

A More Cohesive Borough: A Scrutiny Challenge Report



June 2017



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The Chair's Foreword

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has always had a rich history of diversity, with over a 130 languages spoken in our schools. We have always been a welcoming borough, for hundreds of years new communities have settled in Tower Hamlets because of the opportunities available here. Our Council has always reflected the ethos of diversity and inclusion in its work.

However modern day challenges do exist with an increase in terrorism and hate crime, it is now more important than ever that our community is less divided and more cohesive. The Casey Review made a number of suggestions to help foster a better relationship between different groups, to promote the mixing of different groups, this report takes that into account. On the other hand, the borough has challenges that were not addressed in the report such as the fast pace of development and its impact on segregation and exclusion of the settled communities.

There is an opportunity to take a more holistic approach to how cohesion work is carried out in the future. This report has tried to provide the initial impetus for this work. The Council has a strong track record on tackling inequality and has made good progress even though those challenges still continue today. We need to make a distinction between cohesion and equalities, the former is focused on people of different backgrounds interacting with each other and the latter on specific protected characteristics. Under the Equalities Act 2010 the Council and its partner service providers have a responsibility to foster good relations between people and improve cohesion in the borough. Whilst the latter may have a positive impact on cohesion there is a need to have a stronger focus on cohesion especially at this time.

With limited resources we need to be assured that cohesion is being delivered in the right way to achieve positive outcomes for all. Within the context of this report as a community leader I have been thinking about how we can develop strong leadership focused on cohesion with Members, senior officers, and community leaders to ensure that as leaders we understand its importance and are promoting the right messages.

I am grateful to the challenge session members for their passion, time, energy, thoughts, and insights which really drove our discussion and were instrumental in producing this valuable report.

Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaqim
Scrutiny Lead, Governance

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Council develops an approach and action plan to: mainstream cohesion across Council services and activities, explore external funding opportunities and develop a robust evaluation, review and reporting process for all cohesion activities and initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Idea Store Learning to explore a common assessment process between internal and external providers of ESOL in the borough to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs and better matching to course places.

Recommendation 3: The Council should commission more projects which tackle isolation and encourage strong positive relations and friendship between different groups in the borough.

Recommendation 4: The Council reviews the grant and commissioning policies to ensure that there is a stronger focus on cohesion.

Recommendation 5: Explore how leadership on cohesion can be developed by the Council through the delivery of specialised training for councillors, senior officers and community leaders.

Recommendation 6: Explore setting up a taskforce to consider the impact of gentrification on cohesion in the borough.

1. Introduction and Rationale

The reason for the challenge session

- 1.1 Dame Louise Casey was asked to undertake a major review of integration in Britain to consider what could be done to boost opportunity and integration in our most isolated and deprived communities. The Scrutiny Lead for Governance as part of his work programme for 2016/17 agreed to hold a challenge session to consider the implications of the Casey Review in the borough.
- 1.2 This challenge session offered the opportunity to review the work that the Council and its partners have undertaken/commissioned to deliver improved cohesion outcomes and to understand the impact of this work. Members wanted to understand what the important issues are related to cohesion in the borough and what can be done further to enhance cohesion. The findings and recommendations from the session have been conveyed in this report.

The challenge session panel membership

- 1.3 The following Members and officers attended the challenge session held on 12th April 2017:

Name	Title	Organisation
Councillor Muhammad Mustaquim	Chair, Cllr Independent Group, St Peter's ward	LBTH
Councillor Shiria Khatun	Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Cohesion	LBTH
Councillor Amina Ali	Cllr, Labour, Bow East	LBTH
Fokrul Hoque	Chair	Safer Neighbourhood Board
Gemma Cossins	Acting CEO	THVCS
Sadia Ahmed	Deputy Young Mayor	LBTH
Emily Fieranreed	Cohesion, Community Engagement & Commissioning Manager	LBTH, Strategy, Policy & Partnership
Gulam Hussain	Senior Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer	LBTH, Strategy, Policy & Partnership
Iqbal Raakin	Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer	LBTH, Strategy, Policy & Partnership
Muhibul Hoque	Strategy, Policy & Performance Officer	LBTH, Strategy, Policy & Partnership
Simon Leveaux	Deputy Head of Idea Store Learning	Idea Store Learning, LBTH
Leanne Chandler	Skills for Life Manager	Idea Store Learning
Paul Jordan	Prevent Co-ordinator	Community Safety, LBTH

2. The National & Legislative Context

The Definition of Community Cohesion

- 2.1. Community cohesion has been defined by the government as going beyond race equality and social inclusion. A cohesive community is where: there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.¹

National Reviews Related to Cohesion

The Cantle Report (2001)

- 2.2. In the wake of a series of race riots in 2001 in Bradford, Burnley, Leeds and Oldham the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett commissioned Professor Ted Cantle to deliver the Cantle Report (2001) which discussed segregation and integration in these communities.. He found that the communities in each of these areas were so segregated and polarised that residents led 'parallel lives'. He also noted that mutual ignorance of inward-facing communities can easily turn to fear of one another and then violence.

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Integration Report (August 2016)

- 2.3. The APPG on Social Integration Chaired by Chuka Umunna MP also considered these issues and published an interim report in August 2016 (final report to be published in July 2017) which considered how the UK's immigration system could more effectively promote integration. The report partly reflected similar points made by the Casey Review but it also saw integration as a two-way street (i.e. the responsibility for integration sits with the host community as well as newcomers).

The Casey Review (December 2016)

- 2.4. The Casey Review considered which actions were required to boost opportunity and integration in our most isolated and deprived communities. The review was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in December 2016.
- 2.5. In summary the report identified a number of challenges to integration including:

- Net migration figures rising continuously;

¹ This definition is based on the Government and the Local Government Association's definition first published in *Guidance on Community Cohesion, LGA, 2002* and resulting from the *Cantle Report in 2001*.

- Ethnic groups being dispersed in some areas whilst also being concentrated and segregated from other groups in other areas across the UK, leading to a lack of diversity in schools and wards;
- Lack of English language aptitude amongst specific ethnic groups constraining social and economic integration and worsening inequalities particularly for ethnic minority women.

2.6. The findings of the Casey Review² focused particularly on Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, and set up a dichotomy between Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities against other communities such as African and White British. The report focused on northern towns and cities such as: Blackburn, Bradford, Burnley, and Birmingham. The review concluded that segregation exists where high proportion of ethnic minority groups are concentrated in particular wards; to improve social and economic integration it suggested that more social mixing of groups is required.

2.7. It linked segregation to economic exclusion, so for example the report linked a high concentration of ethnic minority population to social economic exclusion such as unemployment, lack of disposable income and discrimination towards women and it noted the cultural barriers which were the drivers of this.

2.8. In terms of recommendations the report suggested:

- Building community resilience by empowering marginalised women and promoting social mixing
- And putting greater emphasis on 'British' values

2.9. The report further suggested that approaches to reducing economic, inequalities, segregation and social exclusion should include;

- Increasing integration in schools;
- Having more English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision;
- Overcoming cultural barriers to employment
- Amending housing and regeneration policies;
- Providing better leadership and integrity in public office.

2.10. The government was due to publish a response to the Casey Review in Spring 2017 and had indicated that there will be an integration plan to address the recommendations in the report however no response has been forthcoming and it is unclear when this is likely to be.

The Legislative Context

2.11. Under the Equalities Act 2010³ there is a Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED). This duty requires the Council and its partner providers to evidence 'due regard'. This means that the Council has to consider how they can

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration>

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

positively contribute to the advancement of equality by eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations between those with protected characteristics and those with not, thereby having a positive impact on cohesion. Protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. The duty requires equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

3. The Regional Context

- 3.1. At the 'Social Integration Event' organised by London Councils on 6th April 2017 a number of key London local authorities such as Westminster, Hackney, Lambeth and Tower Hamlets engaged on emerging regional and national priorities and shared best practice taking place regionally on cohesion.
- 3.2. At this event Matthew Ryder, the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration at the Greater London Authority (GLA) referred to work he is leading on in developing an integration strategy for London and discussed measures which can be used to assess change (e.g. on cohesion).
- 3.3. Developing an effective measure of cohesion was raised as an issue in the Casey Review, it was suggested that the Government should establish a clear measure for tracking progress on cohesion. Due to the absence of national indicators in this area, measuring and comparing the impact of work to improve cohesion has been a difficulty for local authorities. Local authorities and the GLA are awaiting a response from the Government to the Casey Review to see if any such national measures will be outlined.
- 3.4. The GLA indicated that its objective is to 'mainstream' the cohesion agenda across all areas of its work and this is closely linked to a new community engagement strategy also being developed for London. Work to develop this strategy is in the early development phase.
- 3.5. Currently the Council is using the Annual Resident Survey (ARS) to measure the levels of cohesion in the borough. In the 2016 results, 87% of people said that they got on well together with people from different backgrounds. This was found to be on par with neighbouring borough Hackney. In 2013 (the latest data available) an Ipsos MORI survey in Hackney found 90% of residents felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together. There is no benchmarking information on this across London and therefore it is not known how other London authorities are faring in this regard.

4. The Local Context

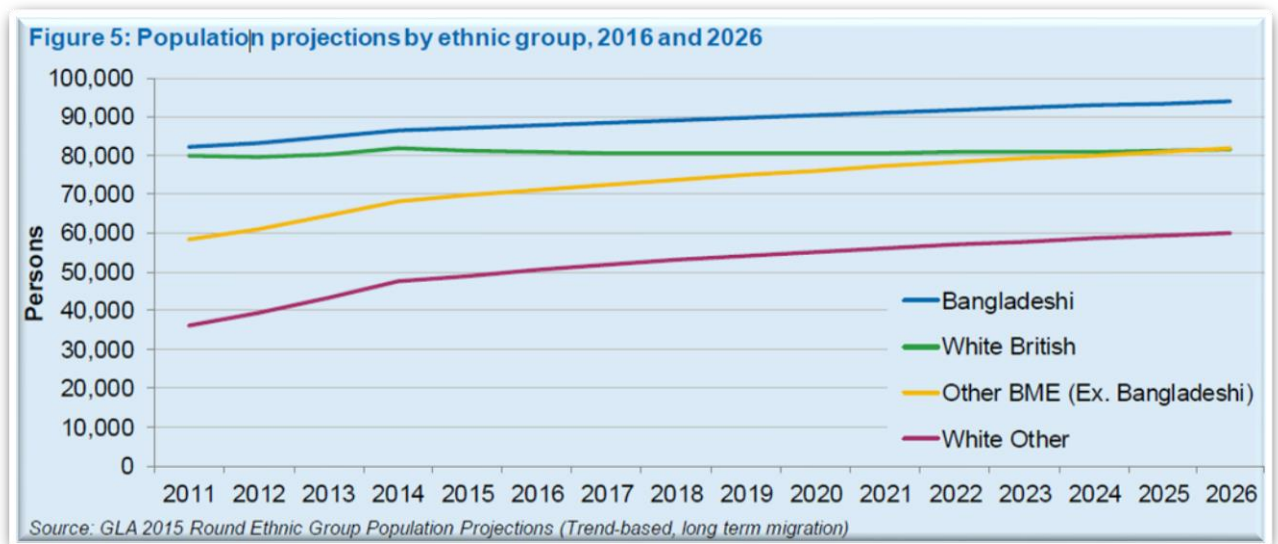
Tower Hamlets Population Demographics

4.1. Tower Hamlets has a population of 284,000, and over the last decade the population has increased by 34.5%, the largest increase of all the local authorities in England and Wales. By 2026 the borough's population is expected to increase by a further 26% to 374,000. These changes are likely to have significant cohesion related impact such as further segregation of specific communities in specific wards, further segregation in schools and further division of the community on class basis.

4.2. The three biggest ethnic groups in Tower Hamlets are:

- Bangladeshi, who make up 32% of the population;
- White British, making up 31% of the population;
- And White other which make up 12.5% of the population.

4.3. GLA population projections from 2016 and 2026 suggest that BME groups will continue to make up the majority of residents of Tower Hamlets. The White British population is projected to increase with only 1% growth over the next ten years. The Bangladeshi population is projected to grow by 7%; Other BME (excluding Bangladeshi) population will rise by 15%. The White Other population will rise by 19%, the largest increase for any of the group (see the graph below).⁴

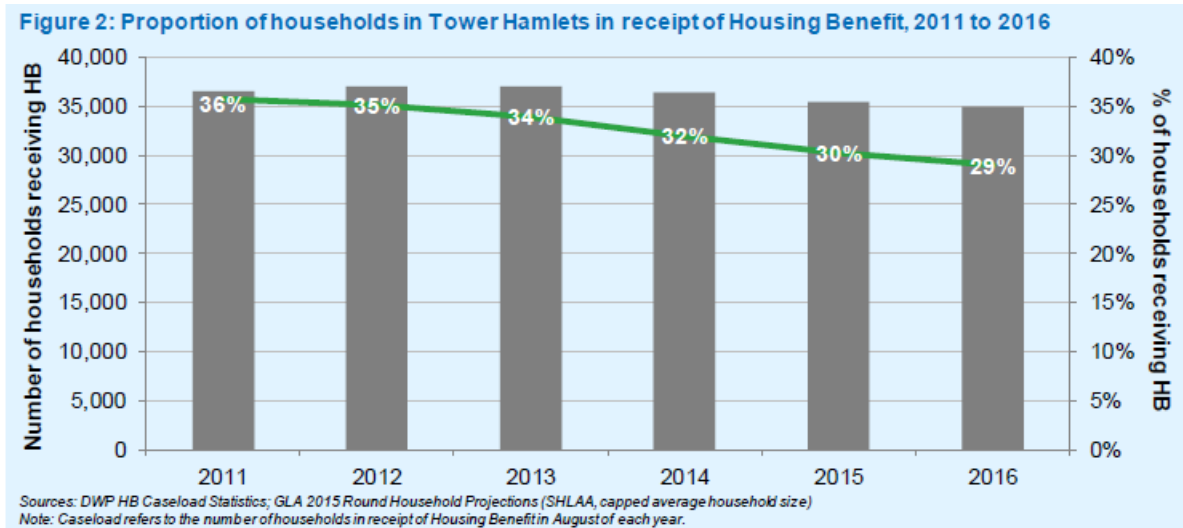


4.4. It should be noted that a large proportion of the White Other group is made up of EU nationals and it is not yet known to what extent this will be impacted by the decision of the UK to leave the European Union.

⁴ http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/population.aspx

4.5. There has also been a significant change in the socio-economic makeup of the borough. 36% of people belong to social grades A higher/intermediate managerial and grade B - professionals, which is an increase of 6% on last year and better than the national average of 30%.

4.6. There is a decrease in people on benefits. As figure 2 below suggests that the proportion of households in the borough in receipt of housing benefit has fallen over time, from 36% of residents in 2011 to 29% in 2016 suggesting that residents were increasingly moving away from welfare.



4.7. In the latest Annual Resident Survey (2016) 87% of residents feel their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together which is up 6 points on 2015 and is at an all-time high suggesting that on the face of it the borough is cohesive.

School Pupil Demographics

4.8. The number of pupils who have English as a second language is 46% which is the 8th highest in London. In terms of languages there are 130 languages spoken in the borough's schools. Whilst this demonstrates diversity in the borough's schools to what extent have schools promoted the mixing of pupils from different backgrounds?

4.9. In primary schools 61% of the population are of Bangladeshi origin and in secondary this is 67%. 44% of the borough's schools have a far higher proportion of Bangladeshi pupils (70% or more) and 28% have higher than 80% of Bangladeshi population. According to the Casey Review the concentration of pupils of a specific community may lead to a lack of integration and segregation. Casey states "One striking illustration of such segregation came from a non-faith state secondary school we visited where, in a survey they had conducted, pupils believed the population of Britain to be between 50% and 90% Asian, such had been their experience up to that

point”.⁵ Casey suggests school admissions policy should be changed to reflect these concerns however currently existing legislation limits what the Council can do to influence school admissions policy e.g. the Council only controls admissions policy for specific maintained schools but not foundation schools, academies and free schools. It would require changes to primary legislation in order to influence admission policy either locally or regionally and therefore a response from Government is required.

Employment figures for BME women

- 4.10. Paragraph 6.46 which represents a breakdown of the borough’s wards by ethnicity establishes that there are parts of the borough which are segregated at least on geographical lines. According to Casey, segregation and lack of integration can be linked to economic exclusion this can be particularly seen in the lower employment rate of ethnic minority women.⁶
- 4.11. The borough has low levels of employment of BME women which includes a high proportion of Bangladeshi women. During 2012 – 15 it is estimated that around 41 per cent of working age BME women were in employment in Tower Hamlets – 35 percentage points lower than the employment rate for White women (76%) and 28 points lower than the rate for BME men (69%). Comparing this to Casey’s findings which found low levels of economic inactivity amongst women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups – she found that 57.2% are inactive in the labour market compared with 25.2% of White women and 38.5% of all ethnic minority women. It would then seem that as Casey says in relation to social and economic integration “there is a strong correlation of increased segregation among Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic households in more deprived areas, with poorer English language and poorer labour market outcomes, suggesting a negative cycle that will not improve without a more concerted and targeted effort”.

⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575975/The_Casey_Review_Executive_Summary.pdf , page 14.

⁶https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575975/The_Casey_Review_Executive_Summary.pdf , page 14.



The life experiences, decisions and choices that lie behind these figures are complex and multiple, ranging from high levels of unpaid care for children and adults with poor health, low level skills, lack of access to support and experience of discrimination.

4.12. In the 'Breaking Barriers' research conducted by the Economic Development Team in the Council found that women of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage found discrimination was present at every stage of the recruitment process when assessing applications during interviews, at recruitment process when assessing applications during interviews with recruitment agencies and also the workplace itself. In 2005 the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that 1 in 5 Bangladeshi women under 35 experienced negative comments about wearing religious dress suggesting that barriers were not solely based on cultural influences.

4.13. We know that the above factors affect women from all backgrounds but some groups are more likely than others to be workless particularly Bangladeshi and Somali women. The Council's Economic Development Team has found that affordable and accessible childcare remains a significant barrier to work for these women. Furthermore it is not clear to what extent these women have intentionally chosen to raise a family over entering the workforce. Therefore the evidence suggests that in this case the findings of the Casey Review is similar i.e. the finding of low levels of employment of BME women but it was debatable whether this was specifically due to cultural barriers as Casey focussed on. Evidence locally suggests that there are combinations of barriers which prevent these women from entering the workforce they include: responsibility for raising a family, access to affordable child care, low grasp of the English language, and discrimination which were stronger barriers to work.

5. The Council's Cohesion Programme

5.1 The Council's Strategy Policy & Partnership Team (The service) manages a number of activities, funds and commissioned projects which build cohesion in the borough. The challenge session discussed the activities of the service and the range of activities was recognised as positive. The borough has an extensive programme in summary this includes:

Partnership working

5.2 The Tension Monitoring Group (TMG) is made up of Council services, the Police and community and voluntary partners. The group responds to tensions which arise within the borough that impact negatively on community cohesion. Specific examples in 2017 include alleged incidents of acid/liquid attacks leaving victims with burns which could possibly be classed as hate crime. In 2016 partners held emergency meetings to discuss and address tensions following;

- Britain First visits outside the East London Mosque
- Alleged incident of police brutality outside Arbour Youth Club

5.3 The group works by establishing a multi-agency partnership approach to share information and intelligence, and develop early interventions to manage imminent and current tensions or cohesion related issues. The TMG meets quarterly and can be convened at any other time in response to major incidents in the borough.

5.4 The Cohesion Working Group, Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Cohesion is comprised of local service providers and stakeholders, and was launched on 20th April 2017, with an aim to:

- To take a more strategic and long term approach to cohesion
- To have an oversight of cohesion work to enable better coordinated and joined up approaches between partners and identify gaps in activity

5.5 The Tower Hamlets No Place for Hate Forum launched the No Place for Hate (NPFH) Campaign which aims to prevent all forms of hate through promoting awareness, encouraging reporting and building community cohesion across all communities. The Council has used a variety of methods to communicate the right messages such as bus stop campaigns and outreach events at hotspot areas, and with many outreach stalls around the borough. To promote a stronger partnership stand against hate and all forms of hate in Tower Hamlets, the Council launched the No Place for Hate Pledge in December 2008, to date:

- 1482 No Place for Hate Personal Pledges and 121 Organisational Pledges have been signed

- NPFH Champions have been recruited and trained, this is made up of 12 local people that deliver hate crime awareness activities which include challenging prejudice and hate

Funding and grants

5.6 The Council's mainstream grants programme spends £105,000 per annum funding a number of small grants for local community organisations to undertake cohesion projects. A good example is the 'Equal Voices Project' delivered by East London Advanced Technology Training which aimed to enable newly-arrived migrant women to be empowered, by engaging with equal participation on local issues that are important and meaningful to them.

5.7 ELATT delivered:

- 37 Citizenship sessions with 296 participants
- 18 Participation in skills workshops
- 10 participants involved in community volunteering

5.8 The Council commissions a number of community forums and large projects which deliver, promote and enhance cohesion in the borough as an example of such a project:

5.9 Section 106 monies from two developments have been used to fund the delivery of a Cohesion Programme focussing on developing and delivering cohesion projects in Mile End and Aldgate East Master plan areas. These projects will be commissioned by the Council and will aim to build local neighbourhood groups that bring people from different backgrounds together to hold events that increase cross cultural understanding and to increase participation in local community activities.

Cohesion offer in Schools

5.10 In order to promote community cohesion amongst young people in schools, the Council has commissioned the HEC Global Learning Centre to deliver a number of initiatives for schools. These include: helping schools develop innovative lesson plans. Delivering 'Train the Trainer' Training Materials for School Council, pupil and staff, that will help develop thinking tools, and raise awareness and understanding amongst young people around issues of community cohesion, equality and hate crime.

6. Findings and Recommendations

Approach & summary of findings

6.1 The challenge session considered the key findings from the Casey Review and sought to establish to what extent those findings were prevalent in Tower Hamlets, by considering and comparing factual and statistical evidence. The session also considered those issues which are specific to Tower Hamlets and not necessarily addressed by the Casey Review such as the impact of rapid housing and business development on community cohesion.

Introduction

6.2 The challenge session provided an opportunity to take a strategic perspective on cohesion and avoid a silo'd approach to ensure that it is not seen as the responsibility for one team or one department but all relevant council services. It was recognised the efforts and the range of work being undertaken or commissioned by the Council including:

- Funding cohesion projects through the mainstream grants programme;
- Commissioning larger pilot projects such as s106 funded cohesion project for Aldgate and Mile End areas;
- The Council's work with various forums to tackle cohesion issues such as the TMG, community engagement forum, and refugee forum.

It was however noted that there is an absence of an overall cohesion strategy to pull all the Council's activities in this area together.

6.3 The session looked at a range of issues to consider the overall approach to community cohesion, including whether the Council's housing/regeneration policies are both designed to improve integration and reduce segregation. It was also considered whether the Council's planning department takes into account how spaces and housing is designed to encourage interaction of different groups. In the Idea Stores the challenge session spoke about the 2 million residents visiting the stores and the spaces that they use and interact with in the stores. There was an identified opportunity to make better use of the 'third space' and how that can be designed better to promote interaction between residents. They also considered the effectiveness of ESOL provision as they recognised that having a good command of the English language is important for integrating into society and accessing economic opportunities.

Mainstreaming cohesion in everything the Council does

6.4 Challenge session members felt that when a planning application comes to committee, Members should be asking questions around cohesion and how it will be impacted. It was felt through existing housing development policy the Council was perpetuating the segregation of communities. The session concluded that shared facilities between private dwellings and social tenants in developments were a way of encouraging interaction.

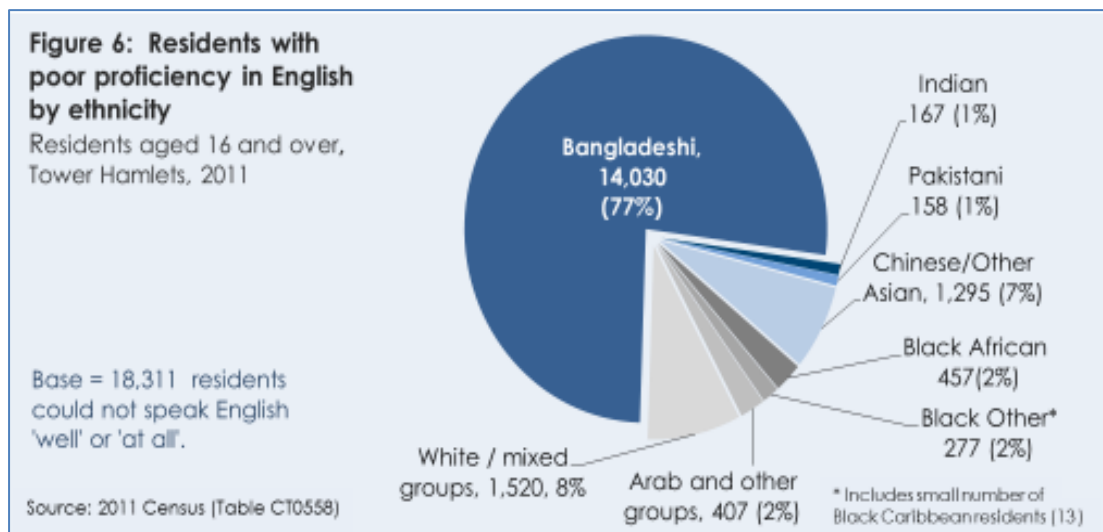
- 6.5 The session discussed how the Council's overall number of Council policies do not support and encourage community cohesion. As an example the Housing and Planning Policy which promotes the division of private dwellings and social housing could lead to segregation and division of communities. In addition school admissions policy does not take into account the mixing of pupils from different backgrounds. There was an identified need of further work to analyse to what extent this occurs in other areas of Council business.
- 6.6 The session looked at an example of the use of S106 development money for the delivery of a projects focussing on aiming to improve cohesion in the Mile End and Aldgate East Master Plan areas. The two projects will be significant in terms of scale, will generate wider interest and could potentially gain recognition as a pathfinder in the local government and voluntary sectors. The two projects aim to increase participation in the local community, build local neighbourhood groups that bring people from different backgrounds together and hold events that increase cross-cultural understanding. The challenge session recommended that the Council undertake similar initiatives and reviewed and documented the lessons learned from this project.
- 6.7 It was also identified that there was limited cross council work on cohesion and that more needed to be done to address the impact on community cohesion of council and partner activities. The session was told about the 'Social Integration Event' organised by London Councils on 6th April 2017. There the GLA said that its objective is to 'mainstream' the cohesion agenda across all areas of its work, Therefore, there is precedence at the regional level that this is the best approach to take.
- 6.8 On funding it was reported that the Council had a fund of 150k to commission cohesion work. The challenge session questioned whether this was enough to deliver cohesion work that would have a lasting impact on the borough. Therefore there was an identified need to maximise the use of external funding and to mainstream cohesion considerations across council services so that funds across the council could be leveraged.

Recommendation 1: The Council develops an approach and action plan to: mainstream cohesion across Council services and activities, explore external funding opportunities and develop a robust evaluation, review and reporting process for all cohesion activities and initiatives.

ESOL provision and language as a driver of cohesion

- 6.9 The Casey Review identified that English language proficiency was a key barrier to integration and it noted that lack of proficiency of the language was an issue which prevented ethnic minority communities fully integrating. The challenge session found that the Council's Idea Store Learning Service's (ISL) ESOL provision was already delivering provision to many ethnic minority group as can be seen in para 6.17.

6.10 In the 2011 census responders who could not speak English 'well' or 'at all' 77% of them were Bangladeshi. The next largest group at 8% was White/mixed groups most likely to predominantly be EU nationals.⁷ A breakdown is provided below:



6.11 ESOL is part of the ISL's delivery of community learning. There are a number of goals and aims in delivering learning to the community which is universal. Idea Stores are required to promote social cohesion in their work as they receive funding from the Skills Funding Agency and in the contract there is a legal requirement to address cohesion.

6.12 The ISL's provision is significantly more targeted towards the lowest 30% of the equalities deprivation index. Neighbouring local boroughs also use Idea Stores and the stores receive 2m visitors a year. National FE choices survey indicated that the Idea Stores were the second highest scoring library and learning service in England. There are two types of ESOL provision delivered: Accredited which involves exams and Non-Accredited which involves informal class room learning.

6.13 ISL's ESOL provision offers:

- A range of accredited and non-accredited ESOL provision from Pre Entry to Level 1.
- Delivery takes place in Idea Stores and outreach centres including schools, Job Centre Plus and children's centres.
- Upon completion of Level 1 ESOL, learners are given the option to progress to Functional Skills English and Maths. This is the first this has been piloted as an internal progression route.
- 13 learners progressed to this and are currently awaiting exam results for Level 1 (there is an aim to progress them to Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSE, and sit these exams in July).

⁷ http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Diversity/Language_proficiency_in_Tower_Hamlets.pdf

- Learners can then use their Level 2 qualification to apply for further courses/jobs e.g. teaching assistant training or apply for jobs.

6.14 The challenge session discussed the need to progress more people from ESOL provision on to Level 1 and Level 2 of the Functional Skills English and Maths. It was noted speaking to learners this jump was quite significant and that course hours needed to be extended to further support learners which ISL service has already taken steps to address.

6.15 ISL has recently started offering English conversation clubs in an informal setting – this will help to develop people’s confidence to speak English. Native English speakers come in from local community to support conversation clubs this includes mainly volunteers e.g. an oxford lecturer was supporting these clubs and people from all walks of life thereby supporting positive cohesion outcomes.

6.16 In terms of the numbers using the provision:

- 735 learners attended ESOL programmes in Idea Stores
- 140 learners accessed outreach ESOL provision
- 115 learners enrolled on IT for ESOL courses.
- A further 140 residents attended informal English Conversation Clubs in Idea Stores (co-facilitated by Idea Store staff and volunteers).
- 71% of ESOL learners were female (in line with national averages).
- 360 ESOL learners on accredited programmes in 2015-16 completed ESOL qualifications. The overall pass rate in these exams was 84%.

6.17 The ethnicity of the learners is included in the table below:

ESOL Ethnicity Breakdown 2015-16	% of Total
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	65.53%
White - Other	20.03%
Black or Black British - African	3.68%
All Other	10.77%

Achievement Breakdown	2015-16
Attendance	92%
Retention	85%
Achievement (Accredited & Non-Accredited)	93%

6.18 Ofsted rated the service as good in November 2016 and stated: “*Staff members ensure that British values are embedded into the core values of the Idea Stores*”.

- 6.19 ISL used the Council's core values such as valuing diversity by being inclusive and valuing others' contribution and engaging others by showing respect, listening and building relationships and partnerships to define British Values for its learners. Respecting and tolerating others, listening to others and observing classroom rules. All learners are encouraged to speak English in lessons so the English language becomes the common factor in their interaction.
- 6.20 There is an opportunity to make the operation of ESOL courses in the borough more efficient, ESOL is 40% of budget for the service. There is a need for sustainable programmes as the service is on a year by year funding from the Skills Funding Agency. It is important to address the funding question. How can funding from the different sources be maximised to make ESOL programmes sustainable?
- 6.21 ISL spoke about working in partnership with other providers of ESOL courses in the borough it recognised that this was needed to ensure better use of resources and deliver cohesion outcomes. Tower Hamlets College is one of the major providers of ESOL in the borough. It has become the project leader for North East London's Basic English Language for the Unemployed Project after being awarded £2.1 million in funding from the European Social Fund. The project focuses on pre-entry ESOL to support progression to further skills training, and employment through sessions set up to teach important job searching skills such as cv writing and job application.
- 6.22 ISL recognised the need to work in partnership with ESOL providers across the borough. The challenge session identified that the development of a borough wide assessment process would help to ensure a more efficient and best use of funding to deliver ESOL classes across the borough. The borough has numerous providers delivering ESOL however it appears that this is not co-ordinated efficiently in a central way. The result is that funding is not being used efficiently to fill course places as there may be courses that are not running at full capacity.
- 6.23 The challenge session also determined that there is a need to work in partnership with all providers. One of the ways this might work is that by using a uniform needs assessment process. All partners can assess what people's needs are and assess where there is capacity in the borough to deliver courses so for example if an ESOL class was oversubscribed at an Idea Store, learners could be slotted into an ESOL place that is being run by partners elsewhere in the borough such as Tower Hamlets College or other smaller providers. This would be aligned to the Casey report recommendation on encouraging learners to access ESOL provision and learning the language as a driver for positive cohesion in the community.

Recommendation 2: Idea Store Learning should explore a common assessment process between internal and external providers of ESOL in the borough to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs and better matching to course places.

Commissioning for cohesion outcomes

- 6.24 The challenge session reviewed and contrasted various acute cohesion related issues that were specific to Tower Hamlets, and the extent to which the observations and findings of the Casey review mirrored these issues and social demographic conditions.
- 6.25 The Casey review linked segregation to economic exclusion (e.g. where there is high proportion of ethnic minority in wards it was also found that there was high levels of unemployment amongst women often due to cultural barriers to work). The challenge session found that the dynamics identified in northern towns and cities in the Casey report were not as applicable to Tower Hamlets a borough based in a cosmopolitan city environment in inner London.
- 6.26 There are many different ways social mixing takes place but the Casey report was focussed primarily on schools. There was an identified need to promote cohesion beyond the school and therefore the challenge session felt that Tower Hamlets should go beyond the Casey review recommendations and also consider the level of social mixing that takes place in the borough outside the school environment. They felt that in their experience of working in the community, that this was minimal.
- 6.27 The challenge session asserted that that Tower Hamlets schools are extremely segregated but recognised that this reflected where people had located in the area. There is a perception of deep segregation in the community as an example the session referred to the trend of the white affluent population sending their children to schools outside the borough.
- 6.28 The Deputy Young Mayor mentioned that at her school, approximately 75% of the school population was Bengali but that this mix in itself did not prevent cohesion... She quoted "I was part of Cambridge maths competition where we got to mix with other people of different backgrounds over a period of time" she felt that schools were not required to have a mixed population to be cohesive but that what was needed was more opportunities for people to meet and interact.
- 6.29 In order to promote community cohesion amongst young people in schools, the Council has commissioned the HEC Global Learning Centre to: develop innovative lesson plans, 'Train the Trainer' Training Materials for School Councils, pupil and staff, that will help develop thinking tools, and raise awareness and understanding amongst young people around issues of community cohesion, equality and hate crime. The challenge session

recognised that work was taking place with schools to promote British values and community cohesion however it was felt that more work needed to take place with cohorts outside of the school such as in youth centres.

- 6.30 The challenge session was of the view that the Annual Resident Survey (ARS) measure which suggested that 87% of people in the borough got on well with each other was not an adequate indicator of cohesion in the borough. The challenge session was not sure how this question was phrased but felt the reality did not reflect this. The challenge session recognised that integration and segregation issues were not as polarising as some of the areas mentioned in the Casey review e.g. the tension and violence in northern cities but nevertheless believed there to be divisions in the borough between some BME and non BME groups.
- 6.31 The challenge session recognised the great number of equalities and cohesion related initiatives that have taken place in the borough and the associated positive outcomes and impact. However the challenge session questioned whether the Council considered in its thinking the long term impact of not focussing on Cohesion (i.e. segregation and lack of integration in communities). There was a view expressed that like it was identified in the Casey Review many residents in the borough have developed 'parallel lives' to each other and that more projects needed to focus on bringing people of different backgrounds together to facilitate sustained contact.
- 6.32 One of the points that Casey review raises is the value of friendship. In order to have true cohesion you have to have activities that ensure regular contact and share space together. The session identified the need to provide an environment where social interaction between communities can take place, beyond the school to develop friendships in the community.

Recommendation 3: The Council should consider commissioning more projects which tackle isolation and encourage strong positive relations and friendship between different groups in the borough.

Approach to grants and delivering cohesion

- 6.33 The challenge session found that the council has not developed an overarching approach or cohesion strategy to pull everything together in relation to cohesion. In this financial year the Council through the Cohesion Working Group will be working with partners and stakeholders to determine the borough's cohesion priorities and agree a comprehensive approach to cohesion across the borough. It was also recognised that this strategy should align/follow the Government's response to Casey and any regional response such as from the GLA.
- 6.34 The challenge session noted that that there were notable strengths in the borough. These include; evidence that people want to get involved and are passionate about where they live and there is a demonstrable desire to take

part in community events. It was mentioned that through the Voluntary Community Sector there were hundreds of community organisations carrying out cohesion work in the borough. The challenge session discussed the legacy of the 1990s; it is quite natural that people will come to organisations for support from different communities and that there is a natural tendency by the VCS to support migrant communities.

- 6.35 The challenge session suggested that it is important that the Council challenges outcomes of third sector organisations and make sure that they are truly opening up VCS event to others and promoting cohesion.
- 6.36 It was the experience of the Council through the Tension Monitoring Group that most of the racial and other tensions and incidents in the borough are as a result of non-residents coming into the area to stir up discontent such as Britain First coming from outside the borough and causing tension with local residents and that it was rare that major tensions were displayed between residents in the borough. It is however recognised there have been recent alleged incidents of acid/liquid attacks by alleged perpetrators in the borough from a White British background against victims who have a BME background which is currently being investigated.
- 6.37 The challenge session referred to the Old Ford Housing organisation who received an award for the Trinity Community Centre which brought different communities together(e.g. the White British, Somali and Bengali group). The centre achieved cohesion by providing a single venue for these various charitable organisations and their clients to interact. This took away suspicion and fear between these communities leading to a more open and honest relationship. It was suggested that the Council ought to review its community building policy in relation to VCS organisations to see how it can further promote cohesion and to learn from this example.
- 6.38 The session identified a need to ensure VCS partners understood how important cohesion could be in securing future grants and that the Council policy needed to emphasise its importance more strongly in future funding and commissioning activity.

Recommendation 4: The Council reviews the grant and commissioning policies to ensure that there is a stronger focus on cohesion

The Councils' leadership role

- 6.39 The challenge session stated that Councillors need to be able to effectively scrutinise and appreciate the impact of cohesion in their Council and community roles i.e. when sitting on planning committees scrutinising new development proposals. The Council needs to ensure that the leaders in the community understand the importance of the impact on cohesion and promote the right messages in their day to day role in public office and when interacting with the community. Under the Council's public sector equalities

duty the Council has to foster good relations between those with a protected characteristics and those with not. Therefore the Council developing a leadership role in ensuring cohesion is being considered in its policies and decision making would demonstrate it meeting this duty.

- 6.40 The challenge session queried whether there was training for Senior Staff, Members and Community Leaders, the service suggested that it has carried out training but not for this audience. The challenge session felt that strong leadership on cohesion with Members, senior officers, and community leaders needed to be developed. In order to develop leadership on cohesion leaders needed to be informed on cohesion.

Recommendation 5: Explore how leadership on cohesion can be developed by the Council through the delivery of specialised training for councillors, senior officers and community leaders.

Social and economic impact

- 6.41 In the discussion there were a number of challenges to cohesion identified in the borough. The impact of new development on established communities e.g. the rapid regeneration introducing segregation issues, such as, class issues. The challenge session felt that developments are being designed in a way that is perpetuating segregation e.g. social and private housing are being designed in way that physically separates living accommodation between the two groups which results in people not meeting or interacting, not feeling a sense of being part of the community. It was also noted that often children from such gated communities were being sent to schools outside the borough, possibly encouraging further future segregation. It was also noted that there was an absence of shared facilities between these groups such as community centres.
- 6.42 The challenge session stated that change comes from the top. There was a need to understand the divisions that exist in the community and what can be done about them. There was a need to understand the impact of development and gentrification on existing established communities and how various socio-economic groups live 'parallel and segregated' lives in the borough. There was also a need for the Council to consider its Local Plan and whether community cohesion is being considered in the future development of the borough. The challenge session suggested that the Mayor to consider convening a taskforce that looks into Community Cohesion to address those types of issues.
- 6.43 According to the census the Bangladeshi population makes up almost one-third (32%) of the borough's population. A breakdown of ethnicity of the population by ward is included below in para 6.47.
- 6.44 It is useful to note that the Shadwell Ward has a higher than average Bangladeshi population at 52% where the White British population is 20%.

The St Dunstan's Ward also has similar demographics with a 51% Bangladeshi population against 23% of White British Population. On the other hand the White British residents comprise 31% of the borough's population and in Bow East Ward; White British make up 50% of the population against 17% of Bangladeshi Population in the Ward. This is also the case in Bow West Ward where there is a 50% White British population and a 21% Bangladeshi population,

6.45 It is therefore evident that at least on geographical lines there is segregation in Tower Hamlets. According to Casey, concentration of people from specific communities can lead to high levels of segregation in schools where the ethnic make-up mirror residential areas and this can lead to a lack of integration into wider society due to not interacting with people of different backgrounds. However, the Council does not have any evidence that such segregation was intentional. Even with segregation, it has not had any records of disturbances within the borough between these different groups. There is recognition by the Council that this may be the unintended consequences of Housing Policy in terms where housing was available to place residents rather than an intentional choice of residents to reside in specific wards.

6.46 The make-up of the other wards is contained in the table below:

WARD	BME %	ETHNIC GROUP		
		BANGLADESHI %	WHITE BRITISH %	WHITE OTHER %
Bethnal Green	53	32	37	11
Blackwall and Cubitt Town	50	15	32	18
Bow East	40	17	50	10
Bow West	41	21	50	9
Bromley North	68	42	25	7
Bromley South	69	44	23	7
Canary Wharf	51	15	29	20
Island Gardens	42	14	39	19
Lansbury	64	39	28	8
Limehouse	41	17	41	18
Mile End	65	42	25	10
Poplar	67	41	23	10
Shadwell	71	52	20	9
Spitalfields and Banglatown	58	41	27	16
St Dunstan's	70	51	23	7
St Katharine's and Wapping	29	13	50	21
St Peter's	53	34	35	13
Stepney Green	64	47	27	8
Weavers	48	29	38	14
Whitechapel	59	38	26	14

From the Census 2011

Recommendation 6: Explore setting up a taskforce to consider the impact of gentrification on cohesion in the borough.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The challenge session has established that there are areas of segregation such as in specific wards in the borough and in some of the borough's schools. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this segregation has been intentional rather it is thought that this is purely accidental and may be a result of the unintended consequences of Housing Policy. This is one of the reasons why the challenge session focused on developing recommendations relating to mainstreaming cohesion across Council services as they believed cohesion wasn't being considered in the decision making process and policies of the Council.
- 7.2 Furthermore, the report has extensively tested the argument that segregation and lack of integration is linked to economic exclusion particularly of BME women. The evidence in the borough is that there are many other reasons for the economic exclusion of BME women rather than segregation or integration for example discrimination by employers and lack of accessible and affordable child care preventing women from entering the workforce.
- 7.3 The challenge session however did find that the lack of English Language proficiency was a barrier to integration and therefore has made recommendations to address the efficiency and effectiveness of ESOL provision in the borough.
- 7.4 The challenge session discussed the need for Councillors to be able to effectively scrutinise and appreciate the impact of cohesion in their Council and community roles i.e. when sitting on planning committees scrutinising new development proposals, or in their interactions with the community. Therefore the session discussed targeted training for Members and community leaders.
- 7.5 It was also observed that the rapid development of the borough and the gentrification of Tower Hamlets have had a negative impact on community cohesion. It was felt that this is already creating segregation and lack of integration between classes. The challenge session felt that in the absence of cohesion considerations in planning policy this is likely to make this trend more entrenched through further developments e.g. by physically separating private dwellings and social housing thereby physically separating new communities with settled communities. The session found examples of newcomers sending their children to schools outside the borough as another manifestation of this segregation.