehicles for public sector and local residents to come together
- In times of austerity community organisations survive because they come from the community so NCVS should support neighbourhoods getting grants.
- It's about communication, awareness-raising, building links in the local area; using opportunities to build common ground.
- It's especially difficult with community organisations without employees. There are lots of random people.
- Promoting [organisations] work within and beyond NCVS membership.
- Providing vehicles for public sector and local residents to come together.
- Council to stop being tokenistic – ticking a box through visits.... NCVS should pressure council to do more.

A range of comments on the style of approach were recorded.

- There's a perception that if you have [specialist agency] in, then there's a problem with racism... The same dynamic is likely to apply here.



- Community cohesion and Prevent are very different pieces of work.
- Addressing causes, not just symptoms and a long term commitment....
- Not certain if there is a one-size fits all approach. Radicalisation is often due to local factors... Need funding to develop a tailored approach. It's a function of what is identified as the root of the problem.
- Similar sorts of structure when working with a national charity. The comparison is useful, although there are consequences to the diverse value-bases amongst community organisations.
- Part of a strategy to enhance existing partnerships.
- Balance between prevention and responsiveness is always going to be an issue. Proving the value of prevention is always difficult.
- There's a risk of raising issue and then telling people they are on their own... So you have to have skills, information etc. in parallel to the challenge.

Views of Online

Throughout the interviews the importance of social media in forming/reinforcing peoples' views was noted (see appendix). It was also seen as a means of organising – when the on-line world comes offline. The need to develop proactive work was recorded.

- It [social media] puts a strong bubble around us. ... It can feed extremist views...
- Much sex work is organised online. In ratings there is talk about nationality- i.e. purchasers of sex appearing to look down on Romanian women. Other vulnerabilities come through e.g. photos with kids toys in the background; sets of photos with same words/backgrounds indicate degree of organisation. Unprotected sex as part of advert....
- Nuanced debate in an online thread is very unusual... The send button is the space between individualised hate and far-right organisations, including particularly the often problematic views of 60/70 year old women.
- Need to have positive profile on social media to engage with it if going to get message out/challenge stuff. Question is what resource and where to point it... It needs a more creative response including social media. Opportunities for individual stories... to put across counter-narrative.
- [Be] proactive on social media perhaps model on 38 degrees. So it can become part of the family dinner conversation.

There were a range of views on electronic media as a vehicle for the distribution of resources. While some people stated they would not use such resources most stated that they would be relevant. However most people who commented also stated that this would



best be as one element of a wider approach, with the need for face-to-face engagement being highlighted.

- Online forum is a good approach; Community Association has a website and Facebook page, a local resident runs an independent page. Although not personally do it much, social media would be a good approach.
- Training; could be online. Include reading, watching on-line and conversations with people who have already done this.
- Online is ok– but better if you're able to talk to someone; to ask questions back and forward.
- The online resource you mentioned isn't something we would use or do currently use. Of course, it sounds like something that should be of interest to every organisation but experience leads me to think it wouldn't be used. [by email]
- Not had good experiences [of online training]. It's about talking with people and exchanging experiences across the country... If it's online need something that enables people to meet...
- Can think about this like an Open University programme – do a course and can then access seminars – face to face opportunities.
- [I] like physical rather than virtual; got to meet people before will put lots of stuff on line. ... Valuable to do Facebook etc. on the back of building relationships face-to-face. Some of this issue is sensitive so managing this is difficult. Stuff can be taken out of context. Social media is a bit of an add-on, it's disjointed from other work; make it link to what people are doing anyway.

Issues beyond the Voluntary and Community Sectors

- It's about the statutory responses as well as the VCS – e.g. police/fire need to be proactive in engaging with local community – and about the initial contacts with new local residents.
- Prevent legislation is toxic and addressed disproportionately towards Muslims.

Police

- If far-right graffiti started to appear would want to get more information. Talk with local residents. Probably talk with PCSO.
- If issues emerged would talk with [name] (Councillor and member of committee) and the police. [We] have historical link with local officer. Unlikely to deal with it beyond that.
- The only thing I would add was a comment made by [individual] in response to the prompt about 'intelligence sharing' on the proposed website. She gave a pretty



unequivocal response that she'd want to share it with the police, or with guidance via other 'official' reporting mechanisms/pathways

- Get individuals who are doing it [Muslim extremist violence].
- Training for Community Association workers should include recognising signs of sexual exploitation and modern day slavery. And engagement in multi-agency safeguarding mechanisms – integration of generic agencies into this is important.
- Police are working out that they need to work with VCOs. It's not clear the Local Authority have.

Local Authorities

- When there was a council we needed infrastructure; now there's not really a council so not certain that it's needed. When Local Authority had employees working on the ground they were colleagues so monthly patch meetings were of value to communities and to organisations. Had practical and strategic conversations. Now there's no point in going to the meetings, there's no money in the Local Authority.
- Local Authority monitoring and evaluation data is not helpful. People are offended by level of scrutiny; people have no idea to what end. If collecting information about people they want to know what it's for. The categorisations; feels part of a broader game, to what end?
- Council to stop being tokenistic – ticking a box through visits.
- Example of African woman trafficked into country, housed in [area]. The children were noticed to be of concern once the woman was accommodated in LA housing, it was felt by some organisations she was neglecting her children. Services were aware that the woman had been a victim of sex trafficking and the vulnerabilities surrounding this.

Housing providers

- Key is housing allocations -social landlord has got to be strong; got to have good estate management with allocations policy understood by local residents.
- There is a challenge about the amount of social housing that there is.
- There's a genuine issue about social housing ... There's resentment about social housing. Refugees are seen to get housing whilst 'we've been on the waiting list for years'. Housing organisations are not sorting this out. There's not the awareness of how housing is allocated – especially in hard-to-let areas. So the perception of leap-frogging, preferential treatment is not addressed. This should be easier than in areas with private landlords. These little bits... add up to an impression.
- More difficult in areas of private landlords as leads to transient populations.



Other public services

- Should be very clearly addressed in schools. They know it's wrong, if not illegal. There are ways they can very gently address racism and misogyny. It needs to be in primary schools.
- You cannot educate people more than they are, if it's into their heads. Compare it with smoking. We've all had the education but kids are still doing it. So think what a waste of money all the education is. Parents should bring up kids not to be racist but they don't. If they're like that they bring the kids up to be like that. It should be done at school. I'm sure it is, but it doesn't seem to stick with some. If by 14 you don't know the difference between right and wrong you're in a bad place. If you're with someone who's bigoted, you're likely to go that way, if you're not strong enough to stand up to it.
- There have been rare occasions where individuals have had difficulty accessing health services. For example, a Romanian woman had difficulty accessing NHS termination services. This was noted by participants to be an exception, rather than the rule.
- Driver on the bus was so rude to someone who couldn't talk English that they got off the bus. Another time a passenger was rude (racist comment) to another passenger and they were thrown off: 'not having racism on my bus'. One organisation with very different responses.



In conclusion

Although it is important to recognise the limitations of the scope and methods used, as recorded in this report the research has evidenced the rationale for the development of a resource to support people in developing confidence and competence to have difficult conversations as an integral part of their work and activity.

It provides pointers in the content and style of such a website, which is identified as one important element of a broader set of responses within and beyond the voluntary and community sectors.

The focus of the work is to enable people – volunteers, paid workers, and trustees - to engage with these issues rather than either solely using statutory reporting mechanisms where this is seen as proportionate or alternatively brushing people's concerns aside and so closing down opportunities for dialogue, challenge and change.



APPENDICES

1) Project Briefing Note

The following was circulated to potential participants and partners to provide a brief overview and introduction to the research and broader project.

“Newcastle CVS has received support from Building a Stronger Britain Together (Home Office) to develop resources that enable community based workers and volunteers to confidently challenge extremist language, behaviour and attitudes.

This research is the first phase of the project. Focusing on four areas of Newcastle and Gateshead, it aims to gather experiences and concerns of people working in communities around these issues: What’s going on in the community you work with? We want to better understand what are the current conversations you’re hearing people have, in the wider context of Brexit, about things like immigration, pressures on limited social housing, community tensions. We also aim to identify what support might be needed and how this might best be provided. It will directly inform the next phase of the project’s work.

The project seeks to build our individual and collective knowledge and capacity to address the issue as they emerge within our communities. It has a preventative focus. This is one of the crucial aspects of work in this area, where the sector is well positioned to make a difference and a vital element of any effective responses.

The research is in two phases. Firstly individuals who are active within local communities are being asked to take part in a short discussion. This can be done face to face, on the phone or by email. The early findings from this will then be shared and further explored in small group discussions.

The approach is designed to minimise the call on people’s time while maximising the learning, with a high level of confidentiality and anonymity.

Contact details

For more information on this research, or the broader project please contact: information@cvsnewcastle.org.uk



2) Additional findings

In this appendix materials gathered through the research but not included in the main report are recorded. There is however some repetition between this appendix and the report. This is where an observation in the report has been substantially edited for reasons of space: it is outlined more fully below.

To help make the materials more useful they have been ordered under broad themes, although many comments cut across this. Where more than one comment, making the same point, was recorded these have been excluded.

Racism and Other Discrimination

- Main conflict in [location] is around local environment (rubbish in back lanes) with a culture of blame ignoring wider determinants; “it’s all the fault of new arrivals” ... angry white English blaming everyone, anyone. It is understandable.
- In [location] one person with UKIP poster during 2015 general election (it stood out like a sore thumb; the rest were labour or green). This and the occasional Union Jack (especially when there’s a football competition) is the closest seen.
- Recent incident in [area – not research] against Syrian families recently arrived. Started on Facebook who refused to take it down (no breach of policy). Then an individual -26 yrs ago was convicted of assault of minor – on Facebook as vigilante against a paedophile, who did take it down... These two as street incidents. It’s always been [an] area of high anti-social behaviour. No community resources or organised groups in [this area]. Do have issues in [research area] but they are less visible.
- Even fix the litter problem. The link is white extremists say “they’re all dirty”. It’s about education and support to locals and businesses. Compared with [area] local residents are ignored.
- Recently Syrian/Kurdish woman wanted to come and join the baking group, coming to toddler group. Husband came in – a very abrasive manner. White British people [women?] felt very threatened by this. In [the] end, volunteer got another volunteer who was more assertive. There were a couple of weeks of high tension around this – in parallel with London Bridge etc.
- White extremism has been a central part of colonialism; including eugenics. Government is top down and very centralised. See race riots in South Tyneside in 1913/4 Yemeni community. There was no organisation, but the same propaganda. Normal people becoming extreme and it’s directly linked to racism. After World War 2 people were invited to UK for jobs. Direct response of normal white people becoming extreme and violent – or at least sympathetic - in response to situations. Powell speech. In recent times it’s more East Europeans. Not people of colour but



they're still different. With UKIP casual racism is normal again. Katie Hopkins popularised this. She has a platform. Direct call to action to normal white people. History is repeating itself; historically about anyone not white; now it's specific to Muslims. Some forms of bigotry have become taboo, but there's now more of a focus on Muslims. 9/11 onwards some stupid Muslims have done some bad things. Sometimes don't help ourselves. Young white and angry, have got nothing, no career, aspirations; they get attracted to movements. There's a real issue about way young white men treat sisters [Muslim women].

- Is it natural to be scared of other people? Is it class? No, richer people may be more sophisticated. Don't care about what people think, all care about is peoples' behaviour. People know social media is not the real world but it does get off line. I have a right to be protected. Problem when I'm walking down the street knowing someone is thinking bad about my religion; it's not just about actions. People need help to understand me, my beliefs. We want to challenge stereotypes... Want to think it [agency's activity] can sometimes lead to change in actions. It should clarify peoples' misconceptions. Creating understanding is important. Can give facts, information, but do people then behave in a decent manner? Creating understanding is about accepting each other's ways of life.
- EDL marching in Newcastle – shocked and surprised. Bought up in Glasgow so used to sectarian marches and hated it.
- When lived in [street] there was a black woman who moved up from London; had brain and back injury from a car crash. A lovely woman if a little bit odd. The children were loud and happy. Our kids played together and I made friends with the woman. After a while she said she had experienced racism from 4 or 5 neighbours; had to have a camera put up. Police took it very seriously – hate crime recently become law. She was shouted, sworn at, including in front of the children. They didn't know there was a microphone on the camera – it caught the death threats. One neighbour, a care worker, was caught – lost her job due to it coming through on her CRB check. But it didn't stop. They just got a lot more careful. The woman landed up moving out of [the area]. A few of us stood up; lots wouldn't have anything to do with those being racist. Surprised it was so open – constant damage to her car; stealing pot plants. Eventually the police were not doing anything anymore without cast iron proof.
- Older people's housing complex being used to house Syrian refugees – complaints about cooking smell, people banging on windows during the night. Group attending [agency], but we're keeping it quiet as we don't know what [the area's] response would be. Volunteers won't challenge racist behaviour/language ... Workers, if anybody, would.
- Issues were about implicit or explicit racism between white residents and incomers; migrants, refugees and asylum seekers - and between different groups within these.



- When under pressure – oppression, poverty, lack of agency and voice, disenfranchisement – the easiest thing is to blame another group. This leads to the ‘othering’ of groups – crudely with e.g. the EDL, but more generally a feeling of having a hard deal – jobs, housing etc. The roots of violence come from this ‘othering’.... There is othering within [area] – a social apartheid – particular neighbourhoods but also people with drugs and alcohol or mental health issues, although this is masked by money.
- Centre is a polling station, so interesting to see who votes – at Brexit many people who may not have ever voted, and the comments while passing on the stairs “I’m voting to get you out”. In last election tide had changed to Labour it was about the bedroom tax. Some conversations showed how confused people were. Don’t know if Brexit has made any difference – for a while people though they could be racist, saying stuff out of hand. In this centre that got stamped on.
- With more mixed marriages the overt racism within families is being challenged in another way as well.
- Deal with casual racism on a daily basis; our job is to say that’s not acceptable. Beyond that would make links with community police officers...
- Possibly relevant example. Building sold by council to local retailer, the lease runs out in a couple of years. Been very difficult for self and chair of trustees (both white middle aged women) to get any response from him. He did respond to first approach from a male trustee.
- About 18 months ago all sorts of people came together to get two people who had killed kids out of the [area]. Same wouldn’t happen with refugees, they’ve not done anything wrong; probably won’t get refugees in [area]... People just come out with it, some people just say it. We’re not brought up to be racist. I’d a childhood friend who was black and we played all sorts...
- It’s mainly racism but also misogyny.... Women, disabled people, black people, Syrian refugees. I want to belong to a society which is welcoming. My great grandparents came across from Ireland, starving: British government let them in.
- In recent examples there’s lots of racism. But misogyny is a big issue, especially in the workplace. Zero hours contracts, unions disappearing; and lots of powerful men with lots of money. It’s linked to the benefits system being decimated and people being sanctioned for months – don’t know how they survive. Women – even in local government – get left behind. It’s very difficult to keep up especially with childcare.
- Have had a couple with clear drug and alcohol issues, leading to anti-social behaviour [in area]; using drugs in public. There was an aggressive reaction, almost a lynch mob being organised. They were trying to organise a meeting at the centre. We are working with a couple of the active local residents, trying to draw them into



the steering group. It's about working with individuals and challenging the existing narratives.

- There are a recognised set of vulnerabilities of targeted women in the context of sex work/exploitation/violence – health inequalities, drugs and alcohol, mental health issues, homelessness; don't know if far right are targeting this. Modern day slavery is a further vulnerability... Key characteristic with people working in sex industry... is complex lives and abusive childhood. Can draw a strong comparison between vulnerability to grooming for the purposes of child sexual exploitation and being drawn/groomed into far right activity. Includes desire to belong to a group, becoming recognised/validated by other people.

Values and Beliefs

- The social demographics of peoples' beliefs are very important.
- We encapsulate the ethos of the organisation in our recruitment for employees and volunteers. We have an Equal Opportunities policy but it's about how you go about doing the work. The ethos is underpinned by the value base. Values come from the person. Can do all the training and awareness work but it won't get far without the values.
- Values as the basis for challenging individuals – requires courage. It's about guilt, letting yourself down. You cannot abdicate your social responsibility.
- The simplicity of terms like 'racism' needs to be challenged. The problematisation is a problem – need to think about it differently at this level. How do we move beyond our comfort zones and patterns of thinking.... There's no collective common decency left – it's in tension with individualised rights-based work....
- I hold these values as positive, if old fashioned; a sense of justice, challenging was important – it involved a critical discussion about how you felt... What we know may be old-fashioned values – equally fighting for culture and community; active inclusiveness and equal opps. is seen as a bit loony by some but acceptable by affluent.
- We have to be adult and take responsibility for our mess. There's not a big fight any more; we need a sense of righteousness and compassion. It's about what we put value on. Not throw the baby - right on stuff from 60s – out with the bath water. Can be critical of it but not ignore the successes.
- Freedom of speech has limits, boundaries. Muslims don't have the opportunity to go near these limits.
- In a way don't see [area] as staunchly working class... Had an anchor that could bring people back to – what we are fighting for – framed in a way so people conceive of themselves as part of society. UKIP poison has put this back to blaming.
- ... 'all them coming over here, those refugees taking our jobs. Those refugees sitting in their houses all day with the curtains shut. The kids are bastards'. This group [making



such comments] largely in 20s and 30s, stay-at-home dads... They have just as much right to be listened to. If we don't do this, how will we ever turn them around? ... They need to be listened to.

- Its government cuts, austerity – not Syrians coming over here. It's a class issue. Racism is taking over the working classes, especially now. Believe the lies on Facebook, Twitter. We need to know why they believe this; they cannot just be bad people. We need to find ways to have these difficult conversations. The Syrians are probably as scared of him as he is of them. Need a lead into introductory conversations, so can understand not fear. How do the educated middle classes engage the working class right wing who are left behind by society. At the moment can see racists and alt right have a very strong pull for disenfranchised, alienated working class men. How to have the language, need a master plan to fight this terrible, terrible rot. I want to fight it but don't know how to. One voice on its own is a joke – but we have to listen to work out why people feel like that; why there's these displaced feelings of anger onto innocent refugees rather than the government. Brexit vote – what happened there? Lots of people didn't know what they were voting for; looked at the Daily Mail, the Sun and did what they said. It's a class issue –we should be fighting for the working class, have them on our side or it's a middle class party for people who don't want our kids to have to pay tuition fees.
- Need to address the disparities of power. We have to do this all over again. Wealthy white protestant men have too much power – or not using their privilege to address the imbalance of power – not seeing this anymore.
- Quakers have particular view/focus on these interconnections [migration, conflict, climate change]. Addressing causes, not just symptoms and a long term commitment. Such views are not specific to faith-based perspectives.
- Violence is the bottom line – including exclusion from ordinary life as a form of violence.

Role of Media/Social Media

- From TV and school people are told should be ashamed of their culture e.g. flying flag of St George is equivalent to being racist but it's your own country's flag. Teachers at school assume it's a race issue if you're in a fight, when that's not the problem.
- Some factual information is difficult to find – and it's not clear how much this counts for people.... The stories have not moved on much – they're regurgitated with a little twist. Nuanced debate in an online thread is very unusual. The social media perspective does not help much – e.g. 'facts'. The 'send' button is the space between individualised hate and far right organisations, including particularly the often problematic views of 60/70 year old women.



- Social media – it puts a strong bubble around us e.g. Brexit most of my feed was remain... it can feed extremist views: the whole world is saying that. This is also true at work. We are able to break the echo chamber of how we use language – we create our own community within a broader community – are exposed to views that otherwise would not hear.
- Its speculation but biggest challenge is what people take from the media – ‘they take jobs away from us’. There’s fairly explicit racism. Now there’s a very convenient target, identified by our politicians, for issues of poverty and high unemployment.
- A media perception; I put a lot of the emergence of radical right wing down to this.
- How much work do public agencies do on social media? – example of information being put out by local authority, [the] subject of which quickly gets lost.
- Reports in the media get people really angry; worried about their children, especially their daughters. The increased profile raises awareness but also prejudice, with very limited focus on protection. People who are vulnerable to their [EDL] messages may feel more sympathetic to them, after instances such as [Operation] Sanctuary. It detracts from a focus on women’s/victim’s experiences.

The Bigger Picture

- With Brexit it’s out of the woodwork, more people are thinking like this... It’s not Brexit – it came from terrorist attacks. It’s a backlash from that. People’s misunderstandings means all are blamed. And the misrepresentation of the media – mainstream and social. Young white guys see headlines about abuse of young girls and they will want to do something about it. ... Young working class white with not much going for them – the social media is a platform for voicing opinions. There’s a lot of hate on social media [in group discussions]
- Loss of old-fashioned culture of this place. Might not see it but there is a sense of change. Feel that the Brexit vote came about because there was no other way of expressing this feeling; who’s going to cup and hold this to their advantage? white supremacists? It’s naive to think people will sit on their arses forever.
- To ultimately bed it into culture takes time; a generational issue – if [someone’s] gone to school with non-white people [there] won’t be the fear. Question is, will what happened in London happen here 20 yrs on? - horrible things happen in London but generally there’s an acceptance of difference. Issues of integration were continuously addressed in London 20 years ago. The political context feeds in here.
- Recent negative events stop people moving forward – Isis, Brexit, bombings – on march to a more tolerant society. Fear and mistrust are being addressed generally over time, but external events put us back to the beginning of the conversation.
- Problems are about inequality and poverty; climate justice.... Addressing causes needs big scale thinking. Climate change will disproportionately impact on poor people.



Working in [area] cannot have a big impact on this but can bear down on e.g. quality of housing.

- People are frightened by the terrorists and what they're doing. You look at people in a different light when you're travelling. I still go to the Metrocentre and town. ...It's to do with what's happening in the world; the terrorism. It's complicated. Would like to think there's a way out but why do they have such hate for white people? My dad always said 'religion and politics don't talk about it, anywhere. You'll never win.' It's about as clear as mud. Want everybody to be in peace and harmony but it's not going to happen.
- Benefits are a big economic aspect of [area].
- It's not brought up as an issue; focuses are on: money, pensioner poverty, access to services, people becoming increasingly isolated – and having the confidence and skills to overcome that.
- 2008 and the banks... Keep coming back to it being about the political and the economy. In a world where money is more important than people. ... We have to be adult and take responsibility for our mess.



About Newcastle CVS

Newcastle CVS gives people who struggle to be heard a voice, supports voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to be resilient and sustainable and promotes a fairer society by influencing and challenging the debate.

Our established reputation, extensive networks and integrity and strength of approach makes us the go to source in supporting voluntary, community and social enterprise action.

We improve the quality of life in Newcastle and Gateshead by supporting the sector.

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