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# Evaluation of *Getting on Together*, the Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales

Research Summary

Social research

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**This report details findings to emerge from a two year evaluation of the delivery and impact of *Getting on Together*, the Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales.**

## Findings:

- Great strides have been made delivering *Getting on Together* since its launch in 2009. A more joined-up approach to cohesion has been nurtured within the Welsh Government. All local authorities in Wales have engaged with the agenda and hundreds of local projects have been delivered in a bid to strengthen community cohesion in Wales.
- Various challenges have been encountered along the way and progress has been mixed on some priorities. Success mainstreaming cohesion within the Welsh Government has been variable. Commitment to the agenda has been limited among some local authorities. Systems for monitoring cohesion are currently weak.
- Key success factors include high level commitment within the Welsh Government, a clear understanding of community cohesion in Wales, the generation of an action plan to support delivery, the creation of a dedicated cohesion unit within the Welsh Government, the Community Cohesion Fund, which helped secure the buy-in of local authorities, and the work of community cohesion officers at the local level.

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

### **Delivering *Getting on Together***

*Getting on Together* was launched in December 2009. The Community Cohesion Unit was established in the Welsh Government and charged with overseeing delivery of the strategy, guided by an accompanying action plan. Local authorities took the lead on promoting community cohesion at the local level and received an annual allocation from the Community Cohesion Fund to support these efforts.

### **The Community Cohesion Unit**

The Community Cohesion Unit encountered various challenges, but the majority of action plan objectives were successfully delivered. The Community Cohesion Fund was key to this success, capturing the attention and promoting the engagement of all 22 local authorities with the cohesion agenda. The Community Cohesion Unit also informed, guided, cajoled and challenged colleagues across Welsh Government to engage with the agenda, although some have remained sceptical about its relevance to their work.

### **Local Delivery of *Getting on Together***

Factors critical to effective local delivery of the cohesion agenda included a dedicated community cohesion officer, the mapping of local needs and priorities and a community cohesion action plan or strategy. Some progress was made mainstreaming cohesion, but staff in some policy areas remained uncertain about the relevance of community cohesion to their work.

The Community Cohesion Fund was the catalyst for activities in many areas, giving local authorities a financial incentive to engage with the cohesion agenda. Rural authorities were typically less engaged with the agenda, while large towns and cities tended to be the most engaged.

### **Local Interventions and Impacts**

The Community Cohesion Fund was allocated to the 22 local authorities in Wales and supported more than 600 local projects between 2009/10 and 2011/12. Local authorities used the Fund in different ways, some supporting a large number of small projects and

others allocating the majority of the Fund to one or two projects.

Projects were typically aligned with local community cohesion priorities, although this was not always the case. In some cases, the Community Cohesion Fund appeared to be regarded as just another source of grant funding.

Ten case study projects were analysed and provided evidence of additionality. The achievements of the case study projects can be categorised under four key headings:

- promoting responsiveness among service providers to cohesion priorities
- promoting understanding between different groups, such as young and old people
- integration support for newcomers to help them cope with their new life in Wales
- managing tensions between different groups and resolving emerging conflicts.

### **Recommendations**

Sustaining the gains secured through delivery of *Getting on*

*Together* and overcoming some of the more irretractable problems that have inhibited progress will require:

- continued commitment to the agenda from the Welsh Government
- a dedicated team in the Welsh Government to lead on community cohesion
- renewal of the community cohesion action plan
- the appointment of dedicated community cohesion leads across Wales
- collection of perception data on community cohesion at local and national levels
- maximising links between cohesion objectives and the Communities First programme

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