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A Message From the North West Team - Community Cohesion Unit (CCU)

Since our last edition, a number of serious events across the North West and nationally have required support from the Community Cohesion Unit. Alongside this, we are increasingly aware of the escalating conflict in the Middle East and the impact this is having on communities here in the UK. We are working closely with local authorities and partners to understand how events are being felt locally, including any emerging tensions, concerns around misinformation, and the wellbeing of affected communities. This includes maintaining open lines of communication with places, faith and community partners, and supporting proportionate, preventative responses where needed. We have continued to work closely with local partners and communities, providing support and ensuring concerns are heard and acted upon. Across the North West, and more widely, we continue to hear about the complex challenges communities are facing. The Community Cohesion Unit remains committed to supporting local authorities and partners to understand local impacts, address emerging risks, promote cohesion, and build resilient, connected communities. We also want to recognise and thank all of you reading this and partners across the region for the inspiring work you continue to deliver every day. Your commitment and leadership in the cohesion space is making a real difference, and we remain grateful for the dedication you bring to supporting communities through challenging times.

Policy & Programme Updates

UK Government New Media Literacy Action Plan

The government's Media Literacy Action Plan (2026–2029) sets out a cross-government programme to help people navigate the digital world safely. Built around supporting people where they are, sharing what works, and encouraging action across all sectors, it focuses on improving access to trusted information, raising awareness of media literacy, and strengthening resilience to misinformation and online harms. Key commitments include a national family-focused campaign, potential new obligations for the BBC, better access to health and civic information, stronger fraud-prevention messaging, and support for local journalism.

The plan also prioritises children and young people by strengthening media literacy in the curriculum, expanding access through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, boosting digital and AI skills, and providing tools like the Kids Online Safety Hub. It further aims to empower local communities through cohesion and digital inclusion initiatives, build local authority capability with LGA and Belong, and work with Ofcom on place-based approaches. Finally, it embeds media literacy across wider government strategies and promotes stronger evidence and evaluation to ensure interventions have measurable impact. [Read more here](#)





Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Protecting What Matters: Government Priorities for a More Cohesive UK

In March, the government published “Protecting What Matters: Towards a more confident, cohesive, and resilient United Kingdom”, setting out a response to growing pressures on social cohesion. The strategy covers why social cohesion is central to national resilience and security. It explains some of the key issues impacting social cohesion and the actions the government is taking towards confident, cohesive, and resilient communities.

In summary it, sets out the government’s strategy to rebuild social cohesion by investing in local pride and community infrastructure, managing the pace of migration and strengthening integration expectations, and taking firmer action against hate, extremism and online harms. It combines long-term place-based investment, stronger support for local authorities, and new rapid-response mechanisms for moments of tension, alongside reforms to education, faith engagement, and public services. The plan also modernises the UK’s approach to extremism and digital threats by tackling harmful narratives, foreign interference and unsafe online environments, while embedding shared values, national identity, and community resilience at the core of government policy. [Read the full strategy here](#)

North West Cohesion Spotlight

Building Trust and Reducing Tensions in Westmorland & Furness

Westmorland and Furness Council demonstrates the value of locally rooted, preventative and reactive cohesion approaches through working with The Flowhession Foundation. Their work in Dalton-in-Furness emerged in response to community tensions surrounding the new South Lakes Islamic Centre, where misinformation and apprehension had begun to affect relationships between different parts of the community. The Flowhession Foundation designed a programme centred on dialogue, trust-building and shared identity, bringing together influential local figures to address concerns early and strengthen understanding across different groups. Tailored workshops focused on practical tools for reducing tensions and developing constructive routes forward. This stands out as an example of how timely and community-led interventions can help address tensions and begin to build resilience across a place.



Community Cohesion Unit’s Volunteering Day with Action Asylum

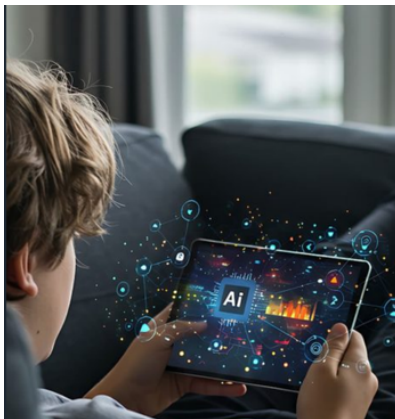
CCU joined Action Asylum and partners in North Wales, gaining first hand insight into how the programme builds confidence, connection and belonging among people seeking asylum and other local residents. Action Asylum, based within Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM), brings people together through shared activities such as cooking and environmental projects, creating opportunities for trust and relationships to grow organically. In North Wales, volunteers worked alongside Denbighshire County Council and The Wildlife Trust to plant c.850 trees, contributing to a wider biodiversity project supporting the reintroduction of beavers. The shared activity paired with food prepared through ALM’s cooking project created a space for conversation, teamwork, learning, and moments of laughter. Participants spoke about the skills and wellbeing benefits gained through volunteering, demonstrating how inclusive opportunities can counter negative narratives and showcase cohesion in practice.





Generation Isolation: OnSide's Youth Research

OnSide has published its latest Generation Isolation report, based on responses from over 5,000 young people aged 11–18 across England. The study highlights rising loneliness, digital dependency and isolation in young people's lives, alongside a strong desire for in-person connection. Key findings show that 39% of young people are turning to AI for advice or company, and almost half have had negative friendship experiences online, affecting their confidence and trust. While 76% spend most of their free time on screens, 49% say they feel most connected when spending time with friends face-to-face. The report also underlines the importance of accessible youth provision: 92% of Youth Zone attendees say it has made a positive difference, particularly through making new friends. Yet only 12% of young people currently attend a youth centre. Young people were clear about what would most improve their lives: more affordable leisure activities, safe social spaces, and opportunities to meet new people. [Read the full report here](#)



New Guidance – Common Ground: Building Cohesive Communities

The Local Government Association (LGA), in partnership with the Belong Network, has released new national guidance to help councils strengthen social cohesion and respond to rising pressures facing communities across England. The guidance provides a framework for addressing issues such as online misinformation, community tensions and hate crime, while embedding cohesion across local services. Common Ground is structured around practical chapters that support councils to lead place-based cohesion work more confidently. It includes:

- **Statutory duties and legal responsibilities** – helping councils understand their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and how cohesion links to wider legal frameworks.
- **Practical tools and models** – offering step-by-step approaches for managing tensions, responding to local incidents, and embedding cohesion across council services.
- **Partnership working** – setting out how councils can collaborate with public services, faith groups, civil society and businesses, recognising that cohesion is the responsibility of all.
- **Good practice case studies** – showcasing examples from across the country of what works in building stronger, safer and more connected communities. These provide real-world insight for areas facing similar challenges.
- **Developing local cohesion strategies** – outlining consistent, evidence-based approaches that councils can use to build long-term resilience.

The guidance arrives at a time when divisions have become more visible. Councils reported a need for a shared language, clearer national direction and practical support to help address these challenges confidently. Common Ground directly responds to those requests, giving local authorities a stronger foundation for leading cohesive, resilient communities. Local authorities can use the guidance to shape or refresh cohesion strategies, improve responses to community tensions, and embed cohesion in day-to-day service delivery. Public sector partners can draw on the shared language and models to strengthen joint working and develop consistent approaches. Voluntary, community and faith groups can use the case studies and partnership guidance to better align their work with local priorities and contribute to a whole-system approach. Belong and the LGA will also be rolling out training and test-and-learn opportunities to support councils in putting the guidance into practice. [Read the full guidance here](#)

Keep in Touch

If you would like us to showcase a project, initiative, or your organisation in our next newsletter, please get in touch!

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