



**Community
Foundation**
Tyne & Wear and Northumberland



County Durham and Darlington's Vital Issues 2017

Strong communities

1 Strong communities

1.1 Overview

The strong communities section of this report focuses on the extent to which local people play an active role in society and how the relationships they have with each other and social institutions provide for a good quality of life.

According to Dr E Wedlock, author of Crime and Cohesive Communities, *“local areas with a high sense of community, political trust and sense of belonging show significantly lower levels of all reported crime”*ⁱ, making this a good starting point for looking at this issue.

1.2 Crime score

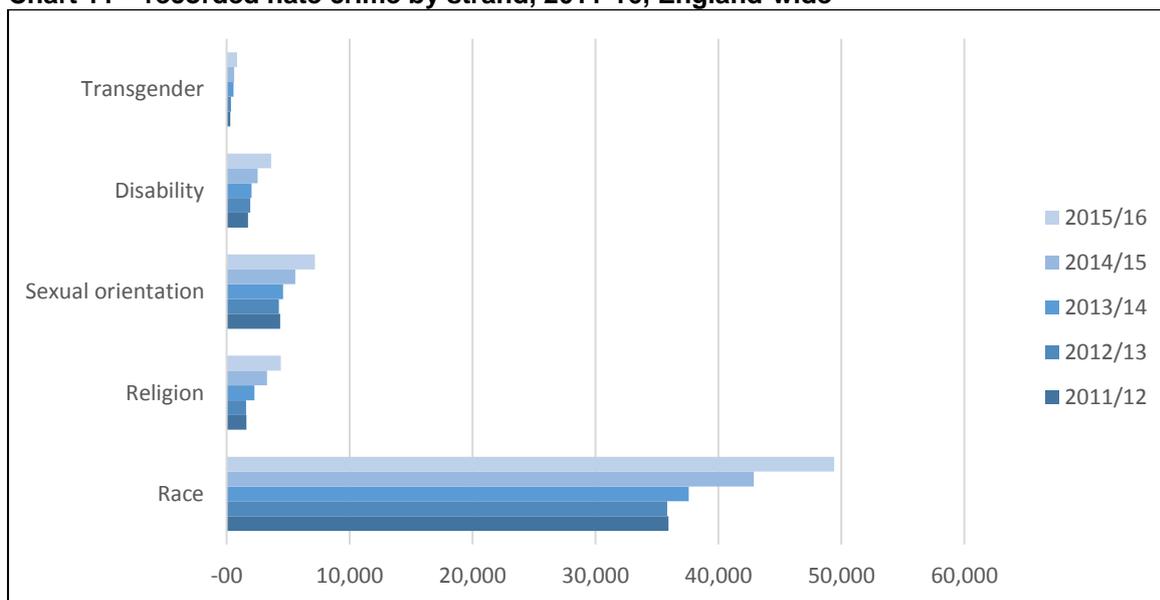
An overall crime score can be calculated by looking at the average rates of a set of crimes per population. This is given in table 47 below for the County Durham and Darlington areas. The crime score for County Durham is lower than average, meaning that there is less crime in the county than elsewhere in England, making it a safer place to live. Darlington, on the other hand, has an above average level of crime. Using Dr Wedlock’s logic, this suggests that you would expect to find higher levels of community cohesion in County Durham than Darlington.

Table 47 – crime scores, 2016ⁱⁱ

Area Name	Crime: score (2016)
County Durham	88.2
Darlington	120.3
North East	109.9
England & Wales	100.0

1.3 Hate crime

Chart 11 – recorded hate crime by strand, 2011-16, England-wideⁱⁱⁱ



Hate crime has become increasingly common throughout the UK, with race-related incidents being by far the most common (chart 11). All strands of hate crime have expanded, with the biggest proportional increases in hate crimes against religious groups, and targeting people with disabilities and transgender people.

In County Durham, the number of hate crimes grew from 409 in 2013/14 to 452 in 2016/17, a similar rate of increase to the national picture^{iv}.

During this period, the population of the UK, including the NE region, has become more diverse. Darlington has more ethnic diversity than average in the region, with 7% of its population having been born outside of the UK. In County Durham, the proportion is half this at 3%^v.

There is no reason to believe that people living in County Durham or Darlington are more likely to perpetrate or suffer from a hate crime than anyone else, however Palatinate (Durham's independent student newspaper) reported in 2016 that hate crime had risen by 16% in the three months after the Brexit vote^{vi}, and in 2013 police in Darlington reported a surge in hate crime following the murder of Lee Rigby^{vii}, suggesting tensions exist.

There is clearly a need to ensure that hate crime is addressed whenever it occurs, and that those who are most likely to fall victim to it are supported to recognise it when it does occur and take appropriate action to report and stop it. Ron Hogg (Police and Crime Commissioner Durham) recently funded Show Racism the Red Card to provide racism awareness training in schools throughout County Durham and Darlington^{viii}. In 2016 Darlington Borough Council passed a motion condemning racism and hate crime. The motion, which was passed unanimously, said:

"We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crime have no place in our country. We at Darlington Borough Council condemn these activities unequivocally and will work to prevent this escalating. We reassure people living in Darlington that they are valued members of society and we have a duty to be good neighbours."^{ix}

As the community becomes more diverse there may also be a need to take positive action to encourage cohesion through community events and information sharing to encourage increased understanding and tolerance.

1.4 Engagement in civic and social society

Voter turn-out can also be used as a measure of civic engagement. Table 48, below, gives the turnouts for the elections during 2015 and 2016.

Voting patterns in Darlington and the Tees Valley appear to reflect the regional and national patterns, with higher turn-outs for general elections and issues of national interest (and then also for local elections if held on the same day), but lower interest in other issues. The turn-out for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections is particularly low.

Table 48 - Voter turnout in elections 2015-16^x

	Durham	Darlington
2016 EU referendum	69%	71.1%
2015 Police & Crime Commissioner	17.4%	
2015 General election	61.7%	62.5%
2015 Local elections		62.2%
<i>highest</i>		<i>Park West</i> 76.8%
<i>lowest</i>		<i>Stephenson</i> 47.5%

For local elections, it is possible to disaggregate the results and identify those wards with the highest and lowest turn-outs. From looking across the wider region, it appears that turn-out is lowest in more deprived wards, and that pattern is reflected in the Darlington results above. This suggests a role for philanthropy in supporting work to encourage those in more deprived areas to engage in the electoral and civic processes to allow them a voice in issues that could affect their lives.

1.5 Area Action Partnerships

When Durham became a unitary authority and the District Councils were abolished, the local authority established 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) across County Durham. The partnerships include representatives of the local community, the third sector, county and town councils, and emergency services. They provide local services and give local people the opportunity to determine how these are delivered. Each AAP has a full time Coordinator and administrative support, and each has a local enabling fund of £120k pa which is available to meet local needs.

1.6 Charity and community organisations

As part of the Taking Part survey (see section 2) participants are asked whether they have engaged in any voluntary work in the previous year. In 2014-15, only 15.6% of NE respondents said they had, growing to 16.4% in 2015-16. (UK figures were 24.4% and 24.4%, respectively.) This might reflect the relative deprivation of the region, as analysis of the national figures shows that on average only 17.7% of those in the most deprived communities volunteer, compared to 29.6% of those in the least deprived areas.

In County Durham's rural areas there is a lot of informal volunteering that may not be captured, with people simply keeping an eye on their neighbours, particularly where there are elderly or infirm. Many of the area's large-scale assets such as Beamish Museum and Durham Castle and Cathedral, are very reliant on volunteers. It will be interesting to see whether the survey shows that the proportion of people in County Durham who volunteer increases now that events such as Lumiere and Kynren are using so many volunteers.

The recent Third Sector Trends Study^{xi} reported on the health of voluntary organisations across the North of England, including Darlington and County Durham. The results in terms of financial strength are given in Table 49, below.

This indicates that fewer organisations in County Durham are in a weak position or experiencing mixed fortunes compared to NE organisations generally, but fewer are also in a strong (17.5%) or very strong (5.8%) position. Tees Valley (including Darlington) organisations are by contrast much closer to the regional average, with

28% in either a strong or very strong position financially. This suggests that more organisations in County Durham will be less resilient to changes in income, contracts etc.

Table 49 – Financial wellbeing of third sector organisations, 2016

	County Durham	Tees Valley	North East England
In a very strong position	5.8%	11.6%	10.4%
In a strong position	17.5%	20.7%	18.2%
In a stable position	50.5%	32.9%	38.9%
In a weak position	11.7%	23.8%	21.2%
Experiencing mixed fortunes	14.6%	11.0%	11.3%

In terms of reserves, Table 50 shows that fewer organisations had no reserves than in 2014, which is a positive change. In County Durham, fewer organisations are using their reserves at all, and fewer of those who do are doing so for essential costs, suggesting that more of them are managing to break even on a year by year basis. In the Tees Valley, however, although fewer organisations were using reserves overall, an increasing percentage were having to use them to cover essential costs, implying income is insufficient to cover the costs of service delivery.

Table 50 - % of organisations' use of reserves, 2016

	County Durham			Tees Valley			North East		
	2016	2014	diff	2016	2014	diff	2016	2014	diff
No reserves	20.8	27.6	-6.8	20.3	26.4	-6.1	19.7	23.1	-3.4
Reserves not used	43.8	36.8	7	35.9	32.2	3.7	39	36.5	2.5
Reserves used for development	10.1	9.8	0.3	16.9	13	3.9	14.4	13.2	1.2
Reserves used for essential costs	15.2	20.7	-5.5	19.5	18.7	0.8	19.8	20.9	-1.1
Reserves used for a mix of purposes	10.1	5.1	5	7.4	9.7	-2.3	7	6.4	0.6

Organisations were also asked about their experiences of applying for grants. Half of organisations in County Durham and Darlington had made successful applications to local grant-making trusts, and success rates for applications were around the average in both areas. Organisations in both areas had also made an above-average number of successful applications to local public-sector bodies, and again their success rate was above the average.

When it comes to national grant-makers, Tees Valley groups (including Darlington) had made an above-average number of successful applications, and had an above-average success rate. However, groups in County Durham were less likely than average to make applications to national grant-makers, though those which did had an above-average rate of success. There may be work to do in encouraging County Durham groups to approach national grant-makers.

Table 51 – applications made to grant-making bodies and success rates

	local grant-making foundation			local public sector organisation			national grant-maker		
	Co Durham	Tees Valley	NE	Co Durham	Tees Valley	NE	Co Durham	Tees Valley	NE
In the last two years, we made an application and were successful	50.5	50	54.6	48.4	44.8	42.6	33.5	41.6	36.7
In the last two years, we made an application but unsuccessfully	7.1	8.1	7.7	5.5	7.4	7.4	13.1	14.3	14.7
In the last two years, we did not make an application	42.3	41.9	37.7	46.2	47.8	50	53.4	44.2	49.6
Percentage success rate	88%	86%	88%	90%	86%	85%	72%	74%	71%

Finally, organisations were asked about whether they work with other organisations, or are planning to do this. Tees Valley groups were more likely to be working with or seeking to work with third sector, public and private organisations, which bodes well for their future sustainability as this will enable them to gain access to a wider range of funding and expertise to be benefit from experiencing a wide range of working practices.

Table 52 – desire to work with other organisations

	County Durham	Tees Valley	North East England
Intention to work more closely with other TSOs			
Doing this now	21.6	28.8	23.2
Planning to do this	16.5	16.5	16.0
Not planning to do this	61.3	53.7	60.8
Intention to work more closely with public sector organisations			
Doing this now	17.0	25.9	19.6
Planning to do this	14.4	17.7	14.4
Not planning to do this	68.6	56.4	66.0
Intention to work more closely with private sector organisations			
Doing this now	3.1	7.4	6.1
Planning to do this	13.9	17.7	14.1
Not planning to do this	83.0	74.9	79.7

County Durham organisations, on the other hand, were much less likely to be involved in, or seeking these kinds of relationships. Only Northumberland organisations were less likely to seek out partnership working opportunities. This insularity will limit opportunities for County Durham organisations, and it would be helpful if County Durham third sector organisations could be encouraged to look at developing partnership relationships.

At the more extreme end, there may also be opportunities for organisations to consider merging to reduce costs and benefit from synergies. This is something that seldom happens in the third sector, and is particularly rare in the NE region. There may be a role for philanthropy in encouraging more organisations to consider this as an option, and to help them identify the right potential merger partners – probably the most important factor of the whole process.

1.7 Asset transfers

There has been a large asset-transfer programme in County Durham, providing the opportunity for local groups to take on the running and management of council services and facilities. The initial wave of transfers included many community buildings, and organisations were supported to develop a sustainability plan for their building. However, many have since run into problems such as lacking the key skills on their management boards, and financial problems due to the loss of key tenants or unexpected costs such as high utility bills or dealing with Legionella.

The Council is now inviting ideas from local communities and organisations wishing to take over the running and management of other facilities and services such as leisure centres, libraries, play areas, household waste recycling centres, museums, theatres and bowling greens. While this provides an opportunity for existing or new organisations to take on local services, it may also result in similar issues around lack of expertise and/or unexpected costs, so additional support may be required to support organisations to become more resilient.

1.8 Gaps in third sector support

There have been massive changes to the way infrastructure support is provided to third sector organisations in Darlington and County Durham over the past few years.

In County Durham, whereas there used to be a local infrastructure organisation in every district, now Durham Community Action operates as a sector development agency across the county. In Darlington, there is no dedicated third sector infrastructure support since the closure of Evolution in 2015. With third sector organisations being such a key player in meeting the needs of so many deprived communities in Darlington, it is important that support exists at a local level to nurture the development of new organisations and groupings, particularly those that spring from the grass roots of local communities and estates.

1.9 Our Darlington

Representatives of a number of third sector organisations in Darlington have recently come together under the Our Darlington banner to garner 'collective responsibility for providing a better Darlington for everyone'. The vision of the collective is that in the face of continuing austerity measures, helping people who are marginalised will help everyone and make Darlington a better and more inclusive place to live.

The group is still in the early stages of forming a coherent strategy for achieving this vision, but it appears that it is likely to involve all sectors (public, private and third sector) as well as engaging the public if it is to achieve its aim, and that this will take time. At the moment, the main focus is around ensuring there is VCS representation on the relevant strategic boards.

A feasibility study is currently being undertaken into the idea, which will report in late 2017 and may make recommendations for how the group and its ideas can be taken forward.

Potential roles for philanthropy

This section opened with a quote suggesting that communities are more cohesive where there is less deprivation, though it's not clear from evidence which is the chicken and which is the egg. Logic suggests that where people have more time and resources to spare they are more able to engage in non-essential tasks, so the key to increasing cohesion may lie in reducing inequality and increasing wealth. However, there are also specific actions that can be taken to strengthen communities in County Durham and Darlington. These include:

- Community events and activities to reduce misunderstanding, distrust and hate crime
- Supporting those most vulnerable to hate crime to ensure they can report it.
- Encouraging an understanding of, and interest in, local and national democracy, particularly in the more deprived areas where turnout tends to be lowest
- Encouraging volunteering and engagement with local third sector organisations
- Providing encouragement to County Durham organisations to consider working in partnership with organisations from all sectors
- Supporting organisations which have taken on a transferred asset and face managerial or financial issues
- Developing new mechanisms to provide development support for new and embryonic organisations in Darlington.
- Potentially supporting the Our Darlington movement to develop an alternative way to support people and organisations across Darlington.

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