



Community
Foundation

Northumberland's Vital Issues 2017

Strong communities

1 Strong communities

1.1 Overview

The strength of a community is not an easy thing to measure. The strong communities section of this report focuses on the relationships people have with one another, the extent to which local people play an active role in society and the voluntary associations that help provide for a good quality of life. We will therefore use crime, electoral turnout, volunteering and the state of civil society organisations as the main focus of our analysis. First however, we will look at what is known about how local residents view their quality of life.

1.2 Self-perception

The Measuring National Wellbeing survey was released in 2015ⁱ. It measures satisfaction with using the following questions:

- “Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?”
- “Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?”
- “Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?”
- “Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?”

Table 20: The 4 wellbeing measures – scale of 0 to 10ⁱⁱ

	England	Northumberland
Satisfaction	7.6	7.7
Worthwhile	7.8	7.8
Happiness	7.5	7.4
Anxiety	2.9	2.8

It is reasonable to conclude that Northumberland is generally content, although there will be variations at local level particularly where deprivation is an issue.

1.3 Crime

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*”ⁱⁱⁱ, making this a good starting point for looking at this issue.

An overall crime score can be calculated by looking at the average rates of a set of crimes per population. The score for Northumberland is given below:

Table 21 – crime scores, 2016^{iv}

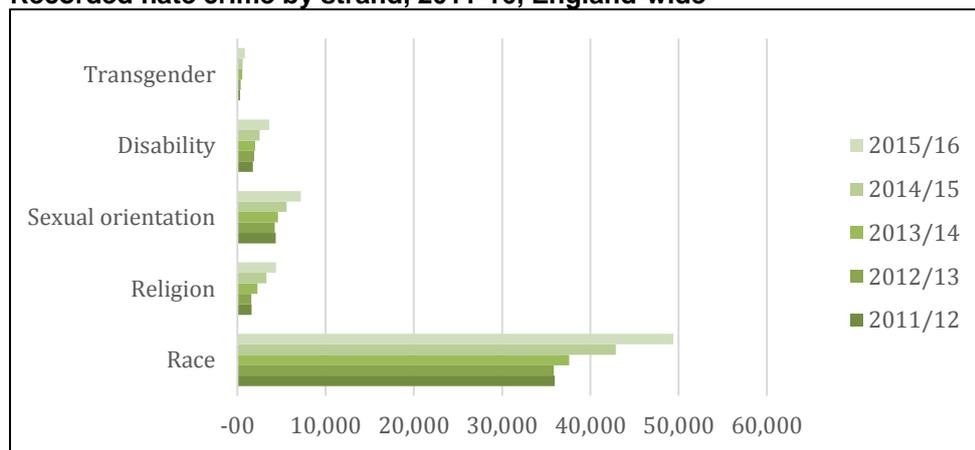
Area Name	Crime: score (2016)
Northumberland	90.63
North East	122.62
England & Wales	100

The score suggests that crime in Northumberland is lower than elsewhere in the NE region, and England and Wales as a whole (but see also section 4 – Safety). Following Dr Wedlock’s logic, this would suggest that there is a higher degree of cohesion in Northumberland than elsewhere. Of course, as we discovered in the

Safety section of this report, the level of crime varies across the county and this may be indicative of a relative lack of community cohesion in some neighbourhoods.

Rising levels of recorded hate crime suggest an erosion of community cohesion, and this has unfortunately become increasingly common throughout the UK. Figures are not available at a regional or local level, but the chart below gives the rates of growth across England since 2011. 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.

Recorded hate crime by strand, 2011-16, England-wide^v



There is no reason to believe that people living in Northumberland are more or less likely to perpetrate or suffer from a hate crime than anyone else. However, in a county where some of those targeted may live in isolation local support services provided by voluntary groups such as Safe Reporting Centres have an important role to play.

1.4 Civic engagement and volunteering

Voter turn-out is a good indicator of civic engagement, and so of the strength of a local community. Looking at the data for the 2015 General Election there is a clear distinction between different parts of the county, with low turnout in the South East of the county:

Table 22 – Voter turnout in General Election 2015

Constituency	Turnout (%)
Blyth Valley	60.1
Wansbeck	60.9
England	65.8
UK	66.1
Berwick on Tweed	69.6
Hexham	71.5

Unfortunately there are no figures for volunteering below regional level. As part of the national Taking Part survey^{vi} participants were asked whether they had 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.) What does this tell us about Northumberland? The survey

suggests that in rural areas volunteering may be higher than in urban neighbourhoods, so perhaps here volunteering may be nearer the national average. However the situation is very likely to be closer to the regional picture in deprived areas of the county: only 17.7% of those in the most deprived communities volunteer, compared to 29.6% of those in the least deprived areas.

1.5 Charity and community organisations

The recent Third Sector Trends Study^{vii} reported on the strength and sustainability of organisations across the NE region. It noted that many groups in Northumberland tended to be smaller with a strong local focus:

“In the predominantly rural county of Northumberland, 53% of TSOs work only at a very local level compared with only 22% in largely urban Tees Valley and 25% in Tyne and Wear.”

The figures in table 23 indicate that the financial situation of third sector organisations in the county is healthier than for the NE as a whole. The report suggests that this may be because the financial needs of the county's smaller organisations may be relatively modest, making them more resilient when funds are tight.

Table 23 – Financial wellbeing of third sector organisations, 2016

	Northumberland	North East England
In a very strong position	7.7%	10.4%
In a strong position	17.6%	18.2%
In a stable position	45.1%	38.9%
In a weak position	17.6%	21.2%
Experiencing mixed fortunes	12.1%	11.3%

However the nature of the Northumberland community and voluntary sector may also restrict its capacity to access a wider pool of funding. As table 24 indicates there is a strong focus on local funding from grant-making trusts, with the public sector and national charitable funding featuring less prominently in the mix.

Table 24 – applications made to grant-making bodies and success rates

	Local grant-making foundations		Local public sector organisations		National grant-maker	
	Northumberland	NE	Northumberland	NE	Northumberland	NE
In the last two years, we made an application and were successful	57	54.6	36.3	42.6	25.5	36.7
In the last two years, we made an application but unsuccessfully	6.5	7.7	6.3	7.4	12	14.7
In the last two years, we did not make an application	36.5	37.7	57.4	50	62.5	49.6
Percentage success rate	90%	88%	86%	85%	68%	71%

This seems to go hand in hand with a lower degree of interest in funding strategies focused on cross-sectoral partnerships and contracting. Perhaps as a consequence

of all this, the Northumberland third sector might best be characterised as financially stable rather than financially strong.

It is perhaps ending by mentioning the importance of community buildings, particularly in rural Northumberland, as a focus for community life. A good case study of capacity building within the community and voluntary sector is the work of local consortia for community buildings in North and West Northumberland supported by Community Action Northumberland. These incorporate 120 buildings with a value of over £40m, providing facilities for social, educational and recreational activities. A consortia approach is showing dividends in terms of the provision of advice, support and bulk purchasing and in enabling organisations to access funding for essential works.

Potential roles for philanthropy

There is evidence that the long-term key to increasing cohesion may lie in addressing deprivation and reducing inequality. However, there are also specific actions that can be taken with philanthropic support to support local communities:

- Organising community events and activities to improve local relationships and reduce misunderstanding, distrust and hate crime.
- Support those at risk of becoming the victims of hate crime.
- Encouraging an understanding of, and interest in, local and national democracy.
- Encouraging volunteering and engagement with local third sector organisations.
- Providing focused support to organisations to develop their capacity to access funding and develop new income streams.
- Developing new mechanisms to provide support for essential community and voluntary organisations.

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- ⁱ **ONS (2015)** *Measuring National Well-being: Personal Well-being in the UK, 2014 to 2015* at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnationalwellbeing/2015-09-23>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/personalwellbeingestimatedesgeographicalbreakdown>
- ⁱⁱⁱ **Wedlock, E (2015)** *Crime and Cohesive Communities*. Home Office (2006), accessed at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.510.6857&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- ^{iv} **Grant Thornton Analytics (2017)** *Crime*, created and downloaded at: [http://gt-placeanalytics.org/placeanalytics/\(S\(evylqt4540vmzrfqueupwqh\)\)/paweb/ShowAllIndicators.aspx?spatialLevel=18&indicators=904,145,463,1430,927,7885](http://gt-placeanalytics.org/placeanalytics/(S(evylqt4540vmzrfqueupwqh))/paweb/ShowAllIndicators.aspx?spatialLevel=18&indicators=904,145,463,1430,927,7885) 27/6/17 17:59
- ^v **Home Office (2016)** *Police recorded crime*, ONS, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2015-to-2016> 4/7/16 15:26
- ^{vi} See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>
- ^{vii} **Chapman, T and Hunter, J (2017)** *Third Sector Trends in the North of England – a summary of key findings*, IPPR North.