



BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2025-2030





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INTRODUCTION



I'm very pleased to share this Building Stronger Communities Strategic Framework with you all and want to thank everyone who's taken the time to put it together, including both our Council staff and most importantly each of our residents who took the time to be part of creating this important piece of work.

It's clear from the conversations we have had as part of creating this framework that Calderdale is very much loved by those who were born here and those that have chosen to come here and to call it their home. Their sense of belonging and enjoyment of a warm welcome here contribute much to the pride we all feel in this borough.

Councillor Danielle Durrans

Portfolio Holder for Public Services

We are also aware that for many people in Calderdale life has its challenges. Our reflection on those challenges directs our priorities and efforts to strive to reduce them and is why we are committed to reducing inequalities, supporting and building 'thriving towns' and addressing and responding to the climate emergency in all the work that we do.

We are extremely proud that our good practice in social cohesion has been so well recognised and that we see the tangible benefits from it identified nationally. Through the adoption of this framework we will continue this great work and build stronger communities for everyone.



WHAT DO STRONG COMMUNITIES LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?



We know that high levels of social cohesion where diversity is valued and positive interactions between people of all kinds are enjoyed are at the heart of what makes a community feel strong and safe. The communities of Calderdale have consistently shown great kindness and resilience to crisis as we have seen through recent challenges including the cost-of-living crisis, flooding and the pandemic as well as through the warm welcome given to those fleeing conflict and seeking safety and a new life here. It is also shown through the high levels of volunteering and vibrant cultural celebrations that make Calderdale such a special place. But we know that for lots of individuals and communities in Calderdale there are challenges to sustaining and growing these things.

Calderdale Council has a long established and nationally recognised strategic commitment to prioritising social cohesion. The benefits of this were borne out during pandemic by how the people of Calderdale showed significantly greater trust (10.6% higher) in us than in other areas where social cohesion was not prioritised.¹ This has meant that we all enjoy the benefits of how our currency of kindness promotes the sense of belonging that people feel here.

We have been celebrated by the Local Government Association peer review panel who said that Calderdale is:

“a place full of amazing partners, businesses, volunteers and activists. The authenticity of their passion for Calderdale is clear ... This is true in every part of the Borough irrespective of which town or community. The Councils aspiration to ensure that all voices are heard is embraced at every level of not only the Council but also amongst partners and stakeholders more widely.”²

We are seeking to build on these strengths to continue to build stronger communities through greater social cohesion. Social cohesion happens when people from different backgrounds meet, mix and get along. The work of cohesion and integration is about developing neighbourhoods, workplaces, institutions and social spaces where difference is welcomed and celebrated. It is about creating opportunities where empathy and curiosity about people ‘not like me’ are encouraged. When this happens, we can move beyond ‘us’ and ‘them’ towards ideas of kindness, trust and social cohesion between groups of people.

Our **Vision 2034** is that in 2034, Calderdale will be an **enterprising** place, full of **opportunity**, where we can all live a larger life. We will always be **kind** and **welcoming**. Everyone will have reason to be full of **hope** and this will enable us to thrive and get us through testing times. We will be celebrated for our distinctive **heritage**, **nature** and **creativity** that everyone can enjoy. Strong and cohesive communities will play an important part in making this vision a reality.

¹ <https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/project/beyond-us-them/>

² LGA Corporate Peer Challenge February 2023 Feedback report

WHY WE HAVE CREATED THIS FRAMEWORK?



We are committed to all residents of Calderdale being able to live a larger life³, social cohesion and reducing inequalities are essential to making that possible. This framework lays out how we will put this commitment into practice both in setting the ethos for how we work and in how we design and deliver our services to the people of Calderdale.

We recognise that the Government is likely to develop a national cohesion strategy in the coming years and so we will seek to both feed our own good practice into the development of that strategy and to bring it to life in ways that are appropriate to our place.

OUR ETHOS

In Calderdale our approach to building stronger communities is shaped by **5 themes**

Appreciating the **BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY**

A sense of **BELONGING** for all our people

Feeling **SAFE**

Valuing **VOLUNTEERING**, civic and **DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT**

ASPIRATIONS can be met and our residents are able to live a larger life



WHAT DO WE KNOW?



THE NATIONAL PICTURE

In recent times there have been a range of policy proposals both from government advisors and national organisations which we will draw from as we deliver our framework to build greater social cohesion and connect communities in Calderdale which include:

- Nationally there have been identified increasingly poor levels of trust and decreasing civil engagement⁴.
- Threats to social cohesion through conspiracy messaging and extremist disinformation are increasing and having a damaging impact on social cohesion as seen during the civil disturbances during the summer of 2024. Responding to these threats requires consistent and appropriate messaging from public bodies to challenge and correct disinformation designed to promote tensions in communities.

- The absence of a national measurement framework to monitor where changes and challenges are emerging prevents us having a consistent understanding of social cohesion. A consistent and systematic set of national measures would enable us to identify early warnings and measure progress in relation to social cohesion.
- The strongest legislative requirement for us to proactively encourage social cohesion is the Equality Act that requires public bodies to foster good relations between people who hold the protected characteristics listed in the act and those that don't. The delivery of this duty would benefit from a greater focus and priority for public bodies subject to the act.

³ <https://new.calderdale.gov.uk/council/our-vision/vision2034>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-khan-review-threats-to-social-cohesion-and-democratic-resilience/the-khan-review-executive-summary-key-findings-and-recommendations>



THE CALDERDALE PICTURE

We commissioned an in-depth review by the **Belong Cohesion and Integration network** and carried out 800 conversations around our 5 themes. We carried out these conversations throughout the borough to understand the current picture for social cohesion in Calderdale.

THE REVIEW AND ADDITIONAL RECENT RESEARCH HAVE IDENTIFIED AREAS WHERE CALDERDALE IS STRONG INCLUDING:

- Our shared vision of Kindness is well understood and positively embraced across Calderdale.
- Our priority of tackling inequality is demonstrated through a wide range of our strategies.
- There continues to be an increased optimism amongst the adult population
- We have seen an increase in perceptions that people from different backgrounds get on well together in recent years⁵.
- Significantly more people feel safe in Calderdale than the West Yorkshire average⁶.
- We demonstrate a valued voluntary sector with evidenced parity of esteem demonstrated across our strategies.
- Our continued commitment to working at a neighbourhood level promotes trust and supports high quality engagement for all communities.
- Arts & culture are celebrated and shared across our communities
- We have a strong and active interfaith community that works in close partnership with us and our wider partners.
- Loneliness can have a significant detrimental impact on people's wellbeing and sense of belonging. We have demonstrated our commitment to

reducing the impact of loneliness through established and well trusted programmes such as Staying Well and our Warm Hubs⁷. Through creating opportunities for greater connection for people we see stronger, healthier and more cohesive communities. The benefits from this bringing greater impact for everyone.

THERE WERE SOME AREAS WHERE THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDING:

- Optimism is slightly lower in our young people than in our adult population
- Tackling inequality in regard to educational attainment and school readiness in our children warrants continued focus.
- Access to an affordable and well-structured transport system can enhance and enable greater mixing through work, educational, social and cultural activity. The geography and current transport systems can mean this is challenging for some people so a proactive approach to facilitating greater levels of mixing would be of benefit.
- There is entrenched stark inequality across the borough, with men in the most deprived parts of the borough living 14 years less on average than those in the least deprived areas and women living 11 years less.
- People may fear losing their sense of identity when changes happen very suddenly in a place, such as when people from different ethnic backgrounds arrive to work in a town in significant numbers. There would be benefit from greater recognition of the importance of cultural history which can support a sense of belonging.

⁵ West Yorkshire Mayor Your Views survey – 2019 50.3% increased to 56.3% in 2023

⁶ As above – 86.3% feel safe in Calderdale compared to 70.3% in West Yorkshire

⁷ Leeds Beckett School of Health: An evaluation of Calderdale Warm Spaces provision 22/23

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US



We invited people to inform this strategic framework through carrying out **800** conversations with our residents throughout the spring and summer of 2024. Our conversations were with people who reflect the demography and geography of Calderdale and we asked people to converse along the themes of:

- **Feelings of belonging**
- **Levels and types of connection across people from different social groups**
- **Perceptions of how people with different backgrounds get on with each other**
- **Feelings of safety**
- **Volunteering and taking care of the places where we live and work**
- **Feelings that aspirations can be met to live a larger life in Calderdale**
- **Thoughts and feelings on migration**

STRENGTHS

Most people in Calderdale feel a strong sense of belonging to their local neighbourhood with 78% commenting positively about the locality. People are positive about the diversity of Calderdale and are particularly proud of their local neighbourhood and township with strong feelings of attachment.

Most people (over 80%) say that they have good or strong social connections with neighbours, family or friends in their local neighbourhoods.

Calderdale has the highest percentage of people in West Yorkshire who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well

together. Places where people from different backgrounds mix well together are valued and include parks and green spaces, voluntary & community organisations, Halifax Town Centre and the Piece Hall, workplaces, schools and colleges and public events and festival celebrations.

Feelings about the positive impact of well-kept and cared for green spaces and the countryside are strongly held across the borough with most people enjoying social or sporting events that bring them together in these spaces. 82% of people felt their local place is taken care of and many take part in voluntary activity to care for it themselves.

Calderdale is made up of towns of various sizes and people feel that this means that communities are able to know and care for each other and that this fosters close-knit communities.

Half of the people we spoke to do some sort of volunteering locally including, litter picking, looking after neighbourhoods and community gardening or formal volunteering for organisations or groups both local and national. People are motivated to volunteer to make a contribution to their communities, to connect to others, gain skills and stay active.

People value learning about other peoples lives and experiences and over two thirds of the people we spoke to have met someone who came to the UK from another place including refugees and those seeking sanctuary. Most people have met people from other countries via social contacts including through friends or family, as neighbours, in clubs or activities. The second most common way to meet people like this is through work.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Spaces, places and services for children and young people are perceived to be lacking and there are concerns about the opportunities for positive engagement with social and civic life for them.

Some people felt that due to the lack of ethnic diversity in their own area that they lacked the opportunity to meet and spend time with people who are different to them.

People care greatly about the impact of areas that appear neglected and uncared for, that litter, fly tipping and potholes have a negative impact on how a place feels and detract from how much community spirit there is there. They are concerned about the impact this has on anti-social behaviour and crime.

Access to an affordable and efficient transport infrastructure is fragmented and unequal across the borough. This has a negative impact for people economically and socially in areas that are poorly served by public transport.

People are concerned about perceived segregation of communities in Calderdale and that some people of the same demography stick together more than mix with others who are different to them.

Most people feel safe across Calderdale all the time but a significant number of people are concerned about their safety at night time, particularly in town centres. Use of alcohol, drugs and anti-social behaviour make people feel unsafe and unwelcome in some places at night.

Over a third of the people we spoke to made comments about the benefits of migration and see diversity as positive to communities, however a smaller proportion (15%) shared concerns about migration wanting to see more control and perceiving a negative impact on local infrastructure, feeling that different ethnic groups generally do not get on well.

For those in our more ethnically diverse wards some of the people we spoke to felt that migrant and ethnic minority communities are sometimes scapegoated by parts of the media and some politicians and are blamed for problems and represented negatively.



WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO SEE



People acknowledge that there is a work to do around social cohesion and share concerns about how it will be resourced. There is a call for a community-led approach that is supported by the Council and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector alongside more opportunities to mix in schools and at cultural events and in accessible and inclusive spaces.

People particularly wanted to see the following:

- **Well cared for neutral spaces for people to spend time in, particularly green spaces and public gathering places in our towns.**
- **More opportunities for meaningful interaction across people with different back grounds. This is beyond simple mixing interactions such as sharing a queue in a supermarket and towards developing connection and high-quality interaction through for example carrying out an activity together.**
- **Initiatives to address littering and fly tipping alongside pro-active community participation in cleanups are welcomed and encouraged alongside education and communication on re-cycling and our individual waste management responsibilities.**
- **Promotion of volunteering opportunities and greater opportunities that are flexible and accessible for people of different health needs or with disabilities.**
- **Good employment, good health, affordable housing and good local infrastructure to support their ambitions in life to be achieved in Calderdale.**

LOCAL CHALLENGES

Poverty – The poverty rate in Calderdale is 14.9% that means that nearly 15% of our adult residents are living in poverty. This compares to a national poverty rate of 12.9%. For children aged 0-15 the poverty rate is 22.2%.

Housing – The national housing shortage is reflected in Calderdale. Despite a local plan defined need of 997 homes to be built each year an average of 345 homes have been built annually in the last 5 years.

In addition our number of homeless households has increased in line with national trends from 367 households owed homelessness prevention duty in 2019 to 577 in 2023.

Health and wellbeing – Life expectancy for men in Calderdale varies by over 14 years depending on the ward of residents with men in Rastrick ward living 14.1 years longer than those in Park ward, for women the difference is over 11 years.

Loneliness and isolation can have significant impacts on mental health and wellbeing for our residents and remains an area of focus for our approaches to health and wellbeing.

Misinformation and divided discourse in public life – Along with many other parts of the country we have witnessed the potential damage and fear that misinformation and polarised discourse leading to direct harassment can cause. We recognise the value of lively democratic debate and peoples' rights to hold and express different points of view on issues. We are also clear that people in Calderdale want to see people express their views democratically; that protest – however lively – must remain legal; and that there is no place in our borough for any harassment and intimidation of political representatives or of campaigners for whatever cause.

WHAT WILL WE DO TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES IN CALDERDALE?



Taking a **whole council** approach we will embed our **5 themes** as foundational practice across our landscape of influence and service delivery. This means that they form the principles from which we make decisions about how to allocate resources and how we design and deliver our services. It means that through

our partnerships and collaboration across the borough that we will hold these themes at the forefront of how we work together to achieve our priorities to reduce inequalities, have thriving towns and tackle the climate emergency.



BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

We will build on our value of kindness to celebrate and highlight the value of embracing diversity in our population and workforce.

We will foster greater opportunities for people of different ages and backgrounds to spend high quality time together through positive endeavour and celebration.

Our sanctuary seeking residents will be able to influence our policy and practice and will be celebrated for their valuable contribution to our society.

More widely the Council will listen to views and feelings from all sections of the community about the way that our culture and communities are changing and how this reality can be supported to be for the benefit of all. Everyone in Calderdale will be empowered to grow and sustain their cultural contribution and celebration, bringing to life the unique identity of each place and community.

We will build social cohesion into policy and practice across the organisation with a workforce that demonstrates exemplary understanding of our diverse cultures and faiths through skills development programmes.

We will work with our business community in Calderdale to build celebration of and opportunity for greater diversity in the wider workforce and increased connection between people through workplaces.

WE WILL DELIVER these things through our network of strategies and work areas across the whole Council and through our partnerships and networks including:

- **Gaining the Local Authority of Sanctuary award**
- **Where Creativity Flows – Our Cultural Strategy**

- Through our locality working with place-based **Neighbourhood Teams** delivering wide ranging community interventions bringing diverse people together through, food and cultural celebration, celebrating local culture and memory and active and healthy places.
- Empowering our communities to be actively engaged in celebrating and shaping their places through the **Engagement and Empowerment Strategic Framework**.
- **Support and Integration grants** – delivered in partnership with the Calderdale Community Foundation funding social cohesion and integration projects throughout the borough.
- **Our Workforce Equality Networks** that share knowledge and understanding through their lived experience and will inform Council workforce policies and Council service design.
- A workforce equality action plan reporting annually on progress towards a workforce that reflects our communities.
- Building social cohesion and faith literacy into policy and practice skills development programme
- Support the **School linking programme** across our schools
- Build on and improve school inclusive practice through school leadership
- Our **Active Calderdale** physical activity strategy will make moving and being active integrated as part of day to day life in Calderdale. It is delivered through a community led approach, working with and empowering communities to lead the physical activity decision making and work in neighbourhoods where the opportunity for impact is greatest
- We will develop a **Co-production Strategy** for our adult services provision whose lead principle is that it will value and involve people with lived experience and use their knowledge and skills to improve these services.

BELONGING AND FEELING SAFE

We will increase and improve the opportunities for community led solutions for our shared spaces including parks, waterways and public realm to be safe and well cared for by our services and our residents.

Through our Local Plan and capital programmes we will enhance and develop places where there are more opportunities to meet and mix with people who are different to each other and that are accessible to all. Because access to affordable good quality housing is vital to achieving a sense of belonging, safety and wellbeing for residents we are committed to seeing an increase in suitable housing stock through our housing and planning strategies.

Fostering feelings of belonging and connection for people will form a core element of our health and wellbeing service design and delivery and measurement of the impact these make on people's lives.

We recognise and value the contribution that our interfaith community of organisations and people of all faiths and none make to building stronger communities. Their collaboration with each other to bring peace and tolerance into practice for the people of Calderdale alongside wide ranging practical support through multiple charitable activities will be actively supported through our covenant with **Calderdale Interfaith**⁸. Through a training and awareness programme we will increase the faith literacy and cultural competence throughout our workforce and wider partners to ensure that our services are appropriate and inclusive for all.

Our bereavement services will meet the needs of all the people of Calderdale appropriately and with understanding and appreciation of cultural differences within our communities.

The Calderdales' **Community Safety Partnership** priorities will reflect those of the people of Calderdale to tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental blight, for people to feel safe and free from violence, particularly young people, women and girls, and prevent extremists from undermining our values of mutual respect and tolerance.

To build and maintain strong communities it is essential that there are appropriate systems and channels of communication available to communities to make their voices heard in times of unrest and challenge. Enshrining this approach across our partnerships enables us and our partners to understand community sentiment and respond appropriately. This includes ensuring that we have appropriate tension monitoring systems in place so that any issues or activities that could lead to contention and unease can be identified and addressed in positive ways.

Our **health and wellbeing strategy** and delivery of services will focus on the importance of feelings of belonging and safety for people throughout all life stages. We know that some of our residents face barriers accessing sport and health and wellbeing services so we will put in place pathways to increase accessibility for our most disadvantaged residents.

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The_Bloom_Review.pdf



WE WILL DELIVER these things through our network of strategies and work areas across the whole Council and through our partnerships and networks including:

- **North Halifax Place-Making use of Place Standards Tools**
- **Our Local Plan** and supplementary planning documents
- **Starting, Developing, Living & Aging Well strategies – Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **Where Creativity Flows – Our Cultural Strategy**
- **Community Safety Strategic Assessment – Community Safety Partnership**
- **Engaging and Empowering Communities Strategic Framework**
- **Building social cohesion and faith literacy into policy and practice skills development programme**
- **Calderdale Faith Covenant between Calderdale Council and Calderdale Interfaith.**
- **Our communications will be informed by those who are skilled in appropriate social media and disinformation awareness**
- **Our Active Calderdale physical activity strategy is aimed at making moving and being active integrated as part of day to day life in Calderdale. It is delivered through a community led approach, working with and empowering communities to lead the physical activity decision making and work in neighbourhoods where the opportunity for impact is greatest**



VALUING VOLUNTEERING AND INCREASING CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Through our Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategy we will ensure that there is a flourishing and sustainable VCSE sector that enables people to participate and benefit from the positive impacts of volunteering. The sector will better reflect the diversity of Calderdale and deliver a consistent and joined-up approach to volunteering across the borough.

Our commitment to a community-led reality in designing and delivering services and managing and regenerating our places and infrastructure will be enshrined in our practice through the development of an **Engaging and Empowering Communities strategic framework** and through the **Adult Social Care Co-production Strategy**.

We will build on our existing strengths in Calderdale to ensure that there are pathways to inclusion for children and young people to take an active part in civic life, developing leadership and voice for young people and increasing social mixing through school populations.

We will seek to increase democratic engagement in groups that have shown lower engagement in the past through our place-based locality working with our neighbourhood teams and in partnership with locally based community and voluntary sectors.

We will celebrate our volunteers across the borough through campaigns and events that recognise the impact they make every day to building stronger communities in Calderdale.



WE WILL DELIVER these things through our network of strategies and work areas across the whole Council and through our partnerships and networks including:

- **VCSE Strategy 2024-2029**
- **Voluntary Sector Infrastructure funding** sustained on a long-term funding model
- **Pathways to Inclusion for Children and Young People Action Plan**
- **Engaging and Empowering Communities Strategic Framework**
- **Inclusive Economy Strategy 2024-2029**
- **Locality based Neighbourhood Teams** delivering democratic engagement projects and communications directly to local communities
- **Community development delivered through locality Neighbourhood Teams, Active Calderdale, Community Anchors & Staying Well hubs** to strengthen the voluntary sector in localities
- **Our Active Calderdale physical activity strategy** will make moving and being active integrated as part of day to day life in Calderdale. It is delivered through a community led approach, working with and empowering communities to lead the physical activity decision making and work in neighbourhoods where the opportunity for impact is greatest
- **We will develop a Co-production Strategy** for our adult services provision whose lead principle is that it will value and involve people with lived experience and use their knowledge and skills to improve these services.

ASPIRATIONS CAN BE MET, OUR RESIDENTS ARE ABLE TO LIVE A LARGER LIFE

Through our priorities of reducing inequalities, creating strong and thriving towns and places and taking climate action we aim to achieve the vision that all people in Calderdale are able to live a larger life. This means creating an environment where we have a thriving economy and where there is good work and access to the labour market, particularly for our young people.

We are taking wide ranging action along with our partners in Calderdale and across West Yorkshire⁹ to achieve our shared vision through our **anti-poverty, inclusive economy, housing, climate** and **transport** strategies. These are designed to achieve our 3 priorities for people throughout their life course with an emphasis on the needs for young people to be able to achieve their potential.

We will focus on closing the gaps in educational attainment and improving school readiness to ensure that all our children have the best start in life as a key element of our **Starting Well Strategy** and **Family Hubs Programme**. Through the **post-16 strategy, employment hub** and **employment and skills framework** opportunities for young people to access good work will be supported.

The commitment to community wealth building in our **inclusive economy strategy** places a people-centred approach to our economic development. Community wealth building redirects wealth back into the local economy and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. Coupled with our VCSE strategy to strengthen our voluntary and community sector this approach will bring greater opportunity for all to live a larger life in Calderdale.

The cultural industry in Calderdale is thriving and there are opportunities to build on its strengths. Through our **Cultural Strategy** every community in Calderdale will be empowered to grow and sustain its own cultural capacity, bringing to life the unique identity of each place and community.

WE WILL DELIVER these things through our network of strategies and work areas across the whole Council and through our partnerships and networks including:

- **VCSE Strategy 2024-2029**
- **Anti-Poverty Action Plan**
- **Cultural Strategy – Where Creativity Flows**
- **Pathways to Inclusion for Children and Young People Action Plan**
- **Inclusive Economy Strategy 2024-2029**
- **Starting, Developing, Living & Aging Well strategies – Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **Building social cohesion and faith literacy into policy and practice skills development programme**

⁹ West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Strategy



MEASURING SOCIAL COHESION - HOW WE WILL KNOW?



We will establish a Calderdale measurement framework aligned with our 5 themes that allows us to understand the picture of social cohesion in Calderdale. The framework will allow us to understand where change is happening and allow us to align our resource and energy where we can make the most impact on mitigating and managing challenges to building strong communities in the borough.

The **Rapid Review** carried out by Belong for the **Khan Review: Threats to Social Cohesion and Democratic Resilience** states that 'Cohesion is also a dynamic process involving transition and change in response to changing circumstances'. As such this means that we understand that

measurement of social cohesion is unlikely to demonstrate a simple trajectory, there is flux in many directions and as such our measurement framework will acknowledge that while it gives an understanding of the picture it is not a means to measure a simple concept of 'better' or 'worse' but a complex and meaningful understanding of what is happening both in our communities and wider society.

The measurement framework will sit alongside an action plan to provide annual reporting on the picture for social cohesion in Calderdale and map the progress of the commitments made under this strategic framework.





