

# LCC Cohesion & Integration Strategy 2024-28

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## Lancashire Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2024-2028

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## 1. Introduction

The Lancashire Cohesion & Integration Strategy 2024-28 sets our key priorities to help us to deliver our ambition to make Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper. Everyone in Lancashire has a role to play in achieving our goals to make Lancashire a great place. Building trust and confidence to help realise our ambition requires us to interact with communities and listen to their opinions and values through active participation, consultation, and collaboration.

The county council is amongst those public authorities included under the Public Sector Equality Duty which has three general aims which authorities should give "due regard" to in exercising all of their functions.

The general duty of the Public Sector Equality Duty states that public authorities, in the exercise of their duties, must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity (removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic or those who do not share it, and encouraging participation in public life or any activity in which participation is low).
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it/community cohesion.

This strategy focuses on nurturing a sense of belonging, establishing shared values, and enhancing social connections, with the aim of strengthening the community's social fabric. Community cohesion plays a crucial role in mitigating inequalities within communities. By encouraging understanding and collaboration amongst diverse groups, it helps reduce social and economic disparities, ensuring that all community members have equal opportunities to thrive.

## 2. Vision

Our vision for Lancashire County Council revolves around promoting community cohesion by fostering an environment where all residents feel valued and included. We aspire to cultivate collaboration, celebrate diversity, and dismantle barriers to social integration. We want Lancashire to be the County where people choose to create a home, raise their children, develop a career, and grow old in. We are committed to developing and celebrating our diverse communities, heritage, and landscape to create a strong sense of place we can all be proud of, and residents lead happier, healthier lives.

## 3. Demographics

Due to in-depth research, it has been identified there is a business case for a Lancashire ethnic minority partnership to be established to enhance and address current considerations and approaches. Over the last 10 years Lancashire has seen many changes such as: The population in Lancashire- 12 has risen since the 2011 Census (1,023,850) to 2021 Census (1,235,352). Recent years have witnessed an increase in cultural diversity, highlighted by the 2021 Census, underscoring the importance of tolerance and respect for differences. In 2021, the "White" ethnic group had increased by 17,908 people (1.7%) since the 2011 Census, and the "Other than white" ethnicities had risen by 46,104 persons (50.9%).



In the Lancashire-14 area, the 2021 Census results show that Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle, and Preston have the highest proportions of ethnicities "Other than white" (39.7%, 29.6%, 27.6% respectively), and are above the proportions for England and Wales (18.5%) and England (19.0%).

Through research we can work collaboratively to tackle cohesion at a local level for each District. We will gather evidence and knowledge to tackle local challenges.

#### 4. Community cohesion challenges

To enhance community cohesion in Lancashire, it is essential to navigate the complex challenges that vary locally. Often within each group there are multi-layers of diversity and to address cohesion it is vital to understand the neighbourhood challenges which can include:

- **Demographics and Cultural Diversity:** Understand the needs, cultures, religion, and ethnic influence level of cohesion in communities.
- **Social and Neighbourhood Segregation:** Divisions by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religion lead to disparities in housing, education, and employment, affecting community dynamics.
- **Economic Challenges and Deprivation:** Economic difficulties and deprivation hinder shared prosperity, necessitating targeted initiatives to overcome these obstacles.
- **Educational Disparities:** Gaps in educational attainment contribute to community divisions, highlighting the need for equal educational opportunities.
- **Poverty and Housing:** Economic instability and housing affordability issues limit community participation
- **Communication Barriers:** Language barriers impede cohesion, making language inclusivity and communication initiatives vital.
- **Mental Health:** Mental health influences community integration by affecting individuals' ability to engage socially and economically. Access to mental health resources and support networks influences community cohesion.
- **Gender inequality:** When people feel excluded by unequal treatment due to gender, this can then lead to a lack of trust in institutions, authorities, hindering the development social cohesion.
- **Unique Group Challenges:** Specific challenges for youth and the elderly, such as educational gaps and social isolation.
- **Social Media Impact:** This can have positive influence and connections and it can also have a negative influence and impact on cohesion and integration.

#### 5. Our principles

We will promote community cohesion and integration by our three-pronged approach. We aim to strategically tackle local issues collectively, and address the diverse challenges faced by the communities by collaborating through:

- I. **Existing Services:** Collaborate with other departments to deliver services that add social value by leveraging our expertise and knowledge. Providing holistic solutions to inequalities as well as addressing cohesion and integration challenges
- II. **Partnerships:** We are committed to fortifying existing partnerships with the Districts, government departments, voluntary community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) and businesses while engaging with emerging and established communities. Through open communication and shared goals, we endeavour to tackle deprivation, empower communities, and foster trust.



- III. **Communities:** To effectively identify and address the needs of our communities, we actively collaborate with community groups, fostering dialogue and nurturing a sense of belonging. This proactive engagement serves as a catalyst for promoting cohesion among both emerging and existing communities, including deprived and hard-to-reach communities to enhance social bonds.

## 6. Key priorities

Our key priority areas will be to:

1. **Promote Social Inclusion:** This objective focuses on ensuring that all members of the community feel valued, respected, and included regardless of their background, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics.
2. **Build Trust and Understanding:** Developing trust and understanding amongst community members is essential for fostering cohesion.
3. **Empower Communities:** Empowering communities involves giving individuals and groups the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to participate fully in community life.
4. **Address Conflict and Tension:** Conflict and tension can undermine community cohesion. Collaborate with services to address conflict and promoting tolerance.

We will do this by focussing on the following themes:

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Transport &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Education &amp; Early years</b>	<b>Employment &amp; skills</b>	<b>Digital connectivity</b>

**I. Economy:** Economic prosperity serves as a cornerstone for fostering community cohesion and integration. We will advocate for inclusive economic policies, eliminate barriers to fair participation, and empower individuals and communities towards shared prosperity.

**II. Transport:** Transportation networks enhance mobility, allowing individuals to easily access essential services, employment opportunities, and social gatherings, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion. Through transport and infrastructure developments we will ensure that community members can easily access essential services such as healthcare, education, and recreation, promoting a sense of belonging and well-being among residents.

**III. Housing:** Access to adequate housing is fundamental for fostering community stability and cohesion. We will advocate for affordable housing policies, supporting initiatives to address homelessness, and collaborating to tackle Housing challenges in the communities in particularly from deprived neighbourhoods.

**IV. Health & Wellbeing:** Health and wellbeing are essential components of community cohesion. We will work to reduce health inequalities, foster community engagement in health initiatives, and collaborate to promote holistic wellbeing.

**V. Environment:** Access to clean and safe natural areas promotes a sense of belonging and connection among individuals, transcending cultural and social differences. We will collaborate with partners to add social value and look at ways to promote green spaces,



support projects that promote recycling and increase awareness of our carbon footprint and encourage education on climate change issues.

**VI. Education and Early Years:** Education plays a crucial role in promoting social cohesion within communities as it helps to build vibrant communities. Education helps to develop the skills and knowledge needed for people to work together, thrive and add value to long-term prospects. We will support cross-cultural exchange initiatives in schools that enables individuals to learn from one another, fostering mutual respect and promote an inclusive education system.

**VII. Employment and Skills:** Employment is important for community cohesion because it provides individuals with a sense of purpose and belonging. When people have stable jobs, they are more likely to feel connected to their community and employment also helps to foster social interactions and relationships. Having access to employment opportunities can reduce inequality and promote inclusivity. We will work with businesses to create job placement and apprenticeships for underrepresented groups, promoting diversity in the workforce, support vocational training to enhance job readiness and career advancement and collaborate with partners to enhance employment opportunities.

**VIII. Digital Connectivity:** Digital exclusion can impact community cohesion by limiting access to essential services and opportunities, further widening the gap between diverse groups within the community. Addressing digital exclusion is therefore vital in promoting inclusivity and equality in Lancashire, ensuring that all members of the community have equal access to resources and opportunities. We will collaborate with partners to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusivity.

## 7. Community engagement

Community engagement is vital for cohesion and integration as it allows for diverse perspectives and fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity. It also helps build trust between community members and institutions, leading to more effective problem-solving and decision-making processes. We will work collaboratively to:

- **Promote Diversity and Social Interaction:**
  - Co-creating initiatives that celebrate diversity and inclusion of all community groups. Collaboratively with VCFSE to create safe spaces for open discussions.
  - Collaborating with districts to gain insights into local challenges.
- **Develop Inclusive Decision-Making and Collaboration:**
  - Inclusive decision-making is a priority, with active participation sought from residents through consultations.
  - Through active consultation with services, providers and VCFSE
- **Build trust and address needs:**
  - Actively engaging with diverse communities to build trust through transparent communication and meaningful collaboration.

## 8. Cohesion and Integration Strategic Outcomes

We are working towards the same vision of making Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper by focussing on delivering better services, caring for the vulnerable, supporting economic growth and protecting our environment. In doing so delivering key cohesion and integration strategic outcomes in the following areas:



### **Communities and Place**

1. Established Lancashire Ethnic Minority Partnership in Lancashire.
2. Better services provided through collaboration with community groups including ethnic groups, non-ethnic groups, existing and emerging communities which contributes to building resilient communities.
3. Providing culturally sensitive and accessible services that meet the needs of all.

### **Economy**

4. Improved accessibility to economic opportunities, to all.
5. Strengthened local collaborations for economic growth. More inclusive job opportunities which helps build a fairer and inclusive society.

### **Transport and infrastructure**

6. Enhance wider community participation with services, including transport, that create a shared commitment to the environment.
7. Increased knowledge of carbon footprints and benefits of cycling and walking, to various communities in a customised approach.

### **Environment and Climate**

8. Increased diverse participation to address environment challenges from a community perspective.
9. Ensure various communities from different backgrounds participate in environmental initiatives related to green spaces, countryside access, biodiversity, recycling and climate change.

### **Housing**

10. Have a better understanding by working with relevant partners to establish housing demand and the impact it has on community cohesion and integration.

### **Early Years and Education**

11. Ensure inclusivity assists and impacts access to educational opportunities, collaboration for targeted educational programs, providing resources for struggling students, and involving parents and community members, also enhancing educational attainment, promoting community input.

### **Employment and Skills**

12. Ensure effective engagement with hard-to-reach groups and all communities in order to increase awareness of opportunities for employment, which will empower various communities and build resilience.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

13. Improved access to health services by reducing barriers. As well as adding social value and expertise for ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority groups.
14. Work closely with relevant teams and organisations who are looking at improving healthcare access and wellness initiatives.

## **9. Useful Links**

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/area-profiles/local-authority-profiles/>

[Population by ethnicity and change 2011-21 - Lancashire County Council](#)

[Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

