



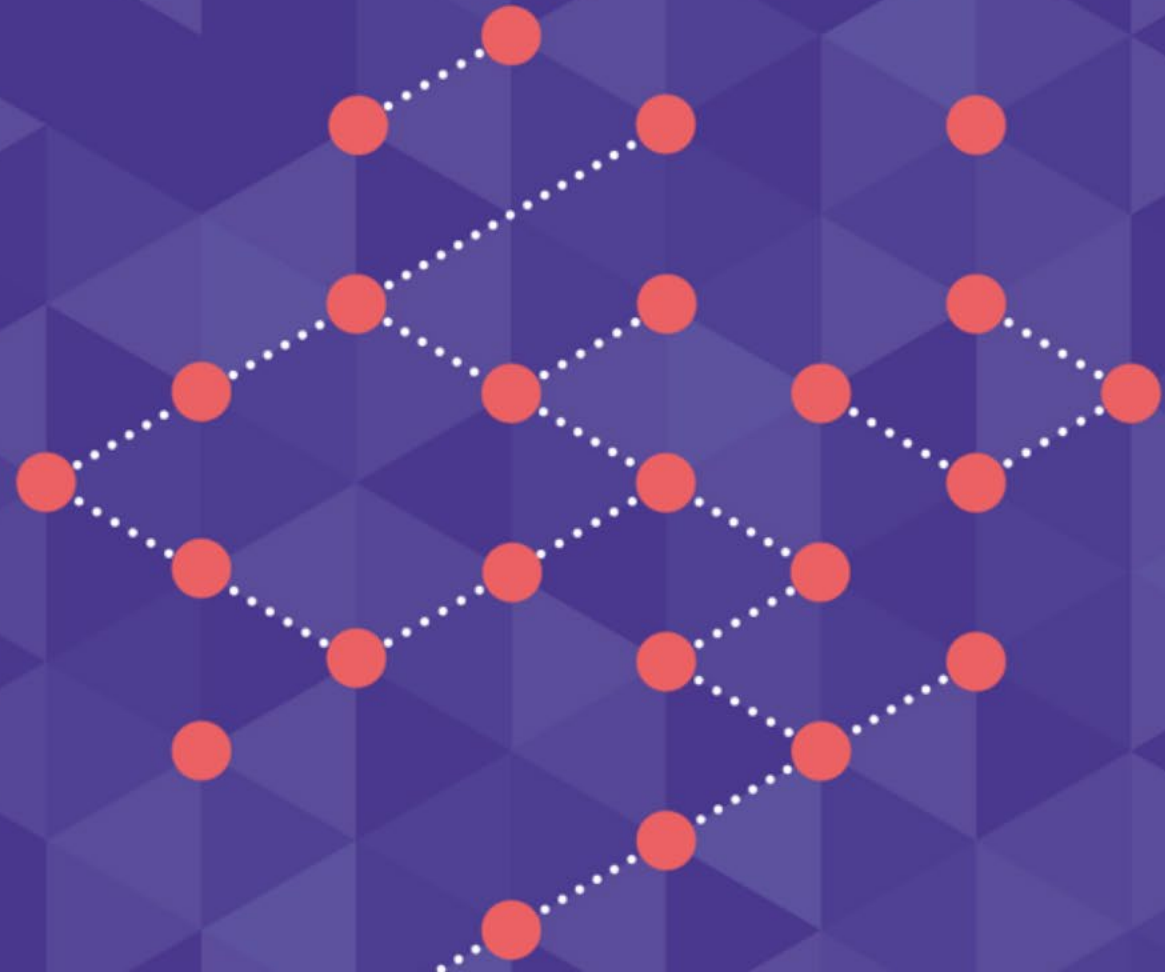
THE COHESION AND INTEGRATION NETWORK

# Inclusive Cities

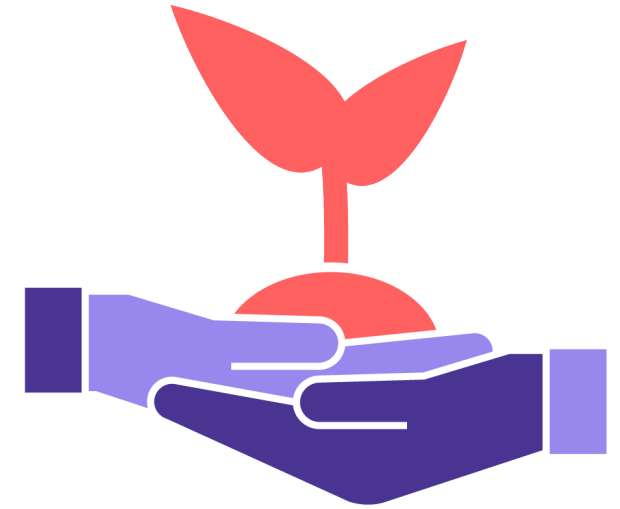
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# A new normal: can businesses play a leading role in supporting strong, inclusive communities?





# Belong - The Cohesion and Integration Network

- Charity and membership network
- More connected, less divided society
- Cross – sectoral – members from business, local govt, civil society sector, policy and research
- Evidence and research led – improving practice and transforming policy
- Providing knowledge, resources and skills to support positive change
- With our members advocating for change

# What do we mean by social cohesion?

Social cohesion is a term that describes how well people from different backgrounds mix, interact and get along with each other.

Building **cohesive communities** is about developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is **welcomed and celebrated**.

It is about moving beyond narratives of “us” and “them” towards ideas of trust, **shared identity** and a **sense of belonging**.



# What makes cohesive communities?



# Cohesion and social value

Social cohesion generates enormous (often unrecognised) social value.

Belong research: local authorities supported to invest in cohesion - significantly higher levels of resilience in the face of the pandemic:

- People **twice as likely to volunteer**
- **Higher sense of neighbourliness** (9.9 per cent higher)
- **Higher level of trust** in local government's response to Covid (8.2% higher)
- **Maintained more positive attitudes** about migrants to the UK

# Cohesion, social value and 'levelling up'

- The **Levelling Up White Paper** identifies 6 forms of capital crucial for levelling up
- Of these, social cohesion plays a **vital role** in two:
  - **Social capital** - trust, strong relationships between & within communities
  - **Institutional capital** – local leadership capability and capacity



# A role for business in supporting cohesive communities?

Belong in partnership w/ Intercultural Cities network, local authority members and businesses has begun to explore this question.

Three virtual roundtables with businesses and local govt. in:

- Manchester
- West Yorkshire
- Swansea



# A role for business in supporting cohesive communities?

- What role does or can business play to?
  - Develop fully **inclusive, integrated workforces** that bring people from different backgrounds together
  - Help **support community life** and build social infrastructure
  - Help bring local communities closer together and **bridge divides**
- What can local government do to support, enable and encourage this?

## Examples of good practice

# The **co-operative**

The Co-operative Group developed an online platform to coordinate volunteering opportunities for employees, members and interested members of the public. Originally piloted in Stretford, Manchester, the platform, called 'Co-operate', has the express purpose of developing more resilient communities by connecting community groups and opportunities with those who want to support them. Over 5,000 volunteering opportunities advertised across the UK.



## Examples of good practice



The heating services company Gower Gas and Oil, based in Swansea, has led a variety of initiatives to address social isolation locally. For instance, #DontDanceAlone, a social media campaign run in partnership with local radio stations The Wave and Swansea Sound, raises awareness of elder isolation. The company also helps to coordinate the Gower Isolation Support Group, which helps ensure that isolated older people are visited regularly.

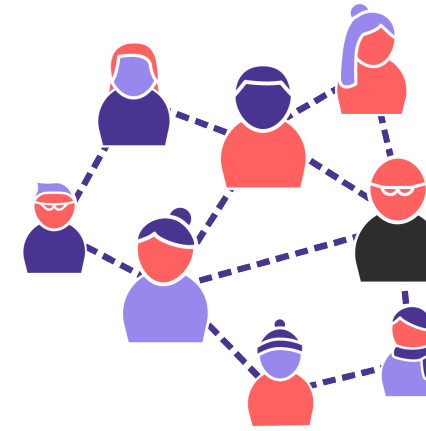


# Learnings

1. Businesses can do a whole range of things which **support cohesive communities**, but they may not realise they are
2. We lack a common language and framework for talking about and valuing this work
3. Greater **collaboration** between local govt. & businesses would lead to greater cumulative impact in particular places and would be welcome by all
4. SMEs can be highly **community-connected**, but are often left out of the conversation



# Some best practice principles



## 1. Business as an engine of cohesion

Workplaces are a site of **intercultural interactions** – this opportunity can be maximised by:

- Recruiting a **diverse staff** body
- Promoting an **inclusive culture** through cohesion-aware management
- **Enabling minorities** to lead innovation
- **Investing in social infrastructure** in the local community

# Some best practice principles

## 2. Business as a community partner

The social value agenda can be harnessed in favour of community cohesion if businesses:

- Partner with a **local community group** or charity
- Provide direct support through **employee volunteering**
- **Localise** their supply chain
- Evaluate their **cohesion impact**





# Some best practice principles

## 3. The role of local government

Local authorities can support businesses by:

- Providing **place-based leadership** - e.g. a clear strategy for action
- **Incentivising and encouraging** businesses to act
- Creating an evaluation framework based on **local cohesion needs**

# Workshop



**Three** possible elements of a local cohesion strategy:

1. Building cross-sectoral partnerships that support social cohesion (e.g. between business, local govt. and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector)
2. Promoting initiatives, spaces and organisations that enable social mixing (i.e. which bring people from different backgrounds together to connect)
3. Encourage active social engagement and ensure volunteers are recognized and rewarded

# Workshop



	Already doing	Could do more	Support needed	Barriers/concerns
<b>1. Building cross-sectoral partnerships</b>				
<b>2. Promoting socially mixed spaces</b>				
<b>3. Encourage active social engagement and volunteering</b>				

# Going forward...we can do more

Social cohesion can be a vital element in social value - **strong, inclusive communities** a foundation on which we **'Build Back Fairer'**

We want to continue this important conversation. To develop a substantive framework:

1. Full menu of actions and initiatives through which businesses can support cohesive communities
2. How to align with local cohesion priorities and objectives
3. How to easily capture, measure, evaluate this work (inc. for SMEs)
4. How to incorporate within existing social value frameworks



THE COHESION AND INTEGRATION NETWORK

# Going forward...together

We are looking for partners to take this agenda forward.

Businesses and local authorities who want to be leaders in this space.

Please get in touch:

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