



# **DIVERSITY/ COMMUNITY COHESION**



We have seen a rapid change in BME populations over recent years with these communities doubling since 2001. The last Census recorded our Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population at c.2.9 per cent. This is changing and the 2006 mid-year estimate stands at 6 per cent. Voluntary sector partners estimate that up to 10 per cent of the population could be BME.

We have more migrant workers in our city than ever before, particularly from the Accession Eight (A8) states, primarily Poland. In 2007/08 figures show 2,270 national insurance numbers were issued to foreign nationals in Plymouth. This was just a rise of 10 compared to 2006/07. School records suggest that at least 7 per cent of pupils in Plymouth are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and they show an increasing population of pupils with Eastern European background.

Each year, the University of Plymouth attracts international students from across the globe, adding on to diversity in the city.

We have been a dispersal area for asylum seekers since 2000 and have some 450 Asylum Seekers supported by the UK Borders Agency in the city. Recently, a number of asylum seekers have been granted refugee status, and are now in the process of settling in as long term Plymouth residents

We have one permanent Gypsy and Traveller site and every year, we get around 20 Gypsy and Traveller unauthorised encampments. These encampments involve a total of up to 200 Gypsy and Traveller children and up to 100 Gypsy and Traveller adults per year.

As many as 49,000 people (20 per cent) of our total population are likely to have some sort of disability described as "limiting long term illness" health problem or disability that limits daily activities or work.

According to the last census, most people in Plymouth are Christian, but we also have a variety of other religions like Sikh, Hindu, Islam and other beliefs, including humanists.

Estimates of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people in Plymouth are between 17,500 and 30,000, or approximately one in fifteen people.

Community Cohesion across Plymouth shows encouraging signs with 75 per cent of residents saying that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. Official community tension ratings have remained "low" for some years. However we recognise specific issues and challenges especially for minority communities, which underlay these facts.

In the absence of comprehensive and current population counts, of the various diverse groups, the accuracy and currency of diversity figures at local and national level remain challenging. Existing official statistics may not always tell the whole story, so where possible official statistics can be supplemented by qualitative estimates from voluntary sector organisations.

Plymouth CDRP focuses mainly on racist and homophobic incidents but the CDRP recognises that other areas of diversity, for which poorer data exists, are equally important, i.e. age, disability, faith and belief and gender.

Within the Council, the Social Inclusion Unit is responsible for managing incident reporting systems. Online reporting systems now include racist, homophobic, transphobic, faith and belief and disablist incidences.

Between August 2006 and July 2007 reported homophobic incidents averaged 4 per month, but under-reporting remains an issue. Police data suggests a 'seasonal swing', with late summer and autumn experiencing higher reports. Records and experiences of voluntary sectors organisation suggest higher levels of unreported incidences. We recognise that there is more reassurance work to do to get more people to report incidences.

The Commission for Cohesion and Integration<sup>27</sup> highlighted data, which showed a majority of UK residents get on well together. PCC is currently undertaking a major piece of work to respond to this report with partners to clarify our approach to community cohesion. Some cohesion problems have occurred in areas like Stonehouse and Greenbank. We are continuously monitoring tension situations and where issues arise, we problem solve in partnership with the Police, local community groups and voluntary sector partners.

The Council leads a programme of multi-agency work to manage asylum seeker and refugee issues in Plymouth and has recently worked with LSP partners to help Third Sector organisations establish an Association and to commission ASR services against citywide priorities. The LSP has established a Race Relations Project Group, which is now also considering wider cohesion and diversity issues.

A number of partners have their own Diversity Teams/Staff for example the Local Authority has a Social Inclusion Unit, the Police have a Diverse Communities Team and Health have an Equality & Diversity Lead. These teams have extensive links with many of our diverse communities, including those defined by age, gender, race, faith & belief, sexual orientation and disability, and they feed into the CDRP.

We have a multi agency partnership around safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. Adult Social care take the lead in identifying vulnerable adults, organising case conferences and passing on cases to the Police where required. The Public Protection Unit within Police investigates crime concerning vulnerable adults and those who are victims of domestic abuse. This work is increasingly coordinated with that of the Council's Social Inclusion Unit.

The CDRP encourages collaborated working between all its partners on diversity issues and also works with the Local Criminal Justice Board to constantly improve our joint approaches.

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<sup>27</sup> "Our Shared Futures 2007"