
A practical guide to help you recognise and think through conflicts which arise in the communities you work with.

The Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are particularly grateful to the Safe Communities Initiative at the Commission for Racial Equality for their support and contribution to developing this resource pack.

The Tavistock Institute
Showing compassion means the ability to communicate that you are trying to understand those that feel their views are not being heard. This involves the ability to actively listen.

Conflict is not always negative and can be essential to change if the issues it raises are channelled into the kind of debates and exchanges which help to find solutions.
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Welcome.

When there is conflict or tension in the community, individuals who understand the situation first hand and who have the personal qualities to take action are essential to finding peaceful solutions. Taking a role in resolving a conflict takes courage, persistence and humility. It requires the ability to take a step back and see the big picture so that the conflict does not hinder or destroy our ability to talk to each other. But however strong the will to build a strong inclusive society, beginning a conversation when there is tension or conflict in the air requires skills.

Some people seem naturally good at this; they make people feel at ease and seem to know how to make connections and to guide people in a conflict towards solutions. Others are less experienced yet may be uniquely in the right place at the right time to act upon the knowledge and influence they have built up through their job or community life. If you are reading this Resource Pack, it is because you are involved in work in your community. You will be trying to change things, include those who are excluded, support regeneration projects or stop injustices. You might be an individual, such as a concerned parent or resident, a police officer, a classroom assistant or a student worried about others caught up in conflicts. You may be part of networks that already know a lot about bringing together different groups with opposing views.

This Resource Pack on community conflict is designed to reach a wide range of people who could be broadly described as community workers. Its aim is to guide you through ways of working through conflict. All those involved in the examples given in this Resource Pack are, like yourself, individuals or organisations that people in the community, statutory services and authorities turn to for help and guidance in times of conflict. You may be someone involved in regenerating our neighbourhoods and communities, either through your profession or on a voluntary basis; you may be a local ward councillor, a respected person trusted to represent a faith group, a positive role model trusted by young people or an activist who lobbies for community interests. Whether your leadership role is informally bestowed upon you, taken up because of your beliefs and interests or defined by your job description, you have an important position in the work of community regeneration and building community cohesion.

Why is community conflict an issue?

The serious disturbances that took place in northern towns in 2001 gave rise to concerns about inter-ethnic community tensions. These concerns have been brought into sharp focus following the recent conflict that affected the Lozells district of Birmingham in 2005. There were several issues to come to terms with following these incidents. Firstly that inter-ethnic conflict has not arisen from irresolvable cultural differences, but that there are some serious inequalities in standards of living and opportunities that underlie group conflicts. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is working with other government departments, local authorities and local people to address these inequalities through its long-term neighbourhood renewal strategy and its wider aim of creating sustainable communities in which people want to live.

The importance of listening to and incorporating the ideas and energy of our young people in building a better future was also a key learning point of the disturbances. This is recognised in all programmes to build better relations between communities and you will see that many of the cases referred to in this resource are especially concerned with young people.

Although there is much more to be done, opportunities for all of Britain’s diverse communities are increasing. This has been the result of collaborative work between Central Government, the Commission for Racial Equality, community organisations, business and front-line services. The Government’s strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion, Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society, is all about looking beyond opportunities for individuals to the importance of strengthening society. This is not something that the Government can do alone, but it is an issue on which it can help lead: helping people come together from different backgrounds; supporting people to contribute to society; and taking a stand against racism and extremists who promote hatred.

Lastly, learning to value and manage difference is essential to building stronger communities which can tackle conflict, whether that conflict occurs on racial, religious or cultural grounds, between age groups or class. Along with tackling social inequality through regeneration of poor neighbourhoods and programmes to help the
most vulnerable out of long term unemployment, we need to create safe spaces to talk and safe ways of going about those discussions, and opportunities to interact with one another and participate in the local community. In recognition of this, in 2001 the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit began the task of building grass roots skills in facilitation and conflict resolution. The Community Facilitation Programme (July 2001–April 2004) revealed that ideas about solutions, abilities, motivation and resourcefulness reside in communities and cannot be imposed by advice from ‘above’. Conflict is not always negative and can be essential to change if the issues it raises are channelled into the kind of debates and exchanges which help to find solutions. This Resource Pack should be considered as part of the wider policies of community cohesion, integration and regeneration work to tackle the underlying causes of conflict.

What is community conflict?
Conflicts occur because of historical, cultural and economic changes that can make people anxious. If people feel excluded from the decisions being made about their communities, they will often react angrily. If they are repeatedly excluded, the anger will grow and may escalate into a major conflict. The trigger may be some seemingly small events or issues. In recent years we have seen large scale inter-ethnic conflicts. On the face of it, some conflicts can appear to result from a clash of cultures or beliefs. In reality, these conflicts can be more about differences in wealth or power. People in conflict can also be acting on their feeling about their gender, sexuality or their sense of belonging to a place.

Many community organisations work with people who feel excluded, who feel that they have no say in what is going on. If you and your organisations are introducing change, it will, by definition, disturb “the way things are done around here”. Changes will force people to think and act differently, and often affect the way resources are allocated to different uses. None of this is likely to happen without conflict. The feelings and emotions, the hopes and aspirations, the anger and the frustration that the changes bring up will often be carried into your organisation and affect your work. It can show up in disagreements between organisations and in disagreements within organisations. This is not anyone’s fault: it is what happens in any highly charged change situation. Our task is to learn from it... not to pretend it isn’t there, or just hope that it will go away.

A challenge...
Presenting a resource pack about community conflict may provoke different reactions. You may feel that resolving conflict is not your job. You may feel that it is just more paper and ask “How does any of this help me do the work? I need more time and resources, not more paper.”

Rather than adding the resource to your ever growing “to-be-read” pile, here are a few reasons why you might want to go further than this Introduction section:

- First, conflict is real. It exists. You may already feel that there is conflict, on the streets, and within and between organisations in our communities. We may call these disagreements, disturbances, discussions, deadlocks. But we mean conflict.
- Second, conflict consumes a great deal of time. It can distract you and others from the work you want to do. It is de-motivating, sapping energy and reducing your effectiveness. Unaddressed, it can breed more conflict.
- Third, working through conflict can liberate everybody, help you break out of vicious cycles, unleash creativity and energy, and allow you to address other important issues.

No matter how peace-loving you are individually, no matter how inclusive your practice, no matter how averse you may be to conflicts, you are part of developments that will provoke heated views and sometimes angry disagreements and conflicts.

So, there is a need to become more expert in recognising, naming and dealing with conflicts. There are many people around who are skilled and experienced in this area. They are prepared to confront issues and deal with them, and they are not intimidated by conflict and the emotions that accompany it. But many people feel that conflicts are to be avoided and that if they occur, they are a sign of failure; that reasonable people can always find a middle ground, a compromise that avoids unpleasantness. But there are things that need to be challenged. There may be low level racism and sexism, officials who appear to be acting unreasonably, organisations that find it difficult to adapt to new and changing realities. Challenging these, in positive ways, is part of working towards change.
Conflicts may be avoided because they are seen as someone else’s responsibility. Or they may be seen as the fault of unreasonable people who either do not understand the full picture or who can’t see beyond their own narrow self-interests. It is certainly true that some conflicts should be avoided and that there are many situations beyond the influence of community workers. But is that enough? What do you bring to the situation? To what extent could it be your role to try to manage it, even if you had no part in generating it?

The challenge you confront is how to consider conflict in a very different way, in a way that recognises the conflicting demands and needs of different people and different groups in communities – without getting hopelessly caught up in the conflict yourself. Rather than thinking of it as abnormal, think of it as an everyday part of life and work. Rather than thinking of it as someone’s “fault”, think of it as a drama in which we are all actors. The drama will play out no matter who is acting the roles. It is not the people (the actors) who cause the drama. It is changes (or lack of them) in our communities that cause the drama. And the challenge to you is to think of yourself and your role in that drama in different ways.

The issue is how do you work, robustly and sensitively, to recognise conflict, to name it, to acknowledge the real underlying causes of conflict and to find imaginative and inclusive ways of learning from it.

About this Resource Pack.
This is the aim of this Resource Pack: to take you through a series of steps to help you build an understanding of conflict and your role in it. However, it also important to say a few words about what this Resource Pack is NOT.
- It is not a training course in conflict analysis.
- It is not a mediator training programme.
- It is not a theoretical explanation of why conflicts occur.

Rather, it is a practical guide to help you recognise and think about the conflicts you confront and a series of case studies and examples of things other people have done in similar circumstances.

It provides contacts and references so that you can follow up on the things that are of most use and interest to you.

There are six sections in the Resource Pack:
- **Section One** gives some definitions and makes the important distinction between positive and negative conflict. It helps you to think about yourself in relation to conflict.
- **Section Two** looks at gathering and analysing data. If you accept that conflict is part of our work, then you will want to know how to predict when it might occur. To do that, you must collect and analyse data about what is happening in your communities.
- **Section Three** looks at how your ability to influence the causes of conflict and build relationships between others is helped by the skills, relationships and networks you build up for yourself.
- **Section Four** describes the use of mediation as a tool of conflict resolution. It is increasingly used and can be effective in the work you do.
- **Section Five** gives some ways of preparing yourself for situations where you may be confronted by challenging behaviour such as aggression, prejudice and anti-social behaviour.
- Finally, **Section Six** looks at what happens after a conflict has taken place. Conflicts leave behind feelings that may trigger further conflict if they are not addressed. This section looks at ways of moving on from conflicts and learning from them.

A final word of introduction. The Resource Pack is not written to be read from end to end. It is intended to be used as a resource, a collection of material to be dipped into as and when your need arises. If you are in the middle of a conflict, you may need to think about how you deal with challenging behaviour and how mediation might be useful (Sections Four and Five). If you know there is anger in the community, you might want to look at how you collect data and analyse it in an inclusive way that reduces the likelihood of conflict erupting (Section Two).

Whatever your need, we hope you will find some ideas and contacts here that will be useful.
Section One. Thinking About Conflict.
What do we mean by conflict?
“Conflict” is a term we use all the time. It goes with words like argument, fight, row, anger and violence. The fact is “conflict” means many different things to many different people.

This Resource Pack is mainly about conflicts that emerge from within and between our communities; conflicts that stop the successful working of our partnerships and our many community regeneration organisations; conflicts that emerge within our partnerships; conflicts that arise between different partnerships or between partnerships and the community. Community conflicts occur between different groups: generations, racial or ethnic and religious groups, areas/neighborhoods. They may be driven by a mixture of cultural and economic differences sparked by an incident around which the tensions erupt.

By implication in this Resource Pack there are many things we are NOT talking about:
• We are not talking about the conflicts caused by criminals. These are for the police to deal with.
• We are not talking about the conflicts that occur within families or between individuals that are unrelated to our work as workers/volunteers/representatives from our community and/or in partnerships and in regeneration. These are for social services to deal with.
• We are not talking about the conflict caused by individuals who need medical help. These are for health care professionals to deal with.

Conflict is hard work and many people want nothing to do with it. But some of us are drawn to thinking about and working with conflict. If you are attracted to using this Resource Pack, it says something about you as a person: that you are willing to become involved. So we are talking about conflicts in which you feel that you might be able to make a difference.

Different kinds of conflict.
There are as many different meanings of conflict as there are books written about it. Here are some useful ideas:
• Conflict is a serious disagreement or argument, a clash, a strike, a breaking, a confrontation, a collision, a fight, a struggle.
• It can break out instantly or, more typically, it can build up over a long period of time.
• People in conflict talk of not being heard or not being listened to or not being understood.

It is as if we are each talking a different language. The more we try to explain, the worse the disagreement becomes.
• Conflict feels like a threat to us: a threat to our needs or desires or beliefs. Sometimes it can feel like a threat to who we are as a person.

Positive and negative conflict.
Conflicts can be extremely negative, but not all conflict is negative: it can also be very useful and productive. In today’s complex communities many people and organisations are working to bring about change – tackling poor health, low educational achievement, rundown environments, high unemployment – and to manage the challenges of cultural diversity.

But changing things usually brings about conflict because there will be different views between different groups involved: within and between statutory organisations; within and between different communities; between young and old, men and women; between people of different cultures and faiths.

Expressing these different views is an essential part of the process of negotiation and change. Disagreeing with the way things are is an important part of being a responsible member of society, and it is important for people to have an opportunity to express their views in a safe space, without fear of condemnation or reprisals. Not feeling you have that right is a sure way of generating conflict, but speaking different views will also lead to conflict in the robust discussions that they cause.

This is positive conflict if it:
• is channelled into building trust and confidence between people.
• is channelled into finding positive solutions that meet people’s needs.
• is contained within a set of rules which protect those involved and ensure no one is damaged by them.
• ensures that no one with the right to speak is excluded from the debate.

The key principle is that:

POSITIVE CONFLICT DOES NO HARM

It may be hard work, demanding, infuriating at times, but it does no harm to the participants. Indeed, the reverse is true. Positive conflict can
build trust and confidence between people if it means that important, uncomfortable or opposing views are being spoken and not excluded. Sometimes it feels so uncomfortable that we try to avoid or suppress positive conflict. We hope this Resource Pack will make you feel more robust about positive conflict. We have all dealt with positive conflict many times. It is all a matter of confidence, patience and belief in yourself.

Negative conflict.
Negative conflict is the reverse of all this. It:
• happens when people are inhibited from expressing their views openly.
• makes the situation worse.
• does not contribute to building cohesion and trust or move towards finding consensus solutions.
• can involve intentional or unintentional violence, physical, verbal or emotional violence.
• hardens antagonism and distrust.

This Resource Pack is to help you to keep conflicts positive, to recognise negative conflicts and to know what to do about them. People have different levels of tolerance to conflict. Your discussions and your work will involve robust exchanges. If you feel you are in a negative conflict or you can see one happening, you need to be prepared to name it and deal with it.

A checklist to distinguish positive from negative conflict.

Distinguishing between positive and negative conflict is an art not a science, but there are some pointers that might help:
• First, and most obviously, if there is physical, verbal or emotional violence, you are into negative conflict. Violence is taking place if you or anyone with you answers yes to the question “Do I feel threatened in this situation?” In this case, get away from the situation and ensure that others are also safe.
• Has the issue that is causing the conflict been discussed endlessly before? Have you been round and round it and we are getting nowhere? then you have negative conflict.
• Do we always end up talking about a specific issue, no matter what the discussion should be? This would indicate a negative conflict. Do you or do other people say that after a discussion you feel bad, lessened or exploited? This is a good indication of negative conflict.

Violence.
However, it is also important to recognise that conflict can involve physical violence. There is only one rule in the face of physical violence.

PROTECT YOURSELF AND PROTECT THOSE AROUND YOU

Do nothing to aggravate the situation and move away from the violence as quickly as you can. Contact the police immediately if they are not already there. You can do nothing if you or those around you are in physical danger. Trying to do something could make matters worse.

When the immediate risk of violence has been removed, there are things that can be done and they are explained in other sections of this Resource Pack.

But physical violence is not the only sort of violence in conflict. Much more commonly, you will be confronted with verbal or emotional violence. This occurs when:
• by words or actions another person feels or is made to feel diminished, abused, discriminated against or in any way lessened in their perceptions of themselves.
• a person experiences racial, sexual or other types of harassment.
• a person feels bullied or unable to defend themselves.
• a person feels lessened or discriminated against, whether or not others think those feelings are justified.

We all have different tolerance levels. Where forthright and robust debate ends and verbal emotional violence begins is determined by each of us for ourselves. Appreciating that our views may hurt or diminish others is not an excuse to avoid robust debate; nor is it to ignore the importance of positive conflict in developing our communities. But avoiding emotional violence, ensuring procedures for dealing with it are in place and recognising the claims of victims are essential in building a strong and inclusive community that can deal positively with conflict.

What sorts of conflicts does this Resource Pack deal with?
This Resource pack is concerned with two related but different sorts of conflict:
(a) The first is direct community conflict. This is where different members of a community or
group, motivated by feelings of anger or frustration, and identifying with the needs of their community or part of it, take direct actions that lead to violent or non-violent confrontation in order, as they see it, to put their point of view across.

(b) The second is where this community conflict is reproduced in the organisations working towards change in our communities. Change usually means difficult decisions which affect livelihoods and wellbeing, where not everyone’s aspirations will be met. This will result in conflicts and confrontations in meetings, between organisations and among communities in relation to those decisions. You will have come across these conflicts many times. People fall out. People will not deal with each other positively. Organisations will not work in partnership.

In both cases we are dealing with people who are acting (in their view) with the best of motives, who feel aggrieved or have identified what they consider to be injustice or unfairness, who may feel powerless or feel they are having their authority challenged.

Causes of conflict.

There are many different views on what causes conflict. This section outlines some different views that show different ways of thinking about the causes of conflict. The views are written starkly. In real life you will hear many variations on them.

• Conflict is caused because people make mistakes in the way things are done, in the how they conduct debates and in their ability to listen and hear each other. So conflicts are caused by the people involved in our work; or
• Conflict is caused by the way we organise ourselves, the opportunities people have to express themselves politically and the quality of our democratic arrangements. So conflicts are caused by politics and organisations; or
• Conflict is caused by deep-seated injustice, which shows itself as discrimination between the powerful and the powerless, between different ethnic communities, between men and women, between people of different religions or world views, between people in different parts of the world and between humankind and nature. So conflicts are caused by historic and current injustices.

Many conflicts are about power. We talk about empowerment of our communities, but not much about power. But conflict is often about who has the right to make what decisions and that is about power. In order to understand what is driving the parties in conflict, it is useful to think about how they see themselves in relation to the authorities that enforce the law and distribute resources.

• People who feel represented but not involved in decision making are likely to believe that power (or the right to decide) rests with the authorities and obey them because they are in the best position to decide.
• People who believe that power is bestowed upon the authorities, but that we are obliged to continually check and question them because they can be incorrect or incompetent in how they exercise their power.
• People who feel alienated from the authorities or excluded from the right to make decisions may believe that the authorities have no right to exercise power over them and that their power is not legitimate.

Understanding the causes of conflict is complex. Some people apply a rational viewpoint to understanding the causes of community conflict, while others see conflict as reflecting the diverse nature of our society. The two broad opinions can be represented as:

• A conflict has a cause or causes and these can be analysed scientifically in order to determine how best to deal with it. That is, there may be many opinions, but there is only one correct opinion. (And, by the way, my opinion is the correct one!); or
• There are many perceptions of the cause of a conflict in our communities and it is not possible to prove scientifically which is correct or incorrect. It all depends on interpretation and the importance you attach to different aspects of the conflict. That is, different people with different histories, cultures or points of view will have different ways of seeing conflict. None will be totally right or totally wrong.

Underlying the conflicts we confront everyday – such as conflicts over arrangements in a new youth club, the location of a new health centre, or the distribution of grants to community organisations – there will often be deep differences in opinions that go far beyond the facts of the immediate disagreement or conflict. They may reflect different assumptions and preconceptions that are not right or wrong, although they may be more or less useful. Conflicts have many causes and not everyone will
agree on a single interpretation. However, being able to recognise and acknowledge different opinions – even where we disagree with them – is usually an important part of moving on.

The stages of conflict.
What you do about conflicts depends at what stage the conflict is. Has it just erupted? Has it been going on unresolved for a long time? Have there been past explosions that have not been dealt with? Is it a crisis at the moment or can you see a crisis looming? Are you moving forward towards some sort of resolution?

Conflicts generally go through different stages, although not all will go through every stage, and they do not necessarily go through them in the same way. But it can be useful to think about conflicts in stages.

One way of describing these stages is as follows:
• The Pre-Conflict stage, where tensions are rising due to often unexpressed differences and people often avoid each other.
• The Confrontation stage, where one group will begin to confront the other with demonstrations of anger.
• The Crisis Stage. This is the time of peak confrontation, with clashes and open hostility.
• The Outcome Stage. Immediately after the Crisis there will be some outcome. One side may win or lose, there may be some negotiation and perhaps mediation. The levels of confrontation will decrease.
• The Post-Conflict Stage. This is where actions are taken to build relations between those who were in conflict in order to return the situation to one of normal relationships. Where this does not happen, conflict can escalate once more.

Seeing conflict in stages in this way helps to ensure that any action taken is right for the stage at which the conflict has reached.

Approaches to dealing with conflict at different stages.
This Resource Pack uses different approaches to dealing with conflict. Although these don’t map exactly on the idea of stages of conflict, some tend to be more relevant at particular stages. For example:
• Section Two concerns Collecting Information and its Analysis and is particularly useful at the pre-conflict stage. If we don’t know what is going on, we won’t be able to predict when conflict is brewing. So we need to be in touch, listening and reading the signs. We often ‘feel’ that things may explode, but can we be clearer about what factors create those feelings and what to do with that information?
• Section Three looks at Building Skills, Networks and Relationships and is particularly useful in preventing an issue from escalating through the stages of conflict. In many situations, we can do little by ourselves and need to work with others. Section Three has many examples and ideas on how to build relationships and help others to build relationships that help address the causes of conflict.
• Section Four considers Mediation and is likely to be particularly useful when conflict is moving towards, or already at, the confrontation stage. It explains how mediation can be used to resolve conflict, and provides examples of how and where it is used.
• Section Five, Dealing with Challenging Behaviour, will help if you are having to deal with very difficult and conflictive behaviour in your work.
• Finally, Section Six, Evaluation and Reflection, is useful in the post-conflict stage, when there is a need to conclude or close the issues that have caused a conflict so that they don’t continue to recur. Can we rebuild relationships and help things become more manageable again? It may take time, but how do we go about it?

Your role in working with conflict.
Dealing with conflict is not easy. There are many
conflict situations that should be avoided, as there is little we can do and our involvement may make matters worse. But sometimes conflict finds us. You may be in a position of responsibility, with resources, when a conflict strikes. You may be the person who others look to for help and wisdom. You may be in a position to see conflicts developing that others do not see. You may be the one who can unlock a conflict, or prevent it from getting out of hand.

Many of us want to avoid conflict or convince ourselves that there is no conflict, even if it is obvious to others. There are many good reasons for avoiding conflict:

• Conflict is very unpredictable. We never know how people are going to react. Most of us will avoid uncertainty as it makes us feel anxious.
• Conflict may make us feel anxious because it puts us in touch with our own conflicts from the past and the pain they caused.
• Conflict causes emotions that we would rather not have to deal with.
• We may not be sure how we will react in a conflict. Will we get angry? Will we get drawn in and get trapped?
• It feels like a failure to have to admit that there is a conflict. If we were competent, we would make sure conflicts did not arise.
• What will people think of us if we try to get involved? Most of us want to be liked. The danger of getting involved in conflicts is that people may end up disliking us.
• We may think it is not our job to get involved. And it may not be, but we may have a role to play.

While these reasons for avoiding conflict are all important, sometimes avoiding conflict, or denying that it exists, is more damaging than the conflict that is dealt with openly and honestly.

By recognising the value of positive conflict it is possible to be proactive in our work and see that:

• Conflicts are part of our work in the community. If we are really about change, then conflicts are inevitable.
• Being involved in conflicts does not make us bad people. We might disagree with each other. We might not like what others say or do. But all of us are motivated by what we believe to be the right thing to do for our group, for the good of our community or our organisation.
• Conflicts make us anxious. But we may find we are more robust than we think.

• By naming a conflict and dealing with it openly and calmly, things can be improved.
• In dealing with conflict the ‘grey areas’ that exist between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ have value. We have all suffered from some form of violence at one time or another, and may also even, in indirect ways, been part of the cause of violence to someone else. Moving away from blame and taking responsibility for conflict is essential to building the personal qualities needed to be able to be recognised as someone who can think about, talk about and deal with conflict.

And having said all that, remember:

**DO NO HARM AND GET AWAY FROM PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AS FAST AS YOU CAN**

Resources.

For a detailed look at how negative community conflict has been managed in the UK see Lemos and Crane (2004) Community Conflict: Causes and Action. This can be downloaded for free from www.lemosandcrane.co.uk

The full report or summary of the evaluation of the Community Facilitation Programme by the Tavistock Institute can be downloaded for free from: www.neighbourhood.gov.uk. The key findings from this have been the basis for the development of this Resource Pack.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit web site is a useful source of information about current policies and funding that affects your community work. This includes a section with free fact sheets and tool kits. www.neighbourhood.gov.uk or contact their helpline 08450 82 83 83.

The web site of the Race, Cohesion, and Faith Directorate within the Home Office is a useful resource for you to look at current government policies on creating more cohesive communities. www.communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith
Section Two. Information Gathering and its Analysis.
Is it possible to predict conflicts?
People often have a sense that community conflict is likely. Where it has happened in the past, many feel it is likely to reoccur. “It is inevitable, nothing has changed” people say, sometimes then, it does not happen, but breaks out in another area where it was never expected. Can we analyse information in ways that both help us to understand the threat and reduce the likelihood of conflict occurring? This section is about being more prepared, understanding some of the indicators that might warn us that conflict is brewing and ways of analysing this. It gives examples of ways that have been used around the country to gather information and predict conflict.

Some writers have talked about “conflict early warning” signs that can be monitored in the same way that weather forecasters monitor air pressure and sea temperature to predict the weather. In reality, it is difficult to predict conflict accurately, but the following two basic elements are useful in identifying where conflict might break out:

- Having the information to know when conflict is likely; to recognise the underlying levels of anger and aggression that may cause conflict and understand them in ways that help us be specific about predicting conflict.
- Having the tools, skills and networks of contacts that help to analyse that information and understand it from the perspective of all concerned.

Having the information and analysing it with all concerned is an important step, not just in predicting conflict, but also in preventing it. And having the information available is not just about collecting it. It is as much about sharing and comparing the information held by different people and organisations, and making sense of it together with all those involved. The sources of information will include many statutory organisations and voluntary, community and faith organisations as well as individuals. If information can be collected, shared and analysed with others, it becomes possible to identify early warnings that help to predict and prevent conflict.

But we have some problems.
Firstly, collecting information can itself be a cause of conflict. In many communities the idea of collecting information, much less intelligence, from many parts of the community would be viewed with at least suspicion, if not outright hostility.

Secondly, predicting conflict sometimes means a partnership of effort between the police, members of different communities and those who might be at the sharp end of any likely conflict. Each has an important role to play. But it can be difficult to get them to work together. In some areas, time and effort needs to go into building trust if it is to work effectively.

Thirdly, getting people to work together, and give the time and effort needed to analyse information, can be difficult. Some of those that need to be analysing data together may have very little in common with each other. They may not want to work together and may feel that time is too short to invest in such an exercise. You can only get their attention when the conflict has erupted.

**Case Study**

At a national level, the police have a dedicated system for collecting information about tensions in the community that may lead to conflict. The National Community Tension Team is based at the Association of Chief Police Officers in London. They work with special interests groups such as the Community Security Trust that ensures the safety and security of the Jewish community in Britain and the Muslim Safety Forum. Their role is to analyse information that comes from police forces all over the country. They decide whether the information given represents patterns across the country that require a coordinated response or can be managed as local matters. This helps them to inform police forces all over the country of tensions that they should be aware of.
Recent examples of prediction methods used. Despite these problems, there are many good examples of joint working from which we can learn. In a number of areas, police, the Home Office and Government Offices have worked closely together to collect data that helped them to predict conflict. Routine police work often leads to information being picked up about ‘low level’ issues such as the spread of rumours or feelings of fear from a particular section of the community. Such information is also often picked up by people working closely to local people such as police community support officers and neighbourhood wardens. The police also have contact with people in the community who can offer different perspectives on tensions, incidents and ‘feelings’ about local issues.

**Case Study**

Following the disturbances in the town in 2001, the police in Burnley have initiated a local Community Reassurance Collection System (CRCS). The system uses four key themes: Economic tensions: conflict over access to employment opportunities and projects funded in one area and not in another. Political tensions: demonstrations on political issues. Religious and cultural tensions: e.g. resentment concerning religious festivals and cultural celebrations. Broader community tensions: that do not fit into the above categories. Key contacts were established in the community from which to collect data on these tension areas. Community Beat Managers would speak to these contacts on a weekly basis and draw up a report on current issues. These are put together to contribute to the police scanning and risk assessment process which includes the category Criminal tensions: Hate crimes, drugs, violence.

But this is not simply a matter of collecting information for the police to act upon. Community organisations, residents and those who work closely with communities are not only best placed to collect information, but best placed to understand what it means and suggest appropriate action that may not involve the police. This type of police/community information gathering system depends for its success on the quality of the relationships between different types of people and organisations involved. It also requires good working relations with the community in order to get the right people to participate in the analysis of that information. Finally, it requires that information is fed back to the community to ensure people know what is happening and what is being done.

**Case Study**

The Midlands Monitoring and Networking Group on the Far Right was established by the Commission for Racial Equality Midlands Office. The group meets every three months to discuss far right activity and community tensions. They are a mixture of local community and statutory organisations including the police. The group have worked together on many projects to combat community tensions. For example, on the basis of the information they collected, the group produced a statement for local areas to adopt in the run-up to elections to ensure that political campaigns were run free from racial prejudice and worked with the media to stop information being misinterpreted during the election campaign.

**Things to think about when collecting information.**

At this point, it is important to repeat an important issue from Section One. We are NOT specifically talking about collecting intelligence concerning criminal activities. This is a specific and specialist task, run by the police, in which the community assists. In this work the community must be directed by the police and provide assistance and support. We are thinking about initiatives, led by the police or led by regeneration or community organisations (usually involving the police) that seek to actively work in predicting and preventing community conflict. This work may throw up information about criminal activity and that will be passed to the police. But this is not its prime purpose. Information can be collected by:

- recording incidents.
- talking to key individuals.
- noting rumours, stories on the grape-vine, the word on the street.
- looking at indicators of the mood of a community, like new graffiti, new people around, new stories circulating.

All these approaches, if they are to be effective, must be approached carefully, given the sensitive and political nature of this work.
In particular, it is useful to follow these guidelines:

• The purpose of collecting the information and the way it will be used should be agreed by everyone before you start.

• Individuals, from different communities, from different organisations and from different points of view, need to be involved if the work is to be trusted.

• There needs to be a two-way flow of information: it must flow from the community, be analysed and then flow back to the community.

• While individuals providing information may do so confidentially, to be effective the information should be discussed and analysed openly.

• There need to be clear rules of how the information is gathered, how it is analysed and how it is reported back. These should be clear to everyone from the outset and the rules must be kept.

• All those involved in the work should do so on the basis of trust and confidence in each other. If that trust does not exist, it is unlikely that these ideas will be effective.

Case Study

Leeds tension monitoring group monitors community tensions through an on-the-ground reporting system and monthly meetings to discuss incidents and anecdotal reporting of community tensions. Information comes from a range of partners and their local contacts. Tension monitoring incidents are recorded and plotted on maps of the city which show where the incidents took place. These are collected weekly and collated monthly. For each incident details of who was concerned in the incident, what it was about, where it took place and when are plotted on the map. The group uses its analysis to plan responses to the tensions it identifies. These responses may involve council departments, other organisations and the police. It takes time to build up the trust needed for the group to work well. The group has identified several issues that are important for its effectiveness:

• there needs to be an effective partnership structure to develop the system and take an overview.

• there needs to be effective networking at the local level.

• there needs to be effective forums and structures to deal with emerging issues.

• data needs to be collected systematically, with each of the who, why, what and when categories filled in fully.

• a clear definition of community tension was needed in order to define what should be reported.

• analysing the data requires as much effort as collecting it.

• the system needs to be able to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses and act upon that e.g. the group is currently exploring more efficient ways to analyse different types of data together.
Trust Building.

Building trust between people who do not trust each other is one of the keys to collecting (and analysing) information. A lack of trust underlines most conflicts. Young people from one community may not trust young people from another community. Members of community organisations may not trust the local authority. Members of minority communities may not trust the impartiality of the police. People higher up the organisational chain may not trust organisations further down (and vice versa).

Building trust does not mean trying to establish close personal relations. You don’t have to like everybody. It does mean finding an acceptable, honest and open working relationship in which everyone is treated with respect and their views heard and taken seriously. It is a relationship in which words like “condescending”, “didn’t listen”, “was not consulted”, “ignored” and “patronising” have no place.

Here are ways of building trust:

- Be open and be honest. Playing games, politicking and hidden agendas undermine trust.
- Treat people as your equal. They are your equal. You may be more senior or more junior, you may be taller or shorter, you may be a man or a woman, you may be white or black, you may be disabled or able-bodied, you may be older or younger, you will be different from the person with whom you are building trust. But you have a basic equality with them.
- Treat everyone with respect. This means turning up on time for meetings, not cancelling meetings at short notice, turning off mobile phones, giving people full attention.
- Listen. Talking is easy, it is listening that is hard.
- Treat what people say seriously. If you don’t agree, say you don’t agree and why. Try to see their point of view, even if you don’t agree.
- Treat confidentiality seriously. A useful tool here is what we call “Chatham House Rules”. In order to have a frank and honest conversation or meeting many people will want to know that their views will not be quoted (or indeed misquoted) later. You can agree that, while the discussion or meeting is not confidential, individual opinions expressed in the meeting will not be quoted outside.
- Follow up on issues raised. There is nothing that destroys trust more quickly than promises in a meeting and then… silence.

Case Study

The Leicester Multicultural Advisory Group brings together key people to consider policy and practice on multiculturalism in the city.
The group includes senior representatives from Leicester City Council, the police, the local press, faith and community representatives, education representatives and representatives from minority communities and young people. It is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Race Equality Council and, at each monthly meeting, members brief the group about any community tension issues or community cohesion opportunities that have arisen. Briefings are followed by discussions on actions to be taken. The group can be convened urgently in cases of specific tensions arising. The meetings use “Chatham House Rules” to allow free and off-the-record discussions when they are needed. This allows for honest discussions and for disagreements to be aired and examined frankly without the risk of the debates being misinterpreted by people who did not attend.

How to collect information and what Information to collect.

We collect information every time we speak to people. We are constantly adding to our store of information and we are constantly analysing it and drawing conclusions. Our suggestion here is that it is possible to build on what we are already doing by making it a more structured and more formal process, by engaging more people in the information collection process and by using a standard set of headings to record what we hear.

If you are in an area with a high risk of conflict, you might take the following steps:

- Decide who you wish to work with on this information collection and analysis project. Spread your net to include the police, people from the community (especially those who may be involved in or directly affected by the conflict threat) and people from the various regeneration and community organisations involved.
- Agree with them how you will deal with the trust issues outlined above.
- Agree with them the format you will use to collect information.
- Inform people in your area that you are doing this exercise regularly. Tell them why you are doing it. Invite them to get involved.
- Agree with them a regular time to come together to pool information and analyse it.
- Feed your information and analysis back to the community. Let them know what is worrying you and seek their advice. This is the feedback loop of your information collection work.

- Agree what you will do if information shows an imminent threat of conflict or if a conflict arises unexpectedly.

Listen to the information that people want to give you. Listen to the things that people from a wide range of backgrounds and localities wish to say. It may not all seem important at the time, but taken together with many other sources patterns can emerge. Write it down using the format you have agreed.

A suggested Conflict Information Format.

It may help to have a standard format for you to use to record the information you collect on potential conflicts and the plans you develop to prevent them. Such a format might include the following:

Learning.

- What conflict indicators did you identify last time you met?
- Did they turn out to be correct conflict indicators?
- Did they turn out to be more or less serious than you predicted?
- Were the plans you drew up last time implemented?
- In your view, did implementing those plans prevent conflict?

Predicting.

- What conflict indicators can you identify at present? Are they concrete indicators (e.g. new graffiti, angry confrontations) or more subjective intuitive feelings?
- How serious are they?
- Can you identify the causes of the conflict to which these indicators relate?
- What forthcoming events might trigger conflict (e.g. a football match, a concert, a festival, summer holidays)?

Taking Action.

- Define the actions that you might take to prevent the conflict you have identified?
- To implement these actions, who needs to do what and by when? (Be concrete and specific.)

Communicating.

- To whom and to what organisations do you need to feed back information on this discussion to complete the communications loop?
- Who will undertake this feedback and by when?
If you need to act quickly when your information shows an imminent threat of conflict, it is good to have an agreed set of steps you will take. A ‘Rapid Response’ or ‘Contingency’ Plan might include:

- An understanding of the sorts of future events that might be a focus for conflict (such as football matches, Council meetings and incidents that create and sustain rumours).
- An understanding of the key people and organisations that need to be contacted in the case of different sorts of threat.
- A pre-agreed way to bring those people together quickly.
- An agreement on who will lead the work, ensuring they will have the time available to do it quickly.
- Pre-existing agreements with all those organisations that will need to support the Plan, so that you are not negotiating resources when you should be talking to the key players.

Practising all this before incidents arise is an effective way to ensure you are ready. And consulting widely and inviting many different community members into your preparation planning will increase the possibility that your plans will be effective.

**Analysing Information.**

Analysing conflict is both an exercise in conflict prediction and in conflict prevention. It is an exercise in conflict prediction because it allows you, with other key people, to consider all the information that is available. With the other people involved you will use your skill, your judgement and your local knowledge to think about the information you have collected. You, and the people you have chosen to work with, are in as good a position to predict the likely outbreak of conflict as anyone else.

And the very task of thinking about the information, with people from various communities, various organisations and various different points of view, is itself a way of preventing conflict from occurring. In your regular meetings, discussing the information will lead to a wider discussion. People will have different opinions on the information and what it means. They will have different opinions on what is likely to happen and what needs to be done to prevent conflict breaking out.

You can manage those meetings as “Problem Solving Meetings”. They give you space to listen to all points of view and to understand the importance different people attach to different situations. You can then begin to build a complete picture of the situation which includes all points of view. If you can achieve that, then you are well on the way to agreeing together what steps need to be taken to prevent incidents from occurring.

**Tools to use for analysis.**

We talk of “tools” a great deal in relation to conflict analysis. These are usually nothing more than ways of thinking about the information you...
have and ways of displaying it so that its meaning can be seen. We have already come across one tool in Section one: the Stages Of Conflict. This helped us to understand conflict as a process that goes through various stages. This can help in deciding what might be effective ways to confront it. The tools outlined here come from a range of sources. They are for you to use, amend, adapt or discard if you do not find them useful.

Drawing a conflict map.
Conflicts are about relationships between people. Drawing a conflict map helps you to see where people stand in relation to others (whose side they are on, to put it simply) and if their relationships are close, if they influence others or if they are in conflict. It also shows where the power lies, which helps in thinking about solutions.

This illustration shows a conflict map. Each person (or party if representing several people) is shown by a circle. The bigger the circle, the more powerful we think that person is. We have one circle for every person or party involved and we put them on the page with the most important towards the centre. We then link the circles in ways to show what sort of relationship each has with the others. As you can see from the example, there are different sorts of lines to denote different sorts of relationships.

The conflict map is a way of representing the various parties to a conflict and showing the relationships between them. This helps to understand where the tensions exist and who has influence on them. This will help you to identify where to put your efforts to address the tensions.
Styles of Conflict Management.
This tool will help you think about how people in conflict relate to each other. It looks at two aspects of relationships that will influence how people deal with conflict. The first is how concerned they are to achieve their own personal goals. The second asks how concerned they are about their relationships with others.

There are five “styles” or ways that people conduct themselves in managing or being involved in a conflict:

- If they are less concerned about relationships (they don’t mind what people think of them) but are concerned with achieving their own personal goals, you might find them being very controlling.
- If getting their own way is not important, we might find that they tend to avoid conflict.
- If they do care a great deal about what people think of them, they might suggest working together to problem-solve as a way of managing the conflict.
- Or they might not be too concerned about their own goals or the outcome to the conflict and they will accommodate to other people’s want.
- The final compromise style is where people will give and take, negotiate and bargain.

When you are analysing information with your colleagues about a conflict, people may not agree about what the information means and what should be done. This tool gives some insights into how different people will react in your conflict analysis sessions.

Positions, interests and needs (The Onion).
The information you are considering gives you some ideas of what different communities or groups within communities want to achieve. They will be expressing their wants and others will be expressing opposing wants. A useful way to approach these conflicting wishes is to consider what lies behind them.

For this we can use what is called The Onion. An onion has many layers. When people start to argue their point, the first thing they will do is to put their “position.” This is what they say they want and it is expressed for all to see and hear. But underlying this position, you may find a slightly different set of “interests”. This is what they want to achieve. People may put one position, knowing that their interests are to achieve something less than that. But that is not the end of it. Peeling back another layer of the onion, we find that underneath their interests we
find their “needs”. This is what they must have in order to continue, the absolute essential without which they will not continue. Now when you start to help people to dig down to their interests and their needs, it is often the case that conflicting positions are not the whole story.

People might have conflicting positions but overlapping needs. For example, two groups may want to use the same room for a meeting on the same night, which means they have conflicting positions. Underneath this, you might find that they were prepared to compromise on using a different room: their main interest is to hold their meeting rather than to use a particular room. If you dig down further, you might find some even more basic needs, such as the need to raise some funds for a specific project. This might be achievable, with support from others, in ways that did not require meeting room space at all.

So digging down from positions to interests to needs can be a useful way of unlocking situations that appear to be in conflict.

For any skilled craftsman a good box of tools is important. Using the tools involves adapting them to your own situation. Making them work for you will involve a process of trial and error.

Resources.

Many tools for analysing conflict are adapted to each individual situation. See section 4 for contacts of experts who can provide these services.

Many of the core ideas on which these are based are published in the book: Fisher, S. et.al (2000) Working with Conflict. Skills and Strategies for Action. Published by Zed Books in association with Responding to Conflict (RTC) (ISBN: 185649). This is a comprehensive guide to understanding and analysing conflict and outlines ways of dealing with it. It is based on RTC’s experience of working with community conflict overseas. The book can be ordered on line from Amazon.co.uk and costs 17.95 or contact RTC at: 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LJ Tel: 0 121 415 5641, Fax: 0 121 415 4119.

Their web site also contain many resources on dealing with conflict that may be useful to think about UK conflicts: www.respond.org

Section Three. Building Skills, Networks and Relationships.
Taking stock of your skills and resources. 
An important part of preventing tensions and 
differences from becoming negative conflicts is 
bringing communities together. As a community 
worker, you can take the initiative to create 
situations where people from different 
backgrounds who seem to be thinking and acting 
differently about an issue or have little 
understanding of each other’s way of life can 
come together, talk about an issue or simply 
interact socially. This section offers some practical 
advice on how to strengthen your ability to build 
relationships and work with conflict. In your work 
you probably already practise the skills of 
facilitation. This includes the ability to listen 
actively, to reframe what you hear, to plan 
meetings to ensure that all points of view are 
heard and understood, to build relationships and 
useful connections, and to deal with emotions. 

It is useful to take stock of the skills and 
experience you already have, which are probably 
also the skills that have brought you to the 
position of taking a role in conflict resolution. 
However, it is also important to be aware of the 
skills you may lack or areas you are less strong in. 

This section is designed to help you to reflect and 
build on these skills, so that you can decide on 
your ability to deal with conflict, and whether you 
need help in handling the immediate situation. 

Core skills. 
Some of the qualities needed for working with 
conflict may seem more like personal qualities 
than skills, but they can be developed and are 
worth taking time to reflect upon. The organisation 
Mediation Northern Ireland (which promotes 
mediation and learning about conflict) outlines the 
basic qualities of a mediator as: 
• having a commitment to non-violence 
• compassion 
• hope 
• humility 
• courage and endurance. 

Work of this kind also requires the ability to focus 
on others and motivate them, to keep a critical 
distance and remain impartial. Showing 
compassion means the ability to communicate 
that you are trying to understand those that feel 
their views are not being heard. This involves the 
ability to actively listen. This section gives some 
ideas on how you might add to your resources by 
further developing some of the skills outlined 
above.

Case Study 
In Burnley, facilitation skills were given to 
people from the youth and community sector, 
the council, carers, a person from a faith group, 
chairs of residents’ groups and mediators from 
a local service. The programme sought to link 
thoretical ideas with the participants’ own 
experience, to develop a spirit of facilitation 
and to supplement these with core skills and 
methods. The first three days of theory and 
practice ended with participants presenting 
their own conflict analysis of the situation in 
Burnley, using mapping and analysis tools from 
the conflict resolution field. They were also 
given one-to-one coaching on dealing with 
people impartially and non-judgementally, and 
planning their longer term development.

Case Study 
In Leeds, Harehills-i Community Facilitation 
Project was concerned with developing young 
peoples’ mediation and democratic skills. It 
aimed to get young people to meet and work 
with people from different backgrounds, 
identify common problems and take 
responsibility for resolving their conflicts. 
They learned about management committee 
processes, how youth organisations work and 
how debates are held. The project was inspired 
by the inter-ethnic clashes in the summer of 
2001, but recognised that these were more 
about dissatisfaction and frustration of young 
people due to inadequate services and 
inequality between the area and others than 
about inter-ethnic conflict. The project tackled 
a clear lack of involvement of young people in 
decision making. The young people involved 
in the project made a video about living in the 
area. They learned technical skills and 
developed an appreciation of the shared 
circumstances of young people across the 
area as well as a sense of self–worth.

Active listening. 
Active listening is an important skill to make sure 
that you are really hearing what is being said and 
that the people you are working with feel that 
their opinions are being understood. There are 
many guidelines around to help people to listen 
more effectively, often described as “active 
listening” skills.
These include body language to communicate that you are listening attentively and types of feedback. Feedback is a verbal way of showing that you are actively listening and of confirming that communication is taking place. This ensures that communications are understood and is a great tool to use to verify everything you heard while actively listening.

1. **Attentive listening**: Part of active listening is being aware of your eye contact and body language. Much of this depends on the circumstances and the type of person you are listening to. As a general guideline, try to be open, encouraging and non-confrontational. As a community worker, you are familiar with what would be appropriate eye contact and body language to communicate openness to the person you are trying to talk to. This means taking into consideration their age, gender, ethnicity and class background.

2. **Feedback**: Feedback includes the skill to paraphrase, clarify, check your perceptions and summarise what you are being told.

Paraphrasing is restating a message more simply and more to the point than the speaker. This tests your understanding of what you heard, and shows that you are trying to understand. Paraphrasing indicates that you are following the way the speaker is thinking about their feelings. When listening, consider asking yourself:
- What is the speaker's basic thinking message?
- What is the person's basic feeling message?

**Examples of paraphrasing:**
**Young person**: “Our parents tell us to stop making noise in the flat. Then the police move us on because the older residents say we disturb them when we hang out near the stairs.”
**Facilitator**: “The adults don’t want you around.”
**Young person**: “The youth club is on Green Park Estate and they are mostly Asian boys in there. They don’t play our kind of music and the youth workers won’t even let us smoke outside.”
**Facilitator**: “You don’t feel welcome there.”

Clarifying is bringing unclear statements into sharper focus in order to make sure that you understand what is being said, to get more information and to help the speaker see the other points of view.

**Examples of clarifying:**
**Facilitator**: “Can I just say what I think you are telling me?”

Perception Checking enables you to give and receive feedback and check that you are not making wrong assumptions.

**Examples of perception checking:**
**Facilitator**: “Let me see if I’ve got it straight. You said that you feel it’s not your fault that you and your friends broke the community hall windows because you feel pushed out by your family and your community and that you have nowhere to be yourselves?”

Summarising is pulling together, organising, and integrating the major aspects of what is being said directly and indirectly. This includes issues that seem to keep appearing and emotions that arise.
- Include the facts, issues that keep appearing and emotions that arise.
- Put these into broad statements (3 key points).
- This creates a sense of accomplishment in the communication and creates the basis for discussion.

**Example of summarising into three key points:**
1. “You have told me about feeling misunderstood by adults in your community and 2. feeling resentful that you are not made welcome in the only available local youth club. 3. This has led to feelings of anger which you were able to express in gang violence.”

Remember active listening means hearing, understanding and judging. Give your full attention to the person who is speaking and make sure your mind is focused. Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk and let yourself finish listening before you begin to speak.

**Case Study**

Training young people in core skills and conflict awareness can have far-reaching effects. For example, Resolve was a project run jointly by Tower Hamlets Mediation Service (THMS) and the Rapid Response Team of the Tower Hamlets Youth Support Service. They trained local young people in mediation and facilitation with a view to becoming Youth Advocates within the youth service. The plan was that they would reach especially hard-to-reach young people, through an ‘on-street’ presence and by themselves being role models. The young people learned core skills and mediation, leading to some being employed as youth advocates for the Rapid Response Team.
The Learning Cycle
It is helpful to think about learning as a continual cycle of doing and thinking. We learn through experiencing a situation which we then reflect upon. We then think in a more purposeful way to form ideas about the situation. These ideas are acted upon and then reviewed by looking at how our ideas were useful. This leads us immediately into the next experience. All this may happen in a flash, or over days, weeks or months, depending on the situation.

Case Study
Radio Underdog, set up by Slough Young People’s Centre working closely with Aik Saath conflict resolution experts, provides a creative opportunity for young people from diverse backgrounds to come together to set up and run a radio station. They are given training and support in relation to the radio work. This also involves skills in negotiation, facilitation, interview techniques, developing inclusive approaches and teamwork. The aim was to increase cultural awareness between the young people and there were sessions directly focused on issues of conflict resolution, and the recognition and celebration of cultural differences. The broadcasts are well received, professional and handle a number of issues including some political content.

Networking.
One of the most important skills in seeking support for your work and being effective in sharing information and helping others is networking. Networking is fundamental to all stages of the conflict cycle: predicting, managing, intervening and learning. What organisations, networks and individuals do you share experiences, resources, skills and information with? How could you build on these and make yourself a more effective community worker?

Thinking about your networks means seeing yourself as part of a system. It may not be formalised, named or stable, but once you have considered the links you have, remembered where you draw your inspiration from and who you turn to for resources or ask for information from, you can begin to see your system as something concrete. You are not alone in your work with conflict. You are part of a system that can support you and that you can help build. There are many organisations, individuals and groups that you can build links with when you want to take action in conflicts.

The difficulties of working with other professions. Each profession has its own language, culture and ideas about its role. It is important to be determined when seeking links with other community workers or professional or state organisations. You have knowledge, skills and resources to share. Too often these can be forsaken because of power issues, for example, between the voluntary and statutory sector, between those that see themselves defending victims of crime or harassment and those that see their role as understanding and rehabilitating offenders. When people from different professions come together to work in partnership, their differences are often brought into clear focus as they feel insecurity about the new ways of speaking and thinking about issues. When differences arise, they defend familiar ways of tackling problems and begin to blame other organisations or individuals for not being able to work on an issue and the relationship can break down.

Personal networks and professional networks overlap. Networks need to be maintained. This means social interaction, whether this is formal or informal, to exchange experiences and information, build trust and identify common ground. Although this may be a routine part of your role as a community worker, this can be hard. After all, networks are only people who come in all personalities. If you find that your network only consists of people that you find easy
to get on with, you may well be missing some key individuals, groups or organisations that you will need to help you resolve an issue. It might be helpful to remember that positive conflict is a healthy and normal part of building strong communities and effecting change.

*Are you effectively embedded in networks that can help in conflict resolution work?*

Try mapping your own network of personal and professional connections that are relevant in your community work. Include friends, neighbours, organisations and individual professionals from organisations relevant to the conflict situation you are trying to help with. Remember that networks require interaction to maintain and draw these on your map with different linking lines to show friendships, frequency of contact and geographical nearness to you.

**Case Study**

Conflict resolution specialists Re-solution undertook work in a local authority, facing community tensions across the “whole system” (i.e. with council leaders, officers, policy makers, voluntary projects, community projects, housing providers) to increase awareness of processes and issues that inflame or reduce community conflict. Training was delivered to a large number of local activists and workers in multi-agency groups to strengthen local understanding of conflict and conflict prevention and handling skills. Work was also undertaken to facilitate dialogue between groups who had traditionally been in conflict in small geographical areas and on estates, such as inter-generational dialogue.

When an incident took place that would have been a likely spark for inter-racial conflict, the whole system was able to respond in order to prevent conflict. Workers and community activists at all levels of the system recognised the significance of the “spark” event. A co-ordinated and urgent action plan was immediately put into place, using the knowledge and skills and partnerships already existing but improved through the training. Appropriate community work and media management strategies and actions were quickly put into operation. Clear leadership from senior and middle managers and their cooperation with local agencies and communities, guiding the input of well-trained workers were also significant factors in this well-managed moment. The crisis of the spark passed without further incidents.

**Building relationships in the Community.**

Assessing and building up your skills and strong networks creates a solid foundation for the work of relationship building between people in conflict. *Building relationships between people involves*...
creating new social opportunities, for example, arts and sports projects that bring people from different backgrounds together. It also involves having an educative role to challenge prejudice and dispel myths, and it involves encouraging the skills of understanding, communicating and negotiating in others.

Positive relationships can be built through the workplace, in schools and in neighbourhoods. Building relationships in the community between different groups or those who have opposing views is also a long and gradual process. It is a process that your community work should be continually contributing to and which is involved in all the stages of conflict.

The Home Office and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme (2003-2004) delivered a range of projects and initiatives to encourage local authorities, the community and voluntary sector, and communities themselves to build community cohesion into mainstream services. This programme placed the Local Strategic Partnership at the centre of building strategies to develop local visions of cohesion and inclusive networks. A tool kit is available in the resource section. Here are the key points of learning around the programme:

- Individuals who take the initiative to build cohesion are essential.
- Community cohesion is a broad term that each area must interpret in its own way. The aim is to find an understanding that fits with the priorities of the area and reflects different views.
- Planning a programme of activities involves getting people from different generations, ethnic backgrounds and religions on board.
- The media are a powerful tool to engage people in debates and myth busting to tackle stereotypes.

**Case Study**

Faces of Peterborough was a project led by the Peterborough Race Equality Council (PREC). It was a poster campaign designed to show the diversity of people in the city as a way of raising awareness and bringing people together. The campaign was initiated through a touring road show visiting schools, libraries, shopping centres and other venues around Peterborough to collect people's pictures for the poster. After collation and production, over 1,000 of the posters were distributed around the city. This in turn led to a wider programme for connecting the communities. A key idea behind the project was to get people to realise that community issues are everyone’s concern and responsibility. It brought many organisations and statutory bodies together in planning and running the campaign but also in follow up and developing initiatives.

**Case Study**

Slough Young People’s Festival was an ambitious project, run by young people, aimed to "bring back the arts" to Slough by recognising and using cultural diversity. Young people were involved in all aspects of setting up, promoting and participating in the Festival which included dance, drama, music and sports – a huge undertaking. The first event attracted over 2,500 people from Slough’s diverse communities and was seen as a big multi-cultural success locally. In addition to being a successful event, the Festival had several benefits at different levels. The young people involved learnt much about bringing people together, working across communities and demonstrated their ability to take responsibility and organise a multi-cultural event of this size. The event is now in its fourth year.

Case Study
The Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association runs the Comic Relief Sports and Leadership project. This project is based around sporting and leadership-building activities that involve many young people from differing social and ethnic backgrounds, creating opportunities for young people in the local area. Through various sports they promote a better understanding between the different ethnic groups through multi-cultural sporting activities. The project also involves education, training and employment advice sessions as well as conflict resolution workshops not only for participants, but also a wider network of professional colleagues and peer representatives from various local youth projects who form the Sports and Leadership organisation committee. The project also recruits a number of young people to be involved in promoting conflict resolution to their peers.

Resources.
Community Cohesion: An Action Guide by the Local Government Association (LGA) offers strategic guidance for local authorities. This can be downloaded from www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/communitycohesionactionguide.pdf Or contact:
Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3000
Fax: 020 7664 3030
Email: info@lga.gov.uk

Community Cohesion Seven Steps: A Practitioners Toolkit is based on best practices from the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme. This can be downloaded from The Race, Cohesion, and Faith Directorate website:
www.communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith

The Birmingham Race Action Partnership has produced a useful guide on community consultation. This contains some fresh thinking about issues of community representation that are very important when working with community conflict. Community Consultation – a Guide can be downloaded from:
www.brap.org.uk/attachments/briefingcommunityconsultation.pdf

For further information the partnership can be contacted at:
9th Floor, 3 Duchess Place
Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8NH
Email: brap@brap.org.uk
Tel: 0121 456 7400

Mediation UK has published a Directory of Mediation and Conflict Resolution Trainers (2005) This is a useful resource for anyone needing to find trainers in the fields of mediation and conflict resolution, whether for an introductory session or a full mediation course. This costs £19.95 and can be ordered via the web site: http://www.mediationuk.org.uk or by post:
Mediation UK
Alexander House, Telephone Avenue
Bristol BS1 4BS
Tel: +44 (0117) 904 6661
Fax: +44 (0117) 904 3331
Email: enquiry@mediationuk.org.uk

Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is global network of private, non-profit, non-governmental organisations ‘concerned with the human factor in world development’. It provides courses and resources for
facilitation skills for individuals or organisations to bring about change. www.ica-uk.org.uk or contact them at:
ICA, PO BOX 171
Manchester M15 5BE
Tel: 0845 450 0305,
Email: ica@ica-uk.org.uk

The idea of getting people to participate more in making decisions about their own communities is encouraged by the European Union. This is referred to as ‘active citizenship’. The guide Learning and Facilitation for Governance and Active Citizenship: An Educational Manual by ETGACE (Education and Training for Governance and Active Citizenship in Europe) is a good introduction to these ideas using life stories of community workers in six EU countries. The manual offers a framework to reflect on your own work. The manual can be downloaded as a word document from ETGACE web site:
http://www.surrey.ac.uk/politics/ETGACE/SEC3-D.HTM

Macbeth, F. & Fine, N. (1995) Playing with Fire: Creative Conflict Resolution for Young Adults (ISBN 0865713065). This book is recommended by experts in school based conflict resolution work. It outlines ninety-five exercises to help teenagers and young adults deal creatively with interpersonal conflict and violence. It explores the dynamics of anger, hurt, conflict, communication, cooperation, and assertiveness; and teaches listening, mediation, and conflict-defusing skills. It is available from Amazon.co.uk and costs £13.99.

The Commission for Racial Equality launched the Safe Communities Initiative in 2003. The aim is to provide information and advice on promoting good community relations. The Commission for Racial Equality also published Promoting Good Race Relations: a guide for local authorities published in 2005 which explains what practical steps public authorities can take to work towards good race relations. More information is available on their website at www.cre.gov.uk
Section Four. Mediation.
What is mediation?
So far we have looked at ways of thinking about conflict and ways of preventing it. But as we know, this does not always work. Conflicts arise and can be very difficult to confront. As mentioned in Section One, confronting conflict can make people anxious, but it is still sometimes better to confront a conflict rather than to let it stagnate. This section explores the more challenging issue of confronting conflict through mediation. Mediation can be used effectively both in resolving conflicts and in preventing them from escalating.

Conflicts are resolved either when there is a win-lose outcome or when there is an outcome which has been agreed by every one involved. Mediation is a process that helps to bring about mutual consensus outcomes in situations that would otherwise remain in conflict or result in negative win-lose outcomes. Mediation is appropriate if both parties are willing to be involved. If they are not prepared to meet on neutral ground, mediators can act as intermediaries, conveying messages between each of the parties.

Mediation is voluntary. It cannot be imposed. It is a private process between those involved and the negotiations are confidential. Whatever is agreed, the mediation belongs to those involved, to be communicated to others only as they agree.

The role of the mediator is important. We cannot mediate our own conflicts. A mediator needs to be independent, impartial, acceptable to all parties and skilled at the task.

In summary, therefore, mediation is a process that:
• can take place when a conflict is identified and named.
• takes place directly between the parties in a conflict.
• requires the consent of the parties in order to take place.
• is confidential between the parties and the mediator.
• is impartial to the parties.
• is confidential to the parties involved.
• is conducted by an independent and impartial third-party.
• needs to be supported by people who are involved but at one removed from the conflict.
• is specifically aimed at finding a solution that is acceptable to all.

A word of warning!
The message “Do No Harm” is particularly important to bear in mind when talking about mediation. Any mediator will tell you that intervening in a conflict as a mediator has to be done carefully. To work as a mediator you need both training and experience. And, as any mediator will tell you, there is no place for mediation in situations of violence or the immediate threat of violence.

Remember the earlier distinction between negative and positive conflict. We defined positive and negative conflict in Section One. In this section on mediation, we are talking about dealing with negative conflict. However, the line between positive and negative conflict is not sharply drawn, and the skills used to deal with positive conflict and the skills used to deal with negative conflict are not totally different. What is different is the language used. The skills used in dealing with the everyday robust and sometimes difficult situations of positive conflict, are usually described as facilitation. Look back to Section One and read through the checklist to distinguish positive from negative conflict.

What happens in a mediation?
The process is different in different situations, but the basic steps are:
• Defining the parties to a dispute and identifying them. There may be two or more parties and some might not realise that they are part of the dispute.
• Getting the parties to a dispute to agree to mediate their problem. This can be difficult, as outlined earlier. Naming the problem, reassuring the parties that they remain in control of the process and reminding them that it is confidential are all steps in getting the parties to the mediation table.
• Agreeing with the parties who should be the mediator. The mediation must be agreed by the parties.
• Agreeing who should attend from each party. Parties will usually bring a supporter or adviser. It is important that those attending have the authority to agree if a resolution is suggested.
• The mediator agrees with the parties the rules of the mediation and how it will be conducted. In most cases the parties and the mediation will sign an Agreement to Mediation which will detail the rules and understandings of the mediation. (One clause in most such agreements is that neither the mediator nor information from the
mediation may be called upon or used later in any other proceedings. This ensures confidentiality and builds openness and frankness.

- In the mediation process the mediator will have sessions where all parties are involved and sessions in which the mediator will meet separately with individual parties and shuttle between them.
- The mediator will help parties to go through a three-stage process: the first is listening and hearing, the second is understanding and the third is seeking ways forward.
- As the parties move towards a resolution, the mediator will help them to be clear about what they have agreed, what each will do in future and the steps needed to avoid the conflict reappearing.
- An agreement is usually written down by the mediator and the parties sign it. They each retain a copy.

**Case Study**

Mediation Services combine local knowledge and professional impartial advice. About 60% of the UK is covered by a local mediation service. These are mainly voluntary sector organisations that deal with the many different sorts of conflict that arise in our communities. Their national organisation is Mediation UK. The Mediation UK website at www.mediationuk.org.uk is an important reference for you. It provides information on what happens in a mediation, the role of the mediator, how and why mediation can be useful, the different types of mediation and tells you how to contact your local mediation service. As they say, mediation “is not an easy option – when people are honest and are encouraged to say what they feel, the situation can provoke strong emotions – but once people have had their chance to express their feelings, they are more likely to let their hostilities go.” An example of a local mediation service is Southwark Mediation Centre, a charity located in Camberwell in London. In their words “mediation is a voluntary, neutral, confidential process which allows parties in dispute to communicate and build improved relations for the future. The power of mediation lies in the fact that the parties choose it and have an active part in any outcomes or resolutions made.” Parties in disputes may wish to meet or, where they have chosen not to, the mediators can go between the parties in a shuttling process that builds communications and searches for solutions.

In addition to working with and supporting three other local mediation services, SMC undertakes three types of work:

- **Housing mediations** specialises in neighbourhood disputes and issues relating to tenancy. Originally most of the cases were referred from the Borough’s Neighbourhood Housing Offices; an increasing number of cases are now being referred by Southwark’s Anti-Social Behaviour Unit. Cases range from issues of noise nuisance to threats and actual violence.
- **Hate Crime mediation** which deals with cases of race and homophobic disputes and crimes.
- **Workplace mediation** which helps resolve conflicts in the workplace that disrupt staff relations.
- **Peer mediation**, which trains and enables young people to confront conflicts between their peers.

SMC works closely with the police. As one officer said, “When we (the police) get called to a dispute and get back in the car afterwards, we know that we will get called to go back there later that night because the situation has not been resolved.” Mediation, on the other hand, can get to the roots of the problem; it gives the victims more options and keeps the problem in the hands of the people involved.
Case Study

Each Mediation Service has its own approach. For example, in Bradford Community Accord has a three-stage process of tension identification, dispute analysis, and dispute resolution and de-escalation. The resolution and de-escalation process takes many forms, depending on the number and accessibility of the parties involved, the willingness of the parties to resolve the dispute through mediation and the ability of the parties to resolve the dispute without outside intervention. BCA uses the following methods:

- **Joint sessions.** BCA believes that the most effective and lasting way to resolve a dispute is to bring the parties together face-to-face in joint sessions.
- **Shuttle diplomacy.** Some parties will not meet face-to-face. BCA will support communications between the parties by meeting them separately.
- **Dispute de-escalation.** In the case where some parties are not prepared to mediate, BCA works to enhance communications, negotiations and problem-solving techniques.
- **Public Forums.** Finally, BCA uses larger events as opportunities for community members to meet, deliberate and resolve community-based disputes. These are used when not all parties to the conflict have been identified and where the conflict has wider community impact.

**The value of mediation.**

Mediation is able to unblock and resolve conflicts. Here are some of the reasons why it is effective:

- It helps to build an understanding of why the conflict is taking place rather than to blame it on the failings of individual people. It can get to the deeper causes behind conflicts.
- It gives everyone the chance to have their say and to be heard. Everyone will not agree with everything that is said, but our need to be heard and taken seriously will be met.
- In being heard, people will feel better for having had the chance to vent their emotions. They may well be feeling angry, exploited or unjustly treated. By speaking these emotions and having them heard, they begin to deal with them.
- It keeps the dispute and its resolution under the control of the parties involved. They may, feel safer and better able to be frank and honest.
- It does not seek to judge or apportion blame. It aims only to find a mutually agreeable solution.
- The mediator is impartial. She or he has no stake in the outcome, nor position on the conflict. They will be skilled and experienced, but independent.
- It is confidential. This gives those involved the security to say the things that are important to them, things that they might not want to say in public.
- It gives space to look for innovative and imaginative solutions to problems.

Case Study

The ODPM’s Conflict Resolution/Community Cohesion Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors (NRA) are a group of people with strong professional and/or academic back grounds who are skilled in applying their expertise to coach partnerships on how to build strong and cohesive communities in which everyone, regardless of race, faith, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, has a real stake and where services are tailored to meet local needs. This pool of experts can apply their skills across a wide range of areas such as community development, community health, education, anti-racism and equality work.

**How you can support mediation?**

There are a number of examples of the use of mediation which have involved professional and trained mediators outlined later in this section.

But, as someone who thinks they might have a
role in confronting a conflict, or someone to whom others look for guidance, there are a number of things that you can do to resolve conflicts by encouraging the use of mediation by following the six steps below:

- Ask yourself if the conflict is negative or positive (See Section One).
- Help those involved to recognise that they are in a negative conflict. This may not be easy as we know that people may deny that conflict exists or refuse to accept that they are part of it.
- Help them to agree to mediate. Outline the benefits. Outline the costs of keeping the conflict running. Use your position to encourage them, robustly if necessary, of the need to move on from the conflict.
- Help them to find a mediator they all trust. This may be yourself (if you are trained as a mediator) as someone who all parties trust. If it is you, and you are not confident of the role, find yourself a skilled joint mediator who will work with you and support you. If it is not you, contact some of the people listed later to help you find a good mediator.
- Encourage them to persist. Mediation is a demanding process. Keep supporting them, keep them going.
- Once the mediation is completed, support them to re-establish good working relations again.

Where and how is mediation used effectively?
There are many ways in which mediation is being used. This Resource Pack is concerned mainly with the use of mediation to confront conflict within your communities, conflict within and between the organisations that are working in your communities and the use of mediation with young people and in our schools. Before we look in detail at these, it is useful for you to know the other areas in which mediation is being used. You may well have come across some of them. They include family mediation, which seeks practical solutions to issues of child custody and finances, commercial mediation between companies in dispute and workplace mediation which deals with employment issues or internal and inter-organisational disputes. These different branches of mediation are all developing their distinct practices and styles. However, the basic elements of the mediation process are similar and there is learning across them.

Case Study
New Link Peterborough is a drop-in advice/resource centre for newly arrived asylum seekers, refugees (mostly Kurdish and Afghan) and also economic migrants from Eastern Europe. The centre provides training to combat
Mediation within the regeneration and cohesion community.

Within your own organisation you may come across conflict from time to time. Many issues give rise to conflict: inter-personal power struggles, competition for resources, unclear responsibilities, competing priorities and issues of discrimination and unjust decision making. While all organisations have their share of conflicts, it sometimes feels that regeneration and cohesion organisations have more than their share.

There is little evidence to support this feeling, but complex change processes like the ones that you are implementing do appear to generate agreement and dispute in equal measure. The feelings associated with this are often picked up by the organisations working in the field and can reappear when least expected. For example, after a difficult meeting with partners, you return to the office and snap at someone for no apparent reason. A neighbourhood development organisation may pick up disputes and tensions from its neighbourhood which then appear as disputes between members of staff, between management and staff, or between your organisation and another organisation. As a result, the level of conflict can sometimes seem endless.

In addition to this basic cause of conflict in your organisation, there are others:

- Lines of communication are very long and complex, with messages coming from Central Government, via Government Offices to Local Authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships and a wide range of organisations in the community. This can lead to poor communications, lack of coordination and misunderstandings.
- There is a basic contradiction between empowering communities (thus giving them the power to make decisions) and Government as a hierarchical decision making machine.
- Many organisations in the community have to struggle for funds, exist on short-term contracts and feel that they have high bureaucratic hurdles over which to jump.
- It is often difficult to be clear where responsibility for things begins and ends. This can lead to frequent disputes over who has the responsibility to do what.
- Staff change all the time and relationships have to be rebuilt again and again.
- Organisations compete for work, for contracts and for influence.

Case Study

The Community Facilitation Programme funded Mediation Northern Ireland to run a programme to improve understandings about promoting community relations in Oldham for the Local Strategic Partnership. Mediation Northern Ireland aimed to build relationships between members of a development group who would bring their experience to bear on their work in Oldham and develop a consensus regarding the contribution of the community cohesion partnership. The aim was to use mediation services as a way of providing an impartial “outsider” in situations of conflict and assisting people to resolve or manage differences in positive ways. The project confronted segregation and integration, policing, social and economic issues, and civic leadership.

The development group was made up of 40-45 people drawn from community, voluntary and faith organisations, from education and youth services, the police, civic leaders, local government and the business sector.

The idea was that the group’s ideas and feelings would represent the tensions in the wider community. These could then be considered and explored in safety. A key element of this work is the role of the mediator, who has to create the safety, remain impartial and manage the process on behalf of the participants. The meetings took place in a safe and neutral space. Each member gave an account of their story of life in Oldham. On another occasion the group split into identity groups and were asked to reflect on the characteristics of their own identity and on the identity of other groups generating discussions on stereotypes.
Work in the field of change is itself difficult. Change comes slowly and only with a lot of hard work. Keeping people motivated can sometimes be difficult.

This is the reality of your working world. And change and conflict are part of that reality.

A Mediation Process for working within and between organisations.
The Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) has a six-step mediation process that can be used in these situations.

Step One. Conflict briefing and signing of a Service Contract with the Sponsor. This is an agreement with the person or organisation in authority that the following steps should be taken.

Step Two. A Series of one-to-one pre-mediation meetings with prospective parties to the mediation. This gives all parties to the conflict the chance to meet the mediator and explain the situation from their point of view.

Step Three. The production of a Conflict Map. The mediators produce a document that outlines the conflict from the points of view of all those concerned.

Step Four. A Joint Pre-Mediation Meeting. At this meeting all those involved consider the Conflict Map. If, after discussion and amendment, they agree that it is a correct statement of the conflict, they are invited to a mediation session. They may accept or reject this invitation.

Step Five. The Mediation. Having agreed the Conflict Map, the parties now work together to look at options for moving forward. If successful, the mediation will produce an agreement between the parties on how to move forward.

Step Six. The Post-Mediation Meeting. This will review the agreement and ensure that it has been implemented successfully.

An anonymous example of a real mediation between organisations.
The voluntary and community sector in a particular town was having problems coordinating their activities in a way that enabled them to negotiate with and present a united voice to the Local Authority and to the Government Office. This meant that they were not fully involved in the development of new initiatives.

The history of the relations between the seven key organisations in the town was complicated. For example, two now independent organisations had emerged and split from another, leaving many unresolved issues. Others had developed in relation to specific Government initiatives. The voluntary and community sector in the town was fragmented and its leadership organisations were similarly fragmented. The situation they were in was not recognised as a conflict, but blamed on other organisations or individuals or on the authorities that were interpreted as trying to “divide and rule” the sector.

Somebody was asked to come in to help one of the organisations in its response to a particular new Government initiative. It was quickly clear that the issue the organisation faced concerned its relationship with the other six organisations. So, with the agreement of the first organisation, that person talked to both the staff and trustees of all the organisations involved. Those conversations showed that relations within the sector were not good. Historic issues remained unresolved, competition for resources were intense, there was mistrust, poor communications and anxiety.

Having spoken to everyone, and establishing some degree of confidence, a statement of the issues was produced. (This could be seen as a conflict map.) It was circulated to all parties and there was general agreement to it. What followed was a series of three workshops that took the form of mediations. The key person from each organisation attended. At first they were invited to talk about the things that were going well in the town, in their organisation and between the different organisations. Following that, they each talked about their own aspirations, their own history and their own motivations. These initial conversations began to establish rapport, communications and trust between these key individuals.

On the basis of that developing relationship, they were each invited to share their perspectives on the issues that were dividing them. Each was given permission to be frank and honest, and some harsh words were spoken (under Chatham House rules). These words were listened to without interruption or discussion.

The beginning of this honest conversation reassured participants and they began to see ways forward both to resolve old grievances and prevent future misunderstandings. They produced a series of agreements on how they would
regulate their relationship in the future and how they would deal together with the Local Authority.

**Conflict Resolution in educational settings: Linking up with schools and colleges.**

As a community worker involved in a conflict situation, you may become aware that underlying tensions are having an impact on the young people or that they are being acted out sometimes violently between groups of young people. In this situation, it might be helpful to involve the local schools, as these may be able to help, whether or not they are already aware of the situation. Schools and colleges are both an important part of the community and can represent a useful neutral space. If community tensions have become an issue within the school, it will help you to understand how they are dealing with it. If not, you may be able to assist them by sharing your experience.

British schools and institutions of further education teach *citizenship education*. They work in partnership with other services to tackle *anti-social behaviour* through *restorative justice*. Some have been working to resolve disputes and intervene in wider conflicts through *peer mediation* and promoting understanding between different religions and cultures through interventions such as *school twinning*. Teachers have become involved with family, neighbourhood and wider community conflicts by being approached by parents, local residents or the police. They have links with the community through their boards of governors, or may deploy individuals with a specific community role such as college multi-faith chaplaincies or community liaison staff.

For this reason, your local school or college is a good place to contact when you are dealing with a conflict in your community, particularly when it involves mainly young people. If you want to work with your local schools or college in resolving a conflict contact:

- the head teacher / principal directly.
- Your Local Education Authority.
- LEAP is a national voluntary youth organisation and registered charity providing training and resources for conflict resolution, particularly in educational settings. LEAP stands for the “leap of creativity”, the “leap into the unknown” and the “leap of change” that we all have to make in confronting conflict. They can provide you with information on conflict resolution in schools and colleges in your area.
Community work in education.

British schools and colleges are doing a lot towards resolving conflicts and building relationships in communities. For example, all schools and some colleges have citizenship training and social, personal and health education that includes learning about how our democratic political process works and about our rights and responsibilities. In your position as a community leader dealing with a conflict situation, it is useful to know that this usually involves exploring cultural differences and equal opportunities. This can help promote self-esteem and cultural understanding, and help to address dissatisfaction and challenging behaviour. Schools and colleges can play an important role in bringing communities together that would otherwise be isolated and some have developed strategies to reach out into the community by finding ways to encourage young people to interact. Schools are increasingly seeing the importance of making sure that young people have core “life skills” and personal abilities such as communicating and working in teams. The ability to make decisions helps them to remain resilient against crime, violence, and substance abuse.

Case Study

Kirklees Community Education and Regeneration department responded to the concern that children were growing up in isolation from other cultures by developing a School Twinning Programme. The aim of the project was for pupils from two culturally diverse local primary schools to learn about the different views and lifestyles of each other. Two classes of 30 children took part in a ten-week citizenship programme where, as part of the Personal Social Health Education curriculum, they travelled each week to the other school to take part in citizenship lessons with their counterparts on the other school. The programme began with an all-day sports, games and social event to enable the children to get to know each other and culminated in an end of project event of performance poetry and song to which parents were invited.

Restorative justice and peer mediation.

Restorative justice conferencing is used to involve victims, perpetrators and their supporters to deal with victimisation and robbery. It can be used to address bullying, assault, verbal abuse, family feuds, friendship breakdowns, gossip, theft, abusive mobile phone text messaging, racial abuse, gangs, truancy and possession of weapons. The aim is to find out why an incident happened and to encourage the person responsible to understand what affect it has had on the target of their actions and the wider community, and to decide what needs to be done to make amends. These can be very formal, involving youth offending teams, the police, parents, teachers and friends or can be an everyday way of dealing with events as they arise.

Case Study

Regent Sixth Form College in Leicester is still in the process of developing a formal policy on conflict resolution and mediation and the processes to support it. However, conflict resolution skills among staff and students are valued as part of a broad repertoire of skills needed to support the college as a learning community where “we all value and respect each other”. The students value the college as a safe, neutral space and are encouraged to deal with conflicts that occasionally arise in the college around a mixture of personality, gender, identity and cultural differences. Staff have been asked by students and their families to intervene in conflicts. In turn, they have also called in agencies and people from the community to help them resolve issues within the college.

Peer mediation involves individual students acting as mediators in conflicts among their fellow pupils and friends. Teachers or coordinators provide support and ensure that students are not dealing with issues that should be dealt with by staff or the police. Children learn how to see things from someone else’s view point, how to communicate their feelings without aggression and how to cooperate. In so doing, children learn to think for themselves and to be able to look for the answers to problems with others.

Conflict resolution through mediation often substitutes for detention or suspension of youths involved in fights, verbal threats or intimidation of other students on school grounds. Participants usually agree to a contract with set standards of conduct. Peer mediation has been very popular with young people. For example, Aik Saath (Together as One) is a popular peer mediation
programme inspired by the need for conflict resolution in Slough to intervene in clashes between the young Sikh and Muslim communities that led to violence in 1996-1997. A large part of their ongoing work is promoting peer led education in conflict resolution. They work especially with schools, but also provide training for community agencies and groups.

Case Study

The staff of Westborough High School in Kirklees run a homework helpline and study-support centres. Two of these are based in local mosques so that pupils can be helped with homework before they begin their Islamic lessons. Non-Muslim children also attend the centre to use the IT facilities. Teachers regularly visit the centres to support pupils. Staff have reached out to the local community, visiting parents in their homes to encourage them to attend parents’ evenings, celebrating and respecting all religious festivals, being aware of events in the local communities. Dedicated community liaison teachers have portions of their time allocated specifically for fostering and maintaining links with parents and the local community.
ASDAN is a curriculum development organisation and an internationally recognised awarding body offering a wide range of curriculum programmes and qualifications for all abilities, mainly in the 11-25 age group. ASDAN provide curriculum resources for citizenship education that are already being used in many centres around the UK.

ASDAN, Wainbrook House, Hudds Vale Road, St. George, Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel: (0117) 9411126
Fax: (0117) 9351112
Email: info@asdan.org.uk
http://www.asdan.org.uk

The tool kit Common Ground: New Conflict Resolution Tool Pack is a video pack for use by young people and practitioners to help develop effective conflict resolution skills. The video and its booklet focuses on the choice between violence and non-violence, exploring causes, effects and the different approaches to take when dealing with conflict.

This tool kit is available from Aik Saath:
Together as One, 323 High Street, Slough SL1 1TX,
Tel: 01753 57 47 80
Fax: 01753 574780
Email: info@aiksaath.com
http://www.aiksaath.co.uk

The book: D. Sorenson (1994) Conflict Management Training Activities Promoting Cooperative Learning & Conflict Resolution in Middle & High Schools (ISBN: 0932796656) (published by Educational Media Corp) £19.95 is suitable for both classroom guidance and training activities for conflict management or mediation programmes. This resource addresses over 40 topics including: Breaking boundaries, Following directions, Working as a group, Handling put-downs, Experiencing conflicts, Exploring negotiating styles and misunderstanding others, Being misunderstood: Available from INCENTIVE PLUS who also have a wide range of games and resources for children to explore conflict situations and resolve them with win-win outcomes. These range from nursery school age to teenagers.

http://www.incentiveplus.co.uk

Leap Confronting Conflict specialise in conflict resolution in schools and with young people. They can be contacted at:

8 Lennox Road
Finsbury Park
London N4 3NW
Tel: 020 7272 5630
Fax: 020 7272 8405
http://www.leaplinx.com

Two useful resources available from Leap are:

Broadwood, J. & Carmichael, H. Tackling Bullying: Conflict Resolution with Young People published by LBTH Learning Design, (ISBN 1 873928 22 X) £7.50 (+£1.50 p&p) This is designed to provide ideas for activities through which young people (aged 12 years and over) can explore the issues involved in bullying behaviour. For use by teachers or youth workers in any setting where regular work sessions can be scheduled.

Broadwood, J. et.al. Promoting Positive Behaviour: Activities for Preventing Bullying in Primary Schools (ISBN 1 873928 33 5) is a similar resource aimed at under 12s £7.50 (+£1.50 p & p).

If you want to contact professional mediators you can do so through Mediation UK which is an umbrella organisation for mediation services. Check their web site to find current information or contact them to find out about services available in your area.

http://www.mediationuk.org.uk

Mediation UK
Alexander House, Telephone Avenue
Bristol BS1 4BS
Tel: +44 (0117) 904 6661
Fax: +44 (0117) 904 3331
Email: enquiry@mediationuk.org.uk

National Coalition Building Institute NCBI British Isles has now changed its name to Diversity Works UK and operates independently from NCBI International and other NCBI organisations. Diversity Works provides training in leadership, discrimination, reducing inter-group conflict, and building multi-group coalitions. For information on current programmes contact:

Diversity Works UK
The Learning Exchange
Wygston’s House, Applegate
Leicester LE1 5LD
Tel: 0116 -222-99-77
Fax: 0116-222-99-70

The commissioning of a NRA is done via the Government Office (GO) for the region. Once the GO receives an expression of interest, they will discuss the brief (requirements) with the relevant partnership, before deciding which NRA they and the partnership...
will work with. For further information on NRAs, please contact Imogen Stone at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: imogen.stone@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

re:solution of workplace disputes and community conflicts.
44 Sefton Avenue, Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5QR
Tel: 0191 265 6264
nsugden@resolutionuk.org

Tavistock Institute: Support for organisation leaders, managers, HR and OD professionals facing conflict in their organisations, or supporting others in dealing with conflict. www.tavinstitute.org, or contact s.king@tavinstitute.org.

Tavistock Institute
30 Tabernacle Street
London EC2A 4UE
Tel. 0207 417 0407
Fax: 0207 417 0567

Transforming Conflict offers training, consultancy and support in educational settings for people seeking to enhance their skills in building a sense of community, fostering a spirit of inclusion and dealing creatively with challenging situations. Their work is underpinned by the philosophy of Restorative Justice,

Transforming Conflict
National Centre for Restorative Justice in Education
Mortimer Hill, Mortimer,
Berkshire RG7 3PW
Tel: 00 44 (0) 118 933 1520
Fax: 00 44 (0) 118 933 1520
E-mail: belinda@transformingconflict.org
www.transformingconflict.org
What is challenging behaviour?
People in conflict often feel angry, under threat and at their least tolerant. This can sometimes result in challenging behaviour including aggression, expression of prejudices such as racism, and criminal acts. By challenging behaviour we are referring to behaviour that is threatening to others and unacceptable to most members of our society. Whilst it is important to recognise that much conflict is driven by the identity of groups and that understandings of what is acceptable behaviour varies in different cultures, between generations, between groups such as teenage gangs, and between individuals, we must keep in mind that we all have the responsibility to live with respect for each other. Violence can be defined as all forms of negative conflict where people’s inherent dignity and equal rights are being put under threat.

Challenging behaviour can include physical violence, racial and other hate crimes. It is usually clear in such situations that things have moved beyond mediation, and your main response should be to protect yourself and those around you. Part of that response involves understanding and knowing how to manage challenging behaviour when it arises.

This section offers some guidance and insights on dealing with challenging behaviour, including aggression, prejudice and crime. One important point is that a balance has to be struck between understanding and challenging negative attitudes, so that others are no longer threatened by the challenging behaviour.

**PROTECT YOURSELF AND PROTECT THOSE AROUND YOU**

Managing aggressive behaviour.
The legal rights and responsibilities of community workers in conflict situations will differ depending on your organisation. If you are employed or working voluntarily for an official body in the statutory or voluntary sector, there may be policy guidelines related to some situations.

For example, people employed in caring roles such as childcare, youth work or probation have a “duty of care” under the law that means there are guidelines on when it is permissible to restrain in order to protect others. If you are working in your community in a less formal way, the situation is less clear, and it is a good idea to seek the help of someone more experienced than yourself if you think that you might have to deal with aggressive behaviour. Depending on the situation, this may be the police, teachers or youth workers. However, for everyone it is useful to have an understanding of aggression as a symptom of some other underlying factor and to be able to deflect anger.

**Aggression:** In order to understand the roots of aggression, it is helpful to view the behaviour as something that the individual understands as rational and something that usually has a specific purpose. In order to bring about any change in that behaviour either immediately or in the long term, it is important to try and understand what the individual is trying to achieve and help them to find a way of communicating that does not cause harm to themselves or others.

**Factors causing aggression:**
- An immediate trigger: a particular situation has led to confusion, anxiety, frustration, fear, humiliation, jealousy, lack of personal space or excitement.
- Personal background: the person’s behaviour may be connected to past experience as a victim of abuse, ill health, isolation, low self-esteem or illness.
- Social pressure: people often get caught up in trying to live up to social expectations, in testing limits and establishing a pecking order. They may want to challenge boundaries or rules set up by others.

All these reasons involve feelings. How a person feels affects the way they behave. Just stopping, or blaming the behaviour, usually means that the feelings have not been recognised. An important part of managing aggressive behaviour is to acknowledge – which is not the same as agreeing with – the feelings and seeing that this behaviour has a purpose for the individual. They may or may not fully understand how it is affecting others. Without some level of understanding, there is little chance of getting them to change the way they behave.

Here are three things to do when dealing with the immediate threat of aggressive behaviour:

Firstly, avoid lecturing, threatening, arguing, shaming, blaming, labelling and negative body language such as:
- moving into personal space.
• using body size or height to intimidate.
• straight forward, square shouldered body stance.
• arms crossed.
• unrelenting eye contact.
• fist shaking or clenching.
• finger pointing/shaking.

Secondly, attempt to reduce anxiety and not to provoke it. For example, some people use well rehearsed statements called “de-escalation scripts” to prevent them from saying ‘the wrong thing’. These are particularly appropriate when dealing with young people.
• Say person’s name (if known).
• I can see (describe the immediate problem e.g. “you are angry at... name/situation”).
• I am here to help.
• Talk and I will listen.
• Let’s go and (offer an alternative to the situation).

Thirdly, use positive body language. This means:
• keeping at a comfortable physical distance.
• moving into a sideways stance, stepping back.
• keeping intermittent eye contact (not glaring).
• relaxing your body posture.
• having the palms open.

Prejudice and hate crime.
This section looks at ways of challenging hate crimes committed against individuals or groups because of their race, faith, culture, sexuality or gender. As a person of influence in the community, you may often have to deal with conflicts that involve strong and deeply entrenched prejudices, and/or hate crimes. When prejudices become acted out as abuse, intimidation and violence, they must be reported to the police and prosecuted. However, the day-to-day reality of community work is that prejudices and views of this kind can be bubbling rather than exploding. If you work with people that hold such views, it is helpful to understand what lies behind them. Getting people to understand themselves and the effect they have on others is important to bring about long term change.

This is a challenging task. For example, strongly held racist views can make your communications with one side in a conflict impossible. You might not be the best person to deal with such a situation and may need to call in outside help. However, knowing some basic ideas used in working with prejudice and hate crime offenders can be useful for anyone dealing with conflict.

Case Study
As part of their work under the Government’s Positive Futures Programme, Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme use sport to engage young people initially and then build a relationship with them through regular interaction. Local coaches provide a role model to young people on their own terms, on local estates. They take a long term informal approach to teaching core skills and values such as making compromises with others, time keeping, being part of the community, respecting and gaining from legitimate forms of employment, and the benefits of rules. As part of the reality of their street level work, coaches have had to deal with aggression that can break out into fights. Coach Sabir attended a one-day course run by E.R.I.C. (Educational Resources Implementation Consultancy) which taught him realistic skills to intervene and manage aggression before it erupts into violence. Sabir says that before the training he sometimes broke up fights at his own expense. The training taught him to put his own safety first and gave him an understanding of the importance of how to avoid conflicts with simple rules such as using positive body language, de-escalation scripts, allowing the individual to calm down before challenging the behaviour and tackling the underlying causes.

Case Study
As part of the rehabilitation of hate crime offenders, perpetrators of such crimes have been encouraged to explore and value their own identity before questioning their negative attitude to others. A Hate Crime Offenders’ Manual was developed as part of the Diversity Awareness Programme by the London probation service. This was aimed at young people convicted of hate crimes and was facilitated by probation officers in Feltham Young Offenders’ Institute. The programme aimed to reduce offending behaviour by getting the offenders to be more self-aware and to develop critical thinking skills and victim empathy by exploring their own and their victims’ racial identity. This gave them strategies to escape their patterns of behaviour.
Key factors in dealing with hate crime offenders.

Hate crime offending usually has a pattern. Often, there have been a number of incidents before an attack is reported. Many hate crime offenders have been involved in other kinds of crime, but some are purely hate based. The most common personal motivations behind hate crime are:

- Scape-goating where the attack is used to release frustration because the offender hasn’t achieved their own goals.
- Resentment towards cultures which are seen as having something that the offender does not: e.g. another group is seen as having a strong cultural identity or academic achievement.
- Issues of identity where another group is attacked to make one’s own look good or the offender may be confused about their own cultural, sexual or gender identity.

This helps us to think about prejudice as being the result of the offender having a poor self-image or as part of a wider pattern of criminal behaviour.

Different types of hate crime.

Offenders can be classified into different types depending on the way they express their prejudice.

- Some are seeking thrills by becoming involved in territorial battles of peer group violence.
- Some are reactive offenders, who feel begrudged and left out, and may feel inspired by a particular project, for example, one that targets a particular ethnic group.
- Politically motivated or premeditated attacks, for example, by members of far right groups.
- Retaliation attacks by those who have been oppressed and feel the desire to oppress.

In all these cases, identity is an important fact behind the attacks. Belonging to a group means supporting its views and this sense of identity may be more important than actually understanding or agreeing with the views held by the group. However, many such offenders can think in very rigid ways and may find it difficult to tell the difference between myth and fact. This can enable them to distort their crime and downplay the victim’s suffering.

Hate crime offending as part of the prejudices that are held in the wider community.

A study conducted in Greenwich, where black teenager Steven Lawrence was murdered in a racist attack, identified the wider factors that led to the perpetration of racist assaults as:

- entrenched local racism.
- poverty.
• low participation in leisure and lack of facilities.
• high levels of adult criminality and criminal networks.
• violent youth culture.
• poor self-esteem and/or poor positive cultural identity.

These facts help us to understand why the people that are the targets of prejudice can change from one place to another, affected by wider political, economic and global forces. This can be seen in several recent events that have appeared in the news. For example, there have been attacks against asylum seekers and refugees moving into an area, with hostility directed towards Gypsies and Travellers living on or wishing to establish sites, and stereotyping and blaming of faith groups connected to global events.

This is why it is important to go beyond blaming the individual for their prejudiced views and behaviour. While those who express extreme prejudices may have a narrow outlook and a distorted world view, they are often acting out views that are held quite widely in the community of which they are part.

Case Study
As part of the Leicester Resolving Differences programme, community facilitator training was provided by the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). 22 trainees between the ages of 15 and 22 years received training in prejudice reduction. This involved empowering trainees by supporting them in leading concrete, replicable prejudice reduction workshops in a variety of school and college settings. Trainees were encouraged to think of themselves as champions of diversity and catalysts in effecting deeper institutional change.

Anti-social behaviour and Restorative Justice. Anti-social behaviour is behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress such as graffiti, abusive and intimidating language, excessive noise, littering, drunken behaviour in the streets and drug dealing. Rises in anti-social behaviour can indicate a rising level of community tension. Incidents of anti-social behaviour such as fighting, vandalism and hate crime may spark off larger conflicts. Some current ideas about how to deal with anti-social behaviour are based on Restorative Justice. This is broader than the notion of punishment. The aim is to deal with the range of problems that may help to lead up to criminal and anti-social behaviour, and include victim support. There are a number of current practices that can be useful in different stages of community conflict.

• Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs): An ASBO is a civil court order which prohibits the perpetrator from specific anti-social acts and from entering defined areas on a map (exclusion zones). These do not give the offender a criminal record, but if an ASBO is broken this can result in sentencing.
• Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs): This is a voluntary agreement between an individual involved in anti-social behaviour and the local police, the housing sector and sometimes schools. If an individual fails to comply with the terms of their ABC, the next step is to apply for an ASBO. ASBOs and ABCs can only be applied for by the police, British Transport Police, local authorities and registered social landlords.
• Community Courts: The Community Court Liverpool is a pilot community court based on the Red Hook centre in New York. The court focuses on offenders making amends to the community. Merseyside Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and probation and youth offending teams provide advice and support services. A community judge presides over the centre, monitoring treatment programmes and community punishments. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring the views of the community are considered and the judge attends and initiates community meetings.
• Community Justice Panels: These are tribunals made up of local volunteers to deal with low-level disorder and crime. The aim is to bring victims and offenders together with members of the community to discuss the causes of the offence and agree on ways of making amends. Going before the panel is a voluntary alternative to getting a criminal record or a procedure such as housing eviction.
• Youth inclusion and support panels (YISPs): are voluntary schemes that target children aged 8-13 identified as being at high risk of offending. They are multi-agency groups (the police, schools, health and social services, and members of the local community). Local agencies refer young people who are then, along with their families, offered contracts and programmes.
Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs): are a combination of police, local authorities and other organisations and businesses who work together to develop and implement strategies for tackling crime and disorder on a local level.

Case Study

The Howard League Awards.
The Howard League for Penal Reform, in partnership with the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation supports community sentencing as a constructive alternative to the overcrowding in prisons. One of the recipients of their Penal Reform Community Programme Award was the Youth Offending Service Mentoring Project, Leicester City & Leicestershire. This programme deploys volunteer mentors to work with young people to support them in dealing with issues in their lives that may lead to further offending. The project recruits volunteer mentors from all areas of the community, both geographically and to represent the multi-cultural mix of Leicester and Leicestershire. Mentors also work to reduce the fear of crime by raising awareness about the positive work that young people are involved in.

Gangs and gun crime.
Over the past decade there has been an increase in concern over the growth of youth territorial gangs and gun crime related to this. Although the level of gun crime in the UK is low compared with other countries, it has risen in recent years and new laws have been put in place to deal with it.

It is important to understand the difference between two types of territorial gangs: first, those involved in organised criminal networks, such as drug markets, and second, groups of young people who have an identity around a neighbourhood and may engage in anti-social behaviour. These are very different issues which require different solutions. Ways of dealing with the first involve police operations; the second can be worked with through peer mediation, restorative justice approaches, projects that bring young people together and into positive activities, and civil injunctions such as ASBOs.

Case Study

The Unity project run by Peterborough Youth Service aims to reduce racial incidents in the city by increasing mutual respect and understanding through young people working...
intensively together on different projects which focus on uniting themes such as sports, fashion, music and fun activities.

Examples of Unity Projects include the Unity Football Team, bringing together different racial groups from areas of the city where there are high levels of racial incidents; the Unity Conference where over 100 young people spent a day with the police, the local authority and the local press to talk about social cohesion; and the Unity Youth Crew, a peer led project that targeted older youth 'street leaders' and involved a two-day residential course to learn about youth work and undertaking voluntary work on unity projects.

As well as this general preventative work, the Unity Project intervenes in conflict. For example, in one particular school a conflict between Asian and Black youth erupted after tensions built up over the summer break. The youth workers and the school identified five key leaders from each side. Each young person had a choice about taking part and chose the youth workers they wanted as facilitators at the 'Peace Conference' that took place over two days at the neutral venue. The school was fully involved and were able to be 'tough' on the young people involved, whilst the youth workers could take on the neutral role of mediators. The end result was a ‘Unity Pledge’ agreement signed by all young people and youth workers, and this ‘Unity Pledge’ held firm for the reminder of the academic year.

The following points are drawn from The Gangs and Territorialism project run by the organisation LEAP that has been working with young people involved in or affected by gangs. The aim is to divert the energy and companionship of gang culture into positive learning and leadership activities. Here are the key lessons from the project:

- Gangs are not taking over our streets. There are many kinds of gangs, and most are not armed, organised or criminally active. Gangs are not necessarily bad; they are mostly groups of young people, friends who call themselves a gang. They may be seen as a gang by others when they are seen as a threat and are deeply rooted in an area.
- Young people join gangs for many reasons. Generally, it is a need for group membership as a transition to adulthood. It is also in response to a need, they may give their members excitement, status, self-protection, or help in dealing with their social and economic situation.
- It is usually more productive to make sure that gang energies are channelled into new opportunities for learning and leadership, than to stop them. Gang members can be given the opportunity to learn about personal responsibility and how to resist negative peer pressure. This is not about providing alternative activities, but giving them the skills to resolve their own conflicts without doing harm.

Case Study.

The Defendin Da Hood project run by Waltham Forest Community Safety Unit and local landlord Forest Homes has attracted young people who are involved in or on the edge of gang culture through music and entertainment. Young people are invited to take part in conferences where they can put their views to the police and council. Nearly 2,000 young people have attended the events. As a contribution to World Peace Week, over 500 14-19 year olds responded to an invite to a social event where they were given the opportunity to express their point of view to police and council representatives. It was also an opportunity for the police and others to explain their position and the dangers associated with real and imitation guns. The aim was to address the poor image of local youngsters to older residents, the gang culture in the area and the emergence of the use of guns by a minority of young people.

Resources.

A tool kit on anti social behaviour by The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
For information and training on reducing crime including, crime reduction toolkits for helpful advice in delivering community safety projects: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/guncrime/firearms controls.
The Connected programme is part of the Home Office strategy to tackle gun crime and gun culture, aimed at working with community groups. The connected fund was designed to assist small local community projects working to tackle gun crime and gun culture.

Educational Resources Implementation Consultancy (E.R.I.C) specialises in providing a range of courses and consultancy to care services, schools and organisations dealing with challenging behaviour - www.e-r-i-c.co.uk


Home Office website on ASB - http://www.together.gov.uk

Home Office general website on crime reduction: http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk

Rupra, M. (2005) I Aint Racist But... has been developed by the Racial Harassment Action Group Monitoring Project at Leicester Racial Equality Council. This is aimed at youth workers and suggests ways of responding constructively to racist incidents and to deal appropriately with victims and perpetrators. Cost: £20 plus postage and packing. Available from: Leicester Racial Equality Council - LREC

Epic House, 3rd Floor, Lower Hill Street, Leicester LE1 3SH
Tel: 0116 299 9800
Email: administrator@lrec.org.uk

Mediation UK practice guide:
40 Cases: Restorative Justice & Victim-Offender Mediation £12.95. A collection of practitioner accounts of a restorative approach being used successfully at all stages of the criminal justice system. This can be ordered via the web site: http://www.mediationuk.org.uk or by post:

Mediation UK
Alexander House, Telephone Avenue
Bristol BS1 4BS
Tel: +44 (0117) 904 6661
Fax: +44 (0117) 904 3331
Email: enquiry@mediationuk.org.uk

PEP (Priority Estates Project): an independent, not-for-profit company providing advice, training and research services to tackle social exclusion and support neighbourhood renewal on some of Britain’s worst estates.

www.pep.org.uk

Police web page on hate crime - http://www.met.police.uk/urhc/index.htm

http://www.safer-community.net is a national website focusing on interventions addressing crime prevention within the context of community development. You can find out about programmes to support young people at risk through Youth offending teams (YOTS). There is a YOT in every local authority in England and Wales. They are made up of representatives from the police, probation service, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. To contact your local youth offending team or youth inclusion and support panel see the Youth Justice Board web site: http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard
Section Six. Reflection and Evaluation.
After the crisis.
All conflicts end at some stage. In time, all disputes are resolved one way or another; but in many cases, they also recur. They come around again, maybe in a different form or in a different place or at a different time.

In Section One the idea of the stages of conflict was outlined. The final two stages are:
• The Outcome Stage. Immediately after the Crisis there will be some outcome. One side may win or lose, there may be some negotiation and perhaps mediation. The levels of confrontation will decrease.
• The Post-Conflict Stage. This is where actions are taken to build relations between those who were in conflict in order to return the situation to one of normal relationships. Where this does not happen, conflict can escalate once more.

As mentioned before, the idea of stages of conflict has to be treated with care. Not all conflicts have stages in this way, stages do not necessarily follow one after the other, and not all conflicts end with a final outcome and post-conflict stage. In fact, some say that after the outcome stage, it is as likely that the conflict will enter crisis again as it is to move into post-conflict.

And it is in the aftermath of a conflict that you might be tempted to relax, to see the job as done and to move on to the next issue. So another word of warning. The conflict may have passed, but it will often leave behind a legacy of emotions and tensions. The issues that caused the conflict in the first place may remain unresolved. Even if they have been resolved, it is likely that the people involved have work to do to be reconciled.

But some things may have changed:
• You may have encouraged discussions between people who usually do not speak to each other.
• You may have been involved in some frank and open conversations about issues not often discussed.
• You may have established or helped others to establish some new relationships and networks.
• You may have learned some new skills or practiced skills you already have.
• You may feel more able to deal with conflict in the future.
• And the parties involved in the conflict may be more open to further discussion in the future.

This section looks at what can be done after a conflict to analyse and learn from it, to continue building relationships and networks, and to establish ways of helping to deal with the emotions that are left behind afterwards. These are some ways of working to break the recurring cycle of conflict.

Case Study
In Bradford, the Programme for a Peaceful City has been organising Safe Space Discussions since it was set up following the disturbances of 2001. The importance of ‘safe space discussion’ for the PPC was based on a sense that Bradford had not found an effective way of discussing the social and cultural divisions in the District. There is little inter-class or inter-cultural dialogue in the District, and some would say that the evidence points to increasing segregation on cultural and ethnic as well as class lines. Given the District’s history of serious disturbances, most notably 1995 and on a larger scale, 2001, this lack of deliberative space and a methodology for deliberation could inhibit progress towards a peaceful District. Since 2001, many have wanted to encourage us to ‘celebrate our differences’, and of course that is important. However, some differences are deep, even fundamental. How do we live with these? Can we only live apart, in segregated zones? Or can we find another way by beginning to discuss what those radical differences are? What do we do about the inequalities of wealth, power and status which often exacerbate our differences and lead people to denigrate the ‘Other’ out of fear, insecurity or lack of self esteem. How do those inequalities impact on our ability to talk to each other? The PPC safe space discussions aim to build relationships, overcome misunderstanding, encourage communication, diminish the impact of rumour and thus contribute to conflict prevention. They do not have to resolve conflicts. But in order to be useful, the events must honestly recognise -as appropriate- the reality of conflict and disagreement.

The aftermath of conflict.
Immediately after being involved in a conflict, you may well feel very tired and drained. The effort of finding a way forward is always consuming and emotionally harder than you might expect. So, after the key meeting, or after the mediation,
or after the show-down, take time to stop and rest. You will need to gather yourself. There are some interesting paradoxes after a period of conflict.

- At one level people will be relieved that an issue has been dealt with, that a resolution has been found.
- At another level, there is often a feeling of anger that the outcome was not sufficient or it was unjust.
- And at another level still, there may be feelings of loss that the conflict, which generated so much energy and emotion, is now gone.

This may seem contradictory and indeed it is. But it is useful to consider the feelings that people experience after an emotional event in their lives, be it a death, a separation or a conflict. While conflicts may not be on the same scale as other traumas in life, we can learn from them. One writer has described a series of emotions that many people experience after the loss caused by bereavement. These are:

- Denial (this isn’t happening to me).
- Anger (why is this happening to me?).
- Bargaining (I promise I’ll be a better person if… ).
- Depression (I don’t care anymore).
- Acceptance (I’m ready for whatever comes).

The people you work with, having just been through a conflict, may well be reeling and hardly believing that it has happened, they may well be angry at the outcome, they may well be working through the “what ifs…” (if only I had done something else) and they may in time become depressed at what has happened and its outcome. It is only after all those feelings have been dealt with that they are ready to accept what has happened and move on. The sort of safe space or supported discussions talked about in the Bradford example above can be useful to allow people to express and work through all these feelings. Providing a safe space for those involved to reflect on their experience of the conflict can be an important part of the process of evaluation once the conflict is over. This can be a practical and a straightforward exercise. Provide a neutral, warm, safe and comfortable space. Refreshments are always a good way to help people to relax. Don’t have a heavy agenda of things that must be done. Give people time and space. Agree with everyone the rules of the discussion. These will involve listening rather than debating, understanding rather than analysing, empathising rather than blaming. Allow people to talk and help everyone to hear what is said.

**Case Study**

In the aftermath of the London tube bombings, the Muslim Safety Forum was actively involved in the national discussion and the national grief that the events provoked. They spoke to the media, they attended the vigil in Trafalgar Square and, via their Chairman Azad Ali, they wrote in the book of condolences “United in suffering, united in grief and united in seeking justice.” In addition, they worked with the Metropolitan Police to ensure the safety of the Muslim community in London and throughout the UK. At one of their regular meetings they were able to share a moment of grief for the victims of the tragedy. The days after the bombing provided a unique moment for creating new relationships between sections of the community which may not have related closely before. These relationships are important for building the long term trust that is needed to confront the underlying causes of the events.

**Reflection and evaluation as tools of conflict resolution.**

In many ways the work of evaluating and reflecting on a conflict is similar to the work of collecting information and analysing that were discussed in Section Two. This is not surprising:
• They both involve working with groups of people who have different perspectives on the conflict.
• They are both about creating discussions between groups of people who hold different views on the conflict.
• They are both about creating a discussion that is safe and respectful of all points of view.
• They are both about learning together and building relationships.
• They are both about changing things so that conflict does not occur or reoccur.

So how is this best done? First review the sections on “Things to think about when collecting information” (on page 16), “Trust Building” (on page 18) and “How to collect information and what information to collect” (on page 19). This section applies all that thinking to the job of evaluating and reflecting on the work you undertook together during the conflict.

Be clear about why you are evaluating. We suggest two key reasons:
• to identify which of the actions you undertook successfully contributed to the ending of the conflict.
• to continue to build trust and positive relationships so that you are better prepared for the next time that conflict occurs or reoccurs.

**Action evaluation in conflict resolution.**

Collecting information about the effectiveness of your conflict resolution work follows the same principles of engagement with all parties that you have been using throughout.

Some people call this action evaluation. It involves:
• A cycle of defining a problem, taking action, monitoring and then reflecting on the outcomes.
• Designing the evaluation process transparently with all those involved.
• Listening to opinions and evidence from all those involved in a systematic way.
• Being clear on the rules of confidentiality when collecting evaluation data.
• Feeding back that evidence to all those involved.
• Drawing conclusions from the evidence you collect in an open forum which includes all shades of opinion.
• Feeding back those conclusions to the community.

Collecting evaluation material in this way is likely to give you a wide range of opinions on what happened and how effective your work was. If the people you work with trust the process you are running, they are more likely to give thoughtful and useful information. They will feel a sense of
ownership and they will trust that they will get the results with everyone else.

It is often very difficult to really be sure about what effect different actions had on a conflict situation. Conflicts are complicated and are caused by a wide range of factors. The factors that cause a conflict to stop are also wide ranging. This means that it will not be easy to identify the specific impact that your particular work had in terms of resolving the conflict. However, if you ask enough people from a broad enough range of opinions, you will collect enough information to be able to make a good enough assessment of what worked and what did not work. While you are doing this, you will be continuing to build those important relationships and networks that are so crucial to preventing future conflicts.

And, similarly, this section is not the end of this Resource Pack. It is a step in the cycle that you are taking which will return you to collecting data, building networks, mediating and all those other activities that are part of the conflict and also part of your work.

But it may be a moment to reflect on your own feelings about conflict and your own skills and experience in relation to conflict. We hope that these resources will help you to recognise and value the experience and skills you already have, motivate you to build those skills and challenge you to reassess your own views and approaches where that is necessary. If you can do that, then you are encouraging others to do it. And when enough of us do it, then change will be certain.

And so to closure.
Some people talk of closure in relation to conflicts. When the dust is settled and “things get back to normal”. By now you will understand that this is not the message of this Resource Pack. “Normal” includes conflicts. They are part and parcel of everything you do and preventing them from happening and dealing with them is part of your everyday experience.
Resources.


Big Lottery Fund has two guides that you may find useful: Self Evaluation- a handy guide and Engaging young people in evaluation and consultation. Both can be downloaded for free from their web site www.biglotteryfund.org.uk in the publication section under ‘Evaluation and Research’.

Tavistock Institute: support for evaluation and self evaluation. The Institute has worked for many years in the field of evaluation and regularly provides support to evaluation activities in the voluntary and community sector.

www.tavinstitute.org or contact:
Tavistock Institute
30 Tabernacle Street
London EC2A 4UE
Tel: 0207 417 0407
Email: d.hills@tavinstitute.org

Measuring Effectiveness is a self-evaluation toolkit to enable individual Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) to monitor and evaluate their own work; and enable the national CVS network to collect and share monitoring and evaluation information in a comparable and consistent way.

http://www.nacvs.org.uk/nacvs/initiatives/mi/meas.pdf
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