



# Hackney Cohesion Review

Summary report July 2010

# Foreword

By Mayor Jules Pipe



Hackney's richly diverse community – where people from different backgrounds are confident and respectful of one another – is one of the borough's greatest strengths. That's why Hackney's Sustainable Community Strategy put strong and cohesive communities at the centre of our shared vision for a sustainable Hackney in 2018.

This review drew on a range of research and data, as well as discussions with residents and local organisations, to explore what makes community life and cohesion so strong in Hackney. By building on what brings people together and unites them, we hope that Hackney will remain a special place for residents – somewhere where diversity is a source of strength and creativity, and where existing communities and residents can share in the benefits and opportunities of London's dynamic economy.

There are challenging times ahead. Now, more than ever, excellent services, delivered fairly and equitably in a way which meets the needs and aspirations of local people are crucial for cohesion. The Council and its partners will be looking closely at the review's recommendations and setting out how we will work together to address the issues, making Hackney a better place to live and work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jules Pipe". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

**Mayor Jules Pipe**

# The Hackney Cohesion Review: Summary

## About the review

During 2009, the Hackney Cohesion Review asked local organisations and people what contributes to a good community life. We looked at some of the challenges facing Hackney's communities and considered what different organisations could do to support strong, cohesive communities where people are happy to live.

We looked at whether communities in Hackney are **cohesive**...

where people from different backgrounds live and work comfortably alongside their neighbours

and whether they are **resilient** ...

where people and communities are able to cope with changes in their lives and communities without blame or undue tension

## Our findings

On the whole, residents feel Hackney is cohesive; somewhere where they feel they belong, and where people from different backgrounds get on well.

There are many reasons for this. Neighbourhoods in Hackney are very diverse, giving people the opportunity to meet and mix with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds on a daily basis. Many people have personal or family experience of migration, and are generally positive about new arrivals. Hackney has a long tradition of progressive local community organisations and local politics. Residents struggling to make ends meet and improve their living conditions see that their neighbours face similar challenges, whatever their background.

Although Hackney is a cohesive place, the review did find that there are strains on community life. We believe that meeting these challenges will help communities in Hackney become more cohesive and resilient.

- Younger and older residents don't always see eye-to-eye, and this can lead to mistrust and isolation

“A green, cosmopolitan part of London with safe, cohesive communities and a shared sense of fairness, citizenship and social responsibility”

Hackney Sustainable Community Strategy – the vision

- Some people face a range of issues which make it difficult for them to get involved in community life. Poverty, limited English language skills, mental health problems, physical barriers and discrimination or prejudice are some of the things which limit people's opportunities. Some parts of the community – such as refugees and migrants, Gypsies and Travellers, disabled adults and families with disabled children – can face many barriers at once.
- Hackney can be a busy, noisy, and sometimes difficult place to live: tackling noise, crime and anti-social behaviour is an important element of cohesion. Many people told us that moving around safely and comfortably in Hackney and making full use of public spaces can be difficult or stressful. This is particularly true for young people affected by 'postcode' rivalry, but also for others, including the disabled and lesbian and gay residents we consulted during the review. People want welcoming places and events where they can get together.
- Although residents generally get on well with people from different backgrounds, many people wanted more chances for people to get to know their neighbours and make friends with people from different backgrounds.
- There are sometimes difficult decisions to be made about how local services and priorities can serve all communities whilst making sure specific needs are addressed. Women-only swimming sessions are a classic example of how local services work to meet the needs of all communities. More could be done to build a shared understanding across the borough of why such decisions are made.

## Moving forward

The review suggests some of the ways we think Hackney Council and partners could help communities in Hackney stay cohesive and resilient. Our recommendations include

- Staying focused on the cornerstones of cohesive communities: tackling poverty, reducing crime, and providing excellent services to all residents.
- Communications which celebrate diversity and showcase residents' contributions to their community and to cohesion
- Ensuring that our approach to regeneration, housing and green space continues to prioritise supporting people to live in and enjoy mixed local neighbourhoods
- providing opportunities for residents to come together, through cultural, sporting and community-led activities
- Tackling the barriers which stop people from getting involved in community life – whether these are English language skills, information about services, reducing harassment and hate crime, or worklessness.
- Staying up to date with the changing profile of Hackney's residents and rethinking how the voices of new and existing communities are heard
- Considering the impact on cohesion and equality of all policies, programmes, and spending decisions
- Working with community organisations and frontline staff to stay up to date with local community issues, adjusting our approach if necessary.

# About Hackney's policy reviews

This review was part of a series of policy reviews, commissioned to explore particularly complex issues key to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Hackney's Sustainable Community Strategy (2008 – 18) is the shared vision for the council, local public services and partners from business, community and voluntary sector. Cohesion was central to the vision for Hackney set out in the strategy: the cohesion review looked at the possible barriers to getting where we want to get to, and how partners might overcome any challenges to cohesion.



If you want to find out more about these reviews, please visit our webpage

[www.hackney.gov.uk/cross-cutting-policy-reviews](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/cross-cutting-policy-reviews)



Neighbourhoods in Hackney are very diverse, giving people the opportunity to meet and mix with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds on a daily basis.

