

# Research Report



## Community Cohesion & Fear of Crime

Prepared for: Luton Borough Council

---

## **Community Cohesion & Fear of Crime**

**Prepared for: Luton Borough Council**

**Prepared by: Sarah Robinson, Qualitative Research Manager**

**July 2010**

---





## Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary .....	3
2	Introduction.....	10
3	Community Cohesion: What it means and the benefits .....	13
3.1	Introduction.....	13
3.2	What does community cohesion mean to you? .....	13
3.3	The benefits of community cohesion.....	14
4	Community Cohesion: Current levels of cohesion on communities in Luton.....	16
4.1	Introduction.....	16
4.2	Saints/Biscot .....	16
4.3	Lewsey Farm.....	17
4.4	Bramingham .....	17
4.5	Stopsley .....	18
4.6	Farley Hill.....	19
5	Community Cohesion: Current issues and barriers prohibiting community cohesion in Luton .....	21
5.1	Introduction.....	21
5.2	The comfort of seeking 'commonality' .....	21
5.3	Ethnicity .....	22
5.4	Religion .....	23
5.5	Age .....	26
5.6	Social deprivation .....	27
5.7	State of the economy .....	29
5.8	Schools .....	30
5.9	Social preferences of different cultures and alcohol .....	31
5.10	Media image.....	32
5.11	Communication.....	33
6	Community Cohesion: Achieving community cohesion .....	35
6.1	Introduction.....	35
6.2	Is community cohesion achievable?.....	35
6.3	Measures to help achieve community cohesion.....	36
7	Findings: Fear of Crime, an Overview .....	39
7.1	Introduction.....	39

7.2	Overview .....	39
8	Fear of Crime: Experiences of crime by area .....	41
8.1	Introduction.....	41
8.2	Saints/Biscot .....	41
8.3	Lewsey Farm.....	42
8.4	Bramingham.....	44
8.5	Stopsley .....	45
8.6	Farley Hill.....	46
9	Fear of Crime: Worst areas of Luton .....	49
9.1	Introduction.....	49
9.2	Overview .....	49
9.3	Marsh Farm .....	49
9.4	Hockwell Ring .....	50
9.5	Bury Park .....	50
10	Fear of Crime: Luton Town Centre .....	52
10.1	Introduction.....	52
10.2	When do you feel safe?.....	52
10.3	Key issues that cause concern .....	52
10.4	Areas for concern .....	54
11	Fear of Crime: Who is responsible and why? .....	55
11.1	Introduction.....	55
11.2	Who commits the crime/ASB and why?.....	55
11.2.1	Young people: disaffected, bored, un-disciplined .....	55
11.2.2	Travellers and no repercussions.....	56
11.3	Who is ultimately responsible?.....	56
12	Fear of Crime: What would make residents feel safer .....	58
12.1	Introduction.....	58
12.2	Making Luton safer.....	58
12.3	Preventing Crime and ASB.....	60
12.4	Dealing with Crime & ASB .....	60
13	Appendix 1: Topic guide.....	61

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Responsible for crime and ASB .....	57
---	----

## Table of Tables

Table 1: Demographics .....	11
Table 2: Crime by area .....	39

# 1 Executive Summary

Luton Borough is currently conducting reviews on the issues of community cohesion and fear of crime. As part of this review 5 focus groups were undertaken in areas identified in a recent community safety survey, as having higher than the Luton average levels of residents expressing a fear of crime. In that same survey, it was found that in one of those areas, there was a high number of people saying that they get on well with people from different backgrounds, in another an average number and in the other three, a low number of people said that they got on well with people from different backgrounds, therefore it was likely that a diverse range of opinions would be found on Community Cohesion by going to these different areas. The areas selected were Saints/Biscot, Lewsey, Farley, Bramingham and Stopsley.

Overall fifty nine residents took part in the research. Residents represented a wide demographic spread in terms of age and ethnicity.

## 1.1 Community Cohesion

Most respondents do not understand the term 'community cohesion'. Some feel that it refers to 'people getting on together', a 'lack of tension' and 'not feeling uncomfortable'. Generally, residents prefer terms such as 'community spirit'. This tends to reflect better the situations experienced by residents within their locales. Respondents felt that there were no disadvantages to cohesive communities and that the benefits were self evident, the most important being no aggravation allowing residents to feel safe.

The current levels of cohesion are high within individual communities when 'community' is defined by a shared interest/belief. As such, there are strong communities based around religion, sport, gender, ethnicity and age etc. However, cohesion is not as strong if 'community' is defined by geographical location. Whilst, in most cases, there is no conflict between communities and they are able to exist 'side by side', they are not actively mixing to create cohesive communities. Additionally cohesion issues occur when one community's beliefs/actions are perceived or seen to conflict with another's.

Areas with high crime levels, such as Farley Hill, were seen to be the least cohesive. However, issues such as crime can cause cohesion across groups that would not normally interact by providing the shared interest in reducing the problem.

### 1.1.1 Barriers to cohesion

A number of issues and barriers were identified that prohibit community cohesion in Luton, almost all of which, can be seen attributed to the largest identified barrier: the comfort of seeking 'commonality'. Respondents feel that human nature is to seek the companionship of people most like yourself. Shared interests, religion, ethnicity, age, gender all lends to people feeling more comfortable with others as they sense a commonality. Respondents find that they gravitate towards people who are at similar lifestyles or who understand their cultural preferences.

It is the desire to seek commonality that has led to the overall lack of cohesion across Luton. Respondents who do not feel 'accepted' in their locales are likely to bond with

other minority groups and as such greater divisions occur between the minority groups and the majority. Indeed, it is the creation of these communities that for some, is the cause of the tensions. White British respondents in particular, are resentful of other ethnicities creating communities around their cultures in Britain. They talk about high streets in areas not having any 'English' high street stores but being dominated by Polish and Asian grocery and clothing shops. They acknowledge individual's needs to retain their cultures but feel that 'British' culture is being lost in the process. Issues surrounding ethnicity, religion, language and opportunities are heightened within this context. The most fractious of which is religion and the building of mosques. Some respondents suggested that cohesion can only exist when one 'group' of people are not outnumbered by any other.

The communities which are formed around 'common' interests and are causing barriers are listed below. It is important to note that respondents do not feel that all residents within such groups are causing issues to cohesion but that problems often arise from individuals within such groups:

- **Ethnicity;**
- **Religion:** issues surrounding this generally fall into four main categories:
  - The creation of a religious building in the place of one that was previously used to benefit more than one section of the community;
  - The parking issues created by the attendance at religious buildings disrupting residents in the immediate area;
  - The perceived support of minority religions over White British ones to 'aid cohesion'; and
  - The general distrust because of world tensions over Islamic extremism.
- **Age:** issues expressed here are:
  - Older respondents feel that younger residents no longer know the value of community and so are unlikely to adhere to such a concept;
  - Older respondents fear younger residents seeing them as the perpetrators of ASB and crime; and
  - Many activities are run by generational groups so it is rare that opportunities to interact across ages exist [e.g. 50+, young mums, youth groups].
- **Class/Social deprivation:** There was a common belief that more affluent areas were less likely to experience cohesion issues compared to deprived ones.



Respondents felt that residents in affluent areas were more likely to have respect for the area and ensure that it was well maintained. Not all respondents agreed with this view though, some felt that greater cohesion existed in deprived areas. However, many residents in deprived areas did feel that funding to regenerate the areas to a better standard was the only way to help improve cohesion in their locales;

- **Wealth/State of the economy:** The current recession and lack of employment was contributing to issues around deprivation, as well as causing many to search further afield for work limiting the time available in their homes and communities to provide them with the opportunity to contribute. The competition for work has caused strained relationships between ethnic groups when it is felt that one is 'taking' the jobs of the other;
- **Schools:** Whilst some areas have clearly benefited from having a mixture of ethnicities attend, others feel that those that are predominately one ethnicity are not as good. Some respondents who form minority ethnicities in their areas cite racism and bullying of siblings and children in schools. Further, some feel that although cohesion is encouraged by schools that external influences are stronger and many children are discouraged from integrating at school;

Other barriers to cohesion included: the selfishness of people today, the busy lifestyles of many, being unable to predict how someone will respond if you offer help/assistance, the negative media image portrayed of Luton, the social preferences of different cultures [for example the divide alcohol consumption causes in regards to socialising] and perhaps most significantly, difficulties with communication.

All respondents accept that cohesion is facilitated by speaking English and that people who live in England 'need English to be their first language'. Although English language lessons are freely available and many are aware of them, the fact that communities are still primarily based on ethnicity means that for many there is little need to learn the language. It was suggested by some that residents should accept that elder generations of some ethnicities will never learn the language, a point which irritates others. Further, the existence of schools based wholly on a single ethnicity has meant that some children are lacking exposure to the English language.

### 1.1.2 Achieving community cohesion

Generally respondents feel that it is an important goal and would hope that community cohesion could be achieved but not all are convinced that it can be. This is in terms of both individual areas and Luton as a whole. Even areas that feel that they are already cohesive [Stopsley and Bramingham] admit that they see themselves apart from other areas so are not cohesive across wards.

The importance of improving community cohesion was felt to benefit safety most of all.

In order for community cohesion to be achievable the correct environment would need to be created. Residents would need to remove pre-conceptions and have an open mind and money would be required in order to regenerate areas, create community

centres and fund activities and education initiatives. Ultimately though, it was felt that being involved in making a community cohesive was 'down to the individual' and there would be people who wanted to and those that did not.

Respondents did make recommendations to achieve cohesion, for example:

1. **Provide young people with role models;**
2. **Integrate activities** by including all communities not holding activities based on individual interest communities;
3. **Carefully consider the locations for cohesion activities**, for example some strongly feel utilising faith groups would help but others would find this off putting, for these respondents, having neutral locations and organisers would be the better way to address cohesive activities in areas;
4. **Local people should be employed to run activities**, the key point being 'employed';
5. **Improve current facilities**, particularly parks [clearing graffiti, dog litter etc and providing family activities there];
6. **Enforce the use of the English language;**
7. **Improve the media view and perception of Luton;**
8. **Create more jobs in local areas;**
9. **Regenerate socially deprived areas;**
10. **Utilise schools as the primary conduit to integration;**
11. **Ensure the Council listens to the residents and actively consults them;**
12. **Educate people on the differences between cultures and religions;** and
13. **Illustrate the figures of 'stop and searches' in local papers.**

## 1.2 Fear of Crime

### 1.2.1 Experience of crime

Although each area in the study is different in terms of levels of crime and experiences, there are specific crimes that all respondents are aware of occurring either in their area or in Luton generally, these are:

- Burglaries;
- Knife Crime;

- Fighting/brawls [predominately by young people]; and
- Vandalism of motor vehicles.

Most respondents had experienced, knew someone who had experienced or had heard about people experiencing, burglaries. Respondents in deprived areas were most aware of crimes committed by 'gangs' on the estates in the area. Drug users and dealers are a large concern in Luton, with many seeing drugs as the cause of the other crimes committed such as burglaries and fights.

### 1.2.2 Feelings of safety

Most people feel safe in their areas and the town centre during the day but not at night. Respondents aged 20-40 were most likely to feel safer at night, particularly in their local areas. The vast majority of respondents are fearful of the town centre at night. Whilst drunken and rowdy behaviour is a contributing factor to fear, residents taking drugs were the greatest fear due to the perceived unpredictability of their behaviour. Other key causes of fear are: large groups of people, the potential for date rapes, disreputable taxi drivers and gang fights. Specific areas that residents are most fearful of are alleyways and underpasses.

Aside from the town centre, other areas with notoriety for high crime levels are: Marsh Farm [particularly the flats]; Hockwell Ring; Lewsey Farm, Bury Park and Farley Hill.

It is widely acknowledged that it is the fear of crime rather than due to direct experience which affects most respondents, thus affecting their preference to remain away from the centre and 'bad areas' at night or not be alone there. This fear is created from media reports, other residents recounting stories [i.e. via word of mouth] and generally the feeling that society is no longer safe.

Respondents do not feel that Luton is necessarily any worse than any other city and that this is a common occurrence across the UK.

### 1.2.3 Perpetrators of crime

The main perpetrators of the crimes are said to be young people, 'druggies' and travellers. It was felt that travellers steal as part of their culture and that 'druggies' commit crime to fuel their habit or as a result of being 'high' and 'unaware of what they are doing'. However, the reasons for young people to commit crime and anti-social behaviour were more complex.

The majority of respondents feel that social deprivation, boredom and lack of aspiration are the key drivers to young people committing crime and ASB. The area where these issues were the most pronounced was Farley Hill. The respondents in this area feel the issues stem from the high volume of teenagers in the area, many of whom are expelled from education, out of work and bored. As a result they have turned to drugs and crime. Most feel that the parents are not leading by example to provide their children with aspirations.

The combination of these issues has led to groups of young people collating together and 'forming gangs'. These groups are said to be influenced by music, TV, film and computer games which illustrate and define the 'gangster' lifestyle. Anything that is

viewed to be 'disrespectful' to a member of a group will lead to altercations and this could be something as small as 'looking at someone the wrong way', 'walking into another person's 'territory' or 'saying something inappropriate in earshot of a group member'.

### 1.2.4 Who is ultimately responsible for crime and ASB?

Although young people and travellers are seen to be the perpetrators of crime and ASB, respondents feel that the responsibility of this lies elsewhere. Respondents believe that the following are ultimately responsible for crime and ASB:

- **Parents:** for lack of discipline and control and not instilling suitable values and aspirations in young people;
- **The police:** for not having suitable: powers to detain or resources to capture criminals/perpetrators;
- **The judicial system:** for not supplying adequate punishments to crimes and therefore negating the work of the police, as well as providing preferential lifestyles in prisons [provision of play-stations, TVs and proper meals which many feel criminals may not have outside of jail]. Further, ; residents are aggrieved at a system that appears to not punish crime but the victim
- **Society in general:** for allowing the situation to get this far and for people to know 'their rights more than their wrongs';
- **Councils:** for not providing suitable activities to entertain young people and keep them away from crime; and
- **The media:** 'get rich quick' programmes, gangster lifestyles and violent computer games.

Ultimately, respondents state that they fear that the police are now too afraid to action anything or they believe that the police perceive it to be a 'waste of resources' to catch criminals and prosecute because they know the judicial system will not back them up.

### 1.2.5 Making Luton safer

In order for residents to feel safer in Luton and their local areas the following would need to occur.

1. **More visible police/PCSO's;**
2. **Better use of police time:** Some respondents suggested that rather than focusing on traffic violations or walking the beat, officers should go 'door to door' asking residents if they have any concerns or worries. They felt this would allow police to integrate better into neighbourhoods, build trust and allow the authorities to access more 'specific' issues.
3. **Greater use of CCTV;**

4. **Improved lighting;**
5. **Regenerating areas:** Many respondents feel that making areas clean, tidy and respectable would ensure that residents would feel proud and keep the area that way too, in turn this would lessen ASB and crime and make the area safer; and
6. **Improving community cohesion:** Although the research was in two separate parts, the vast majority of respondents concurred with the brief that community cohesion and fear of crime are closely linked. Many believe improving cohesion will greatly reduce crime and should abolish ASB.

### 1.2.6 Preventing Crime and ASB

Although not specifically ‘measures to feel safer’, respondents had a number of suggestions to prevent crime and ASB occurring in the first place, these included:

1. **Work schemes:** Instigate work schemes that help people find and stay in work. A key factor of such schemes was managing expectations and aspirations of people;
2. **Provision of affordable activities young people enjoy not those ‘you think we enjoy’:** Younger respondents felt that authorities and the voluntary sector set up activities that were not of interest to them or not affordable. They wanted activities to be put in place that they enjoyed and could finance themselves. Older respondents [30s-40s] and those that had previously run such activities, felt it was key to ask the young people what they enjoyed and allow them to take part in organising and running it. For example, conducting music concerts, rap evenings, sports tournaments etc;
3. **Ensure funding is equally distributed:** Not only should funds be provided to better the most deprived areas, but residents in other areas were aggrieved that ‘because they do not cause trouble, they are ignored’. It was felt that improvements should be made to all areas and not focused on any one specific location as this caused an ‘us and them’ mentality that created more friction [respondents referred to ‘postcode gangs’];

### 1.2.7 Dealing with Crime & ASB

If crimes or anti-social behaviour occur despite preventative measures, then respondents felt that authorities should review the judicial system – the way in which punishment is administered, the decision on what punishment to give and the severity of the punishment given. It was agreed that the punishment should be sufficiently severe to deter an individual from repeating the offense.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

Luton Borough is currently conducting reviews on the issues of community cohesion and fear of crime. There is a Commission on Community Cohesion and a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Fear of Crime. While the reviews are being carried out separately there is a degree of overlap between the two. Considerable quantitative information exists on both subjects for example the Place Survey 2008 and the Community Safety Survey 2009 which together represent the views of 2,000 residents.

There is now a need to supplement the quantitative information with qualitative research additional to the Residents and Partners workshops that have already been undertaken for community cohesion issues and information gained from the Fighting Against Crime Together (FACT) meetings and the SoLUTIONs Crime Summit 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The qualitative research was commissioned to explore further the issues already raised and also to obtain views from the groups that were under-represented at the workshop: those residing in the most deprived areas of Luton, those from Asian backgrounds and also younger people.

To further supplement this, Councillors will be meeting with residents to talk about the Fear of Crime.

### 2.2 Methodology

In order to undertake the research required the council commissioned five focus groups with the expectation of 50 residents attending. The recommended wards for the focus groups were Saints/Biscot, Lewsey, Farley, Bramingham and Stopsley. Luton Borough Council funded and organised the venues in consultation with BMG.

To ensure that a range of opinions were sought, residents from five areas of Luton were selected to take part in the focus groups. The areas selected were identified in a recent community safety survey, as having higher than the Luton average levels of residents expressing a fear of crime. In that same survey, it was found that in one of those areas, there was a high number of people saying that they get on well with people from different backgrounds, in another an average number and in the other three, a low number of people said that they got on well with people from different backgrounds, therefore it was likely that a diverse range of opinions would be found on Community Cohesion by going to these different areas. Areas of high deprivation were also targeted.

As the council wished to hear the genuine views and concerns of residents who would not normally come along to a public meeting the groups were recruited face to face in the street in close proximity to the venues.

All attendees received an incentive of £30 to thank them for their time and to cover out of pocket expenses such as petrol/childcare/parking etc.

The Council will be carrying out consultation with young people aged 10-19 separately.

All the groups were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed the findings of which will be presented in this report.

## 2.3 Demographics

The following table illustrates the demographics of the attendees to the focus groups. The total number of respondents in each group is listed in brackets next to the location. Overall, fifty nine residents took part in this phase of qualitative research. Three of the respondents did not participate in focus groups but took part in telephone interviews. Of note, one of the respondents who took part in a telephone interview was a young Bangladeshi woman who lived in Bramingham. Bramingham is inhabited by predominately residents of White British ethnicity. As eleven of the 12 respondents in this group were White British it was felt to be more comfortable for this respondent to conduct her interview separately.

**Table 1: Demographics**

Demographics		Saints/Biscot [7]	Stopsley [13]	Bramingham [12]	Farley Hill [16]	Lewsey Farm [11]
Gender	Male	4	9	5	5	6
	Female	3	4	7	11	5
Age	16-24	1	2	2	5	2
	25-44	4	6	8	8	4
	45-59		2	2	1	1
	60+	2	3	2	2	4
Ethnicity	White	1	9	11	6	7
	Asian	6	1	1	6	0
	Black					4 [3 African Caribbean and 1 white Irish]
	Mixed and Other		3 [1 Black African, 2 Polish <sup>1</sup> ]		4 [3 Polish and one White Turkish]	
Time in area		Majority lived in area all their life. The Asian elder had not but had been in area for 45 years.	The Polish respondents have been here 2 years, the rest 10 years+ - most all their life.	6 less than 10 years; 5 14years+	Half the group have resided in the area less than 10 years with 5 residing under 5 years; the remaining have been there between 12-48 years.	Majority lived here all there life, shortest time lived in area was 15 years.

<sup>1</sup> Please note the Polish respondents actually reside in High Town but this was the nearest focus group being held to their locality.

## 2.4 Reporting

The report has been divided into two separate but complimentary sections: Community Cohesion and Fear of Crime. Where possible, findings are illustrated with direct quotations from respondents. In most instances the gender, ethnicity and location is provided, where it is not it is due to the moderator being unable to recall the ethnicity of the respondent.

Please note that due to the location and presence of 16 very vocal respondents in Farley Hill, the transcribers were unable to provide a transcription for this group. As such, there will be fewer direct quotes from this group.



### 3 Community Cohesion: What it means and the benefits

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section examines what community cohesion means to respondents. It also explores the benefits and disadvantages of a cohesive community.

#### 3.2 What does community cohesion mean to you?

Initially all respondents were asked, what does the term 'community cohesion' mean to you. The vast majority did not understand the term and in most cases the question was met with silence until someone spoke first admitting they were unsure what it meant.

*'I don't understand what you're talking about ... it sounds like some kind of spin.'* [Female, Black Caribbean, Lewsey Farm]

*'What is cohesion? Is it living together?'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

*'I don't have much clue what cohesion is...'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

This would then lead to other people admitting they did not understand either and then the groups putting forward suggestions: people getting on with each other; lack of tension; not feeling uncomfortable; supporting each other and helping out; solving problems together; close knit and integrated.

*'A mixed community that knows each other and has a say?'* [Male, Asian, Farley Hill]

Some respondents found the term to be 'forced' and 'too formal', stating that it implied that 'you WILL get together'. Respondents much prefer what they see as more everyday terms like 'community spirit', 'separate communities coming together' and 'showing each other respect':

*'Just use plain English – do you get on with each other... with your neighbours?'* [Male, Black Caribbean, Lewsey Farm]

*'Sometimes they've chosen to use words that people don't understand, like diversity... or cohesion... they use them so they can gloss over the surface.'* [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]

Indeed, respondents in the Saints/Biscot area appeared quite put off by the term community cohesion and the definition – they preferred to think of it as 'co-operation within the community'.

Despite the preference for the term 'community spirit' and for respondents to view this as the same as cohesion, it is apparent that the two are not synonymous. Respondents cite examples of cohesion as being respondents getting together and helping each other out, having community spirit and of feeling safe. For them, they see

this as illustrating the cohesive nature of their area[s]. Indeed, with the exception of Farley Hill and the depth interviews<sup>2</sup>, all groups felt their area was cohesive. However, as discussions unfold, it becomes apparent that areas are not cohesive.

*'I'm not racist but I've found there's a lot more Asians moving to the estate because it's probably a nicer area and I don't think they do integrate in the same way. They're not any trouble in any way but they tend to keep themselves to themselves.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'It's just their nature to mix with their own. They're pleasant but you wouldn't see them at your barbeque.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'I live on a busy road, so therefore you're not meeting. Years ago I used to know everyone on the street. Now they've moved out and you don't get to know them. I used to know everybody in the street when I was younger, with my mum and dad. There isn't that community.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

Not only did the groups illustrate that there are cohesion issues but they also determined that cohesion was viewed in quite a narrow manner. Despite the definition provided explaining that cohesion was about recognising the rights to equality across a number of differences such as age, gender, disability, how much money you have etc the discussions predominately revolved around cohesion based on ethnicity and religion. Even if opinions commenced talking about other issues such as deprivation or education, these ultimately led to discussions on ethnic divides.

Occasionally respondents referred to differences in age or opportunity.

*'I have a neighbour across the road who's in her late forties and she sometimes pops over to say hello. I'm the only one with a nine year old so we don't have much in common. I'll say hello but that's it.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

*'People don't really want to get involved. If you moved to another area where you felt that it was defined by your age or occupation you would feel comfortable.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

The current levels of cohesion and barriers to cohesion are discussed further in later sections.

### 3.3 The benefits of community cohesion

When asked to describe the benefits of community cohesion and explain who would benefit the majority felt that this was self-evident, particularly following the definition that the moderator's were asked to read [please refer to the topic guide in the appendices]. It would mean that everyone would get along, there would be no aggravation and people would feel safe:

---

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps due to the ability to be more open and frank during a one to one interview than in a focus group where a respondent might feel the need to 'temper' their responses.

*'There's no aggravation, everyone gets on, everything's calm and quiet.'*  
*[Male, White, Lewsey Farm]*

In Stopsley they were most forthcoming about the benefits and suggested: improved communication leading to stronger relationships; feeling safer, peaceful and happy; the opportunity to learn about different cultures and backgrounds and accepting more about who and what you are:

*'People accept who and what you are more, and know the background behind it.'* *[Male, Asian, Stopsley]*

Farley Hill respondents suggested that cohesion in communities would bring down crime levels and there would be no hatred or racism.

The majority of respondents do not feel that anyone would lose out from a cohesive community, in fact a few commented that this was a 'daft question'. However those that thought people would lose out were those that thought:

- 1) That in order to make a community cohesive, one culture/group would lose out to another. For example, respondents spoke of mosques being built in place of other community buildings. They feel this was done to allow Muslims to feel 'more at home' but has meant that others feel less so; OR
- 2) If someone had a discrepancy with someone they would not be able to 'see it through'.

## 4 Community Cohesion: Current levels of cohesion on communities in Luton

### 4.1 Introduction

This section outlines how cohesive respondents find their 'geographical communities' to be.

### 4.2 Saints/Biscot

Ethnicity and religion is THE issue around cohesion in this area, please refer to later sections for further detail. The Asian respondents in the focus group feel the area is cohesive but the White British respondent feels isolated and the Asian respondents who took part in telephone interviews feel that the area is predominately Asian and would benefit from a more mixed environment:

*'If the community was cohesive it would be good for me and my child...he could play with other children they do not come around.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

*'It is just an Asian area.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

One younger Asian woman explains that she sends her children to a school 10 minutes drive away because it gets better results. However, after the discussion she tells the moderator that she did this to escape the strictness of the local school which is almost exclusively Asian. The children attend a very mixed school and she wants them to celebrate Christmas and Divali as well as Eid. However, they never attend any local events or clubs in this area because the Asian community is too 'tight and watchful'.

One male Asian respondent feels that the police target Asian men and that he is often stopped and asked where he is going and what he is doing. He feels if he was doing something wrong that would be acceptable but feels that the 'random stop and searches' are not random.

*'Sometimes you feel as though you're just being targeted, let's say, by police, because you're Asian. Obviously these records show it, the amount of times I've just been stopped, and I've seen no reason to be stopped. Just, 'Where are you going, why are you driving at this time of night, why is this?' and there's no reason for it. I'm fully insured, fully taxed, fully licensed to be on the road, everything. There are no issues whatsoever, there is nothing that will trigger off to the police why I should be stopped. You know, sometimes I'll say, 'I understand.' They can stop you for a variety of reasons. When you ask them, it's just a standard stop and search.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

The respondents in this group did not cite specific issues around gender or disability. Sexuality is not seen as a problem as it 'is not a gay area' apparently. Respondents feel that people from their area had as good opportunities as anyone else in Luton and

it was not seen as a 'bad' area. The job prospects for residents were viewed as being poor all over Luton, not especially so in Saints/Biscot. Respondents were not aware that people from outside Luton earn more than those who live in the town.

### 4.3 Lewsey Farm

Generally respondents in this group felt that residents get on in the area.

*'People on this estate, within reason, they get on. Obviously everyone can have a tiff with someone – Mr Bates [all laugh]... We have these people who are names on the estate.'* [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]

Quite a few people in the group recognised and knew each other and there appears to be a good community feeling. However, there were no Asian respondents in this group and there appears to be serious tension over the perceived growing number of Asian Muslims in the area and in particular the role played by the development of a new mosque [please refer to the later section on religion].

There is an irritation that Lewsey Farm has a stigma that people view it as a 'rough area'. So much so that some respondents admitted they do not put their address on job applications.

The group did not get the idea at all of tensions between people who work in Luton (and are richer) and those who live in Luton. They disagreed with this idea and felt that most people in Luton go to London to make money because there is no work in Luton full stop:

*'There is hardly any work in Luton since Vauxhall's gone, Awn gone, Renault's gone, Chrysler's gone – there's no work here.'* [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]

In terms of gender issues, there was felt to be none with the group feeling that women had a strong voice on the estate 'don't cross women on this estate!' They also felt there were no issues with disability or sexuality stating that the area is tolerant. However some felt that transgendered people might be targeted though others disagreed.

### 4.4 Bramingham

White British respondents in Bramingham felt that they already have a cohesive community, particularly in comparison to the neighbouring area of Marsh Farm. They felt that there were few problems and that people were respectful.

*'I think we already have it. This part of the town is pretty good. You only have to come in here and you'll see all sorts of races and everybody gets on.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

It was also thought that this area was more tolerant than others, as one respondent suggested, his gay neighbour would probably not be treated so well if he lived in another part of Luton:

*'I think my next door neighbour's gay. He's a drag act. The first time I met him was on a Saturday evening and he was in his car. He disappears off with his make-up bags and kits and everything. That isn't an issue to me. I think there are areas in Luton where he wouldn't feel comfortable in doing that. I think there are areas he'd get hammered for it.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

They feel that the area is quiet, 'nice', has conveniently placed facilities and 'looks new'. For them, these factors make residents feel safer and have peace of mind. They believe this is what draws people to the area. They note that the area is not 'cheap' to live in and that in order to enjoy the area you have to be able to afford to pay the premiums. By paying such premiums, they believe this encourages people to be more respectful of property, the area and others.

*'You have to pay a premium to live in this area and so most people are working and quite respectable.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

The Bangladeshi respondent from Bramingham did not feel the area was cohesive. She felt it was 'ok, about 60%'. Whilst there were no obvious issues she does feel like an outsider.

### 4.5 Stopsley

Similarly to Bramingham, respondents in Stopsley felt that their area was cohesive. Many commented on the quiet 'nice' area, the high level to which the council maintained 'the village' and the easy access to 'the essentials'. The majority have lived in the area all their life and would not consider moving. They feel the area has a good mix of ethnicities and feel that everyone gets on well:

*'All the kids down the road, all the parents knew each other. If you went away, someone would look after your pet. There was a lot of mix. Asian Muslims. Always had barbecues at someone's house. So I don't see that problem.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

However, they also mention [like Bramingham] how people tend to 'keep to themselves':

*'I think it's quiet and minds its own business. That goes right the way through the village. Most people like it that way. People don't get involved in community things these days. They do in Europe. I go to villages and towns quite a lot, and the whole town is involved in things. Not here.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

*'I think different groups get together. I've noticed that you've got to talk to people to get to know them. They tend to stick to their own group.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

They also mention how the minimal activities that are run are organised by certain groups of people as opposed to having an inclusive nature, so events are run for 'over 50's', 'women only' etc and they feel this obviously defeats the aim of cohesion.

*'The organised stuff is going to be based on a certain group of people. It's hard to get something happening with different ages and sexes.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

Interestingly, what the whole group did agree on was that no-one was happy about the permanent traveller camp in the village. All could cite examples of burglary and anti-social behaviour originating from the camps and all felt helpless about the situation. Whilst the crime was not seen as beneficial, on the other hand it was allowing all other community groups and ethnicities to bond together based on the common dislike for the travellers.

The Polish respondents said that they daily suffer racist abuse around High Town where they live.

*'When they see me in college. Use bad words. A very bad Polish word. The same as 'bitch'. I don't know why.'* [Female, Polish, Stopsley]

They feel isolated and the only people they currently socialise with are also minorities such as the Black residents across the road and the disabled gentleman who they assist with his shopping. They share food and their native celebrations with each other.

#### 4.6 Farley Hill

Respondents in Farley Hill felt cohesion was 50/50. They admitted that it can be quite bad but it is not as bad as it was. Many felt it was a close knit community and that people are often felt to be an outsider, even those who have lived in the area for more than three years. The deprivation in the area is said to contribute to the high level of crime: 'druggies, fights, racist fights, alcoholism and gangs' [further information is detailed in the section 'Fear of Crime'].

Many feel that other residents in Luton associate Farley Hill with racism but the respondents feel that you have a different perception when you come to the area to live. It is not clear why they think this as whilst some exclaim:

*'I am the only white spot amongst all these flags'* [female, White, Farley Hill]

Others talk frequently of gangs formed on ethnic origin and the fighting that occurs. They mention that the area was historically known to be inhabited by 'skinheads' and members of the 'National Front' and believe that this causes tension between older residents and newer ones from other countries. Perhaps they feel that because people of multiple ethnicities live together that cohesion exists but it is obvious that there are high levels of tension in the area. For example, whilst the majority of the group is run with people focusing on crime and anti-social behaviour, the subject of cohesion is often ignored and moved back to crime. As all respondents find the crime levels to be high and unacceptable this common ground clearly made the conversations less tense. However, upon discussing the wishes for cohesion in 10 years time and one Asian respondent wanting a mosque in the area, the group quickly became divisive and a 'heated' debate began. In fact, this area clearly illustrates the majority of barriers listed in future sections.

## Community Cohesion & Fear of Crime

Similarly to Stopsley, there is one cohesion point that the majority of the group agree upon, that Asian residents integrate but that Turkish people do not. This has caused some groups to bond but ostracised Turkish residents. The one Turkish respondent replied that this increases their fear to become involved and they worry that they will be deported.



## 5 Community Cohesion: Current issues and barriers prohibiting community cohesion in Luton

### 5.1 Introduction

Generally, whilst respondents initially state that their areas are cohesive, overall discussions identify that this may not be the case; the following section examines the current circumstances in Luton which are prohibiting community cohesion.

### 5.2 The comfort of seeking ‘commonality’

The largest barrier to cohesion and perhaps arguably the most obvious is that respondents feel that human nature is to seek the companionship of people most like yourself. Shared interests, religion, ethnicity, age, gender all lends to people feeling more comfortable with others as they sense a commonality. As previously cited in section 3.2 respondents find that they gravitate towards people who are at similar lifestages or who understand their cultural preferences.

*‘It’s familiarity, isn’t it? You know that you might have something in common with them. You want a balance.’ [Female, White, Bramingham]*

For example, Asian respondents do not feel uncomfortable or sense that there are any cohesion issues in Saints/Biscot area but the white respondent feels very ostracized:

*‘You feel like an outsider, uncomfortable because there’s so few of us now... Being the only white one here, it is different for me... People don’t talk to you around here like they would if you were a neighbour. You don’t get spoken to apart from ‘Hello’ and ‘Goodbye’ – they don’t make friends.’ [Female, White, Saints/Biscot]*

Similarly, the White British respondents in Bramingham did not feel there were cohesion issues but the Bangladeshi respondent did:

*‘I sometimes feel like an outcast. Am I the only brown face here? It is not a problem, but I do feel left out but maybe they do not feel the same....some people just stare and when I look at them they look the other way so they do not even give me the chance to smile.’ [Female, Bangladeshi, Bramingham].*

It is the desire to seek commonality that has led to the overall lack of cohesion across Luton. There is ‘community cohesion’ if one defines a community by a shared principle/trait or desire such as ethnicity, religion, age, having children of the same age, enjoying the same kind of music etc but there is not cohesion of a community if community is to be defined as a political geographical area such as a ward.

Indeed, it is the creation of these communities that for some, is the cause of the tensions. White British respondents in particular, are resentful of other ethnicities creating communities around their cultures in Britain.

*'You talk about cohesion, they don't want it. They create their own country where they come from. If you're in America you're American, no matter where in the world you come from. In this country they just bring everything with them.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'They are making their mark...'* [Female<sup>3</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

*'They are making a statement that they are here.'* [Male<sup>4</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

They talk about high streets in areas not having any 'English' high street stores but being dominated by Polish and Asian grocery and clothing shops. They acknowledge individual's needs to retain their cultures but feel that 'British' culture is being lost in the process. Issues surrounding ethnicity, religion, language and opportunities are heightened within this context. The most fractious of which is religion and the building of mosques.

However, Asian respondents in Saints/Biscot talk of the division between themselves and the growing Eastern European population which respondents believe to be Polish. This population is said to be creating its 'own community' within itself by speaking in their own language and frequenting Polish owned shops.

*'We speak our language and they speak theirs. They have all the agency jobs, food shops, they speak Polish – it might not be Polish, some Eastern European language.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

So whether it is White British respondents aggrieved over Asian communities or Asian communities over Polish, there is a clear message that residents are forming self-contained communities based primarily on ethnicity.

This section continues to examine the key areas that are, on the one hand, drawing people together and on the other, are keeping them apart.

### 5.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity can be defined in many ways but for the residents it is established by the colour of someone's skin or by the language they speak. Saints/Biscot and Bramingham both clearly identify the isolation residents who form the minority ethnicities feel in an area. The Bramingham respondents understood that being a minority in any area would be unsettling. They noted that living in mixed ethnicity areas was not an issue per se, it was only an issue when one ethnicity was severely outnumbered by another.

*'A lot of people don't feel comfortable being around people who aren't the same ethnicity or religion.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

---

<sup>3</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>4</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

*'In Bury Park I would be a minority...maybe we'd feel what they feel like here.'*  
[Female, White, Bramingham]

This issue is particularly pronounced in Saints/Biscot where White British respondents feel outnumbered by Asian residents. The group in this area estimated that 95% of Saints/Biscot was inhabited by Asian residents.

The respondents in Saints/Biscot area said there was no inter-racial tension between the various Asian communities. However, the Asian respondents in this group were keen to state that people should not make broad generalisations about Asians as it depended on family, how children are brought up and the values that are instilled into them that will factor into how a person behaves. They also stated that it can depend on the street you live on, for example Mansfield Road residents were said to be much more mixed and friendly than others. This is something that is clearly an issue that needs resolving as respondents of other ethnicities are of the perception that Asian residents do not want to mix with others and only want to create Asian only communities. This in itself is causing tension:

*'The racial extremism thing is because once you get one group who is very extreme and want everything in their favour, then obviously you're going to get another who want it the other way. If that community was a bit more integrated, which is what they don't want to do [Asians] then it wouldn't be a problem.'* [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]

In fact, the Lewsey Farm respondents feel that all other communities except Asian ones integrate. There is a general feeling across most respondents that ethnic communities exist side by side but do not mix.

In order to overcome the fear of something different, some respondents recognised the importance of exposure. One young respondent in Stopsley spoke of how his grandfather was always particularly racist and how this worsened as more Asian residents moved into the area. However, one day he suffered a fall and his lifeline failed to work, his Muslim neighbour noticed and between herself and her son assisted the man and waited for the ambulance and his family to arrive. She sat and talked with him and their friendship began. Since then, the grandson speaks of how his once fearful grandfather can now walk past the local mosque and talk to his neighbours without reservation or fear:

*'My granddad used to be quite racist. He's from Blackpool. He moved down here in the sixties. Both his neighbours, either side, were Muslim. He was racist because he wasn't used to it. His views of them changed though, so views can change.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

## 5.4 Religion

Religious differences are clearly an area for tension between White British and Asian residents, particularly in Saints/Biscot, Lewsey Farm and Farley Hill. In Saints/Biscot the White British respondent felt that the tensions were getting worse because of 'world tensions' around terrorism but the majority of Asian respondents in the group would not respond to this comment. Although the Asian elder in the group did

acknowledge that matters have got worse in the last decade with the rise in Islamic extremism which has made the white population more distrustful of Asians in general. They spoke of Muslim families 'keeping eyes on their sons' to keep them from extremism.

Further, young male Asian respondents said that whilst they had not experienced anyone actually saying anything there was a feeling of distrust/unrest/uneasiness:

*'I've never had a race issue. I've never felt that, but since all this 9/11 stuff and that, you just really feel out of place. You think, 'Well, hold on, should I be doing this, should I be doing that?' Am I just going to get picked on? Are people going to say things? I was actually at university at the time when that happened, and I remember there were a lot of American students with me at the time. The whole thing just changes. One minute they're okay with you, you're friends, and the next minute it's like, 'Hold on a minute, you're a Muslim, aren't you?'" [Asian, Male, Saints/Biscot]*

*'It's got to a stage where people look at me. I'm Hindu, not Muslim, but people give me a look like, 'You're one of them.' They just assume straightaway.'*  
*[Male, Asian, Stopsley]*

Being of a different religion was not limited to only Asian residents feeling ostracised. The White British respondent from Saints/Biscot felt that not sharing the same religion as the Asian residents in the area marked her as an obvious outsider and had led to her feeling isolated:

*'Religion is another think that's against you – if you're not a Muslim they don't really like you. It makes it very difficult in this area. The young people are worse than the older ones – they have more of a chip on their shoulder... Teenagers will come up to you and say 'What are you doing in this area? I've had that said to me... It's quite intimidating. My grandchildren, if they go over the park, someone will spit on the slide before they can go down it... they're probably 9 or 10.'* [Female, White, Saints/Biscot]

In Lewsey Farm there is growing tension and irritation by both White British and Black Caribbean respondents over the new building of a mosque in the area, particularly as it was built on the site of the old health centre.

*'The council sold the building – they took that building away which served all of the community and they gave it to one part of that community, one religion and no one else gets to use that building. Now there is an issue because the building is too small for what they need – the parking is ridiculous. When they come to pray, it's not people from the estate, there's people from Luton, Dunstable coming up here because it's easier to get to this mosque. I've found people parking on my own drive way! ... Everyone could go to the health centre – it was wrong of them to take it away and give it to one lot of people.'* [Female, Black, Lewsey Farm]

Prior to the above incident respondents did not feel that race and religion had been a major issue, now they felt it was 'getting there', with the greatest irritation being felt by those who live near the mosque:

*'It is a mixed area but there is more Asian people moving up this end because of the Mosque... You get people knocking along the road asking if you want to sell your house because they want to move near the Mosque...' [Female,<sup>5</sup> Lewsey Farm]*

*'...I think it's true because when I was a kid [he is 18], there wasn't lots of Asian people but now there are gangs of youths, in groups of 5 or 10... They pick up on me being an EMO and they pick up on that. They intimidate you – like a statement – if we can pick on that one, maybe there'll be no more.'*  
*[Male, White, Lewsey Farm]*

*'...I don't think it is just clothes. It's the way they are within their groups – it's not gangs or stuff like that, but it's border line...' [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]*

In fact, the group felt that issues were beginning to occur between Asian and White British teenage boys. Similarly, in Farley Hill, when an Asian respondent feels that community cohesion would be assisted in the area if a mosque was built other respondents become highly agitated. They feel that any development in the area should be for the benefit of the whole community and not just one group – for them, building a mosque in the area would create even greater tension.

There is also irritation about the parking at the Hindu Centre on Hereford Road, particularly when there are weddings held there. The group again notes that the building used to be a community venue for all when it was the Friendship House and now it is for Hindu's only:

*'A place where we all used to go for Brownies and Girl Guides and everything else used to be there.'* [Female, White, Lewsey Farm]

Others are aggravated by the lack parking at the Catholic Church on Clydesdale Road which is said to cause issues on Sundays. Respondents were annoyed that the Council built flats for older people on the land around the church instead of leaving it as a car park.

Conversely, one Asian respondent spoke out about the parking issues at mosques, particularly the one on Selbourne Road. He felt that for cohesion to occur people needed to understand that Friday prayers were important and that for 2 hours on a Friday lunchtime there would be parking issues on the industrial estate. For him, the complaints from businesses and users of the estate about the parking was hindering cohesion:

*'If you understand why someone is doing something, a bit like you said, if there's cohesion and there's understanding, you're not going to get issues....'*

---

<sup>5</sup> Ethnicity not recalled

*They're only going to be here for a short time, they're not causing a problem. They just want to pray and go, that's it.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

One major cause of irritation by respondents, particularly in Stopsley, was that, whatever someone's culture or ethnicity, they should embrace English traditions and festivals. It was not felt that everyone should compulsorily celebrate festivals, but there was a general feeling that Christian festivals in particular, were being 'pushed aside' so as not to 'offend' other religions and this was causing resentment.

*'Like when my dad sends Christmas cards, a lot of Muslims don't because it says 'Christmas' on it. It's England. It should be the English season. Non-Christian people should celebrate Christmas the way English do. It's the way it is. I think you should celebrate every festival and not say it should be changed.'* [Asian, Male, Stopsley]

*'It stops people being cohesive by trying to change Christmas into winter this and that. It angers people.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

The general feelings of irritation around religion appear to fall into four main categories:

- The creation of a religious building in the place of one that was previously used to benefit more than one section of the community:

*'It seems that they are quite happy to do things for people who are religious, but what about the young people, what about their community...'* [Female, Lewsey Farm<sup>6</sup>]

- The parking issues created by the attendance at religious buildings disrupting residents in the immediate area;
- The perceived support of minority religions over White British ones to 'aid cohesion'; and
- The general distrust because of world tensions over Islamic extremism.

### 5.5 Age

Asian respondents across the groups, generally feel that younger Asian residents who were born in Luton mix better than their parents' generation as they speak fluent English and have grown up in a more mixed community. Indeed, the older Asian man in Saints/Biscot says he is unaware of cohesion as he only sees his family and goes to the mosque:

---

<sup>6</sup> Ethnicity not recalled

*'He just gets involved with the mosque, with other men, with prayer, he never goes out.'* [Younger Asian Male translating for older Asian Male, Saints/Biscot]

However, White British respondents, particularly older residents, think that Asian teenagers are the most aggressive and disrespectful to her and the least interested in getting on.

Some respondents feel that there are generational issues over community; they believe that older residents are more likely to know the value and create one compared to younger respondents. This opinion was discussed most prevalently at Lewsey Farm.

*'We came down from London and we formed the community, so we've always had a community. We were young when we came, but that community changes over the years. But there's still lots of people in our neck of the woods who still live together in quite a good community – good neighbours, though you can still get the bad apple in it.'* [Female, White, Lewsey Farm]

*'It seems the gap between people of my age [60] and people of your age [teens] is widening and it's a terrible shame that there isn't a place where you could come and be comfortable and we could all chat and be doing the same things and enjoying the same things together.'* [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]

They feel that this situation is not helped by the lack of a community venue that would allow residents to meet new people and socialise:

*'There are less and less places on Lewsey Farm for people to get together... We need more places like that on this estate.'* [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]

## 5.6 Social deprivation

Providing investment to an area to remove the deprivation was seen as key by many groups to gain community cohesion. Respondents generally cited the more socially deprived areas as being least cohesive: Hockwell Ring, Marsh Farm, Farley Hill and Bury Park, whereas respondents residing in Stopsley and Bramingham felt their areas were affluent and cohesive:

*'There was a party on Saturday, my next door neighbour's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and she'd invited everyone in the cul-de-sac. There were people who had been there since the houses were built and it was really good. When people have an interest in their property then you have people like us.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

A few respondents disagreed that socially deprived areas were less cohesive:



*'I came from a council estate when I was a kid. One thing people didn't do is shit on your own doorstep. I think there's more community spirit on council estates. If I broke down with my car I'd have five or six people helping me. If I had the same thing here I'd find it hard to get anyone to help me.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'You're more community minded when you have less money. The more money you have, that's where the one up-man-ship starts.'* [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]

In fact, it was the 'one up-man –ship' that was seen to be causing cohesion issues in the more affluent areas like Bramingham. Bramingham respondents spoke of how some residents prefer to call the area 'Barton Hills' because it is more likely to be associated with an affluent area than Marsh Farm, the neighbouring estate. In reality, only Bramingham Wood divides the two areas but it was felt that some people formed a 'snobbery' of the area making it difficult for the two places to be cohesive. This is particularly the case due to the stigma and negative image associated with Marsh Farm.

*'Some people think they are above everyone else, that their poo doesn't stink....they used to call it spam city because the houses were so big but they couldn't afford to put anything in the cupboards.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

Indeed, the Bramingham respondents spoke of people's desire to better and improve themselves. They discussed how individuals strive to upgrade and provide better quality of lives for each other.

*'We mix with our own, we draw to people who are like us. I came from a council estate but you decide you want better. You tend to mix with people who think the same way as you do. If you're paying three quarters of your income on a mortgage the last thing you want is the council to build a load of houses around you.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

Consequently, such respondents were most likely to be irritated by those who did not seek to improve, but merely were seen to be 'sponging off the state':

*'When you have half the population working and paying taxes and then you have people who are just freeloading it's going to lead to resentment, it's as simple as that. There are children who are twenty-five and twenty-six and they don't work and why should they when they can get however much in benefits.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

Some felt that assisting people was not a cohesion issue but more to do with society nowadays. A few respondents felt that generally people are more selfish and unlikely to assist others which has led to a decline in community spirit. Others felt it was due to the unpredictable response that people might give if you did help them:



*'If you try to help someone you don't know if they're going to turn you over because you're helping them or will you get arrested. Someone could see it the wrong way. It happens.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

Whether respondents agreed or disagreed that socially deprived areas were less cohesive, they all agreed that regenerating areas and improving them could only be beneficial. Indeed, in order to illustrate their point respondents in Bramingham spoke of the bad reputation and stigma attached to Marsh Farm. There have historically been negative issues associated with the area. However, the recent influx of investment in the area has led to improvements that have made residents feel the area is safer and beneficial to the community [inside and outside of the area]. In particular, respondents noted the improvements made to the local school:

*'I had reservations about sending my son there but when I saw the school for myself I thought the facilities are second to none.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'That's good to hear. My son's probably going to go there and it worried me.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

In Lewsey Farm it was felt by one respondent [active in the Neighbourhood Watch Scene] that the Council would not help regenerate the area until the community itself banded together and did things for itself such as agree a plan, form groups etc. However, the rest of the group strongly disagreed and felt they would only get financial assistance if they caused a riot:

*'I think it's completely the opposite. For what I've seen in this town, it's the communities that look that they're just literally going to implode that get the money spent...'* [Male<sup>7</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

*'...Start a riot and we'll get the money spent on us – that's how it seems.'* [Male<sup>8</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

## 5.7 State of the economy

Similarly to points raised in the residents' workshop, respondents agreed that the loss of major employers in the town had led to a degradation in community cohesion. The large scale employers provided a platform to bring people of all walks of life together over the fact they worked for the same company. The lack of employers now means that residents have to look further afield for work and communities based on people growing up together are lost as individuals go in search for work outside of Luton.

*'This town was like a mining town – you left school and you went to Vauxhall or the airport or Electrolux – everyone knew where they were going and when you went to that job, your school friends or other people that you knew from doing things around here would be at that job. You'd know where you were*

---

<sup>7</sup> Ethnicity not recalled

<sup>8</sup> Ethnicity not recalled

*going and now you leave school and you might get a job anywhere. The only jobs in Luton now are in the Arndale – that's about it.'* [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]

Additionally, there was debate in both Stopsley and Farley Hill about the resentment between White British and Polish people. The heart of the resentment appears to be that Polish workers are working for lower wages than White British residents. This has led to them being hired more often and reducing the opportunities of the White British residents.

*'My husband is a lorry driver. He got his wages cut by a lot because Polish drivers were doing it for cheaper. So he could feel quite put out. It wasn't that he didn't want to work. He had a wage deduction. So, that's where it could be sorted out fairly. I've worked in an Asian cash and carry for fifteen years. I don't even look at someone and think they're Asian or whatever, but I think that's how views are if you feel you've been hard done by and think you have something to moan about. I don't particularly feel that it's Polish people's fault. It's just the way the world is, but my husband did feel put out because he had a wage reduction....'* [Female 1, White, Stopsley]

*'Everyone would do that though if they needed a job.'* [Female 2, White, Stopsley]

*'I know, but I'm just saying that that's how bad feeling starts. I understand. You feel that you're losing your standard of living.'* [Female 1, White, Stopsley]

However, following a heated debate in Farley Hill, the group agreed that it was the employers that had led to the cohesion issues by taking advantage of the Polish workers. They felt that had businesses paid everyone a fair and similar wage that this particular cohesion issue could have been avoided.

### 5.8 Schools

Whilst some areas have clearly benefited from having a mixture of ethnicities attend, others feel that those that are predominately one ethnicity are not as good. One respondent from Saints/Biscot is not happy with the school education provided in her catchment area. She actively sought to have her children attend another school [where her child is now only one of 2 Asian children], only to be subjected to bullying and racism.

For example, her child was being pushed over one day, she told another child to apologise and stated it was not a nice thing to do. At this point a group of mothers verbally attacked her and pushed her, another parent had to intervene. Since the incident she takes and collects her children from the back entrance of the school to avoid contact with the other parents.

She wonders if the other parents are stereotyping her and do not think she can speak English. Currently this has meant that her child has no-one to play with as she is intimidated to approach other parents to invite their children around.

*'It makes me feel quite sad that not everyone is polite and friendly....it makes me more reserved and more focused on my family. I have a small circle of friends.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

The White Turkish respondent in Farley Hill also provided examples of his younger siblings being bullied at school, primarily because of their lack of English language skills. The situation for them is that the children no longer wish to go to school but they are hesitant to move them as they feel a mixed school is the best chance of them integrating overall.

Indeed, the importance of mixing ethnicities at school is illustrated by the comments of young White British respondents in Stopsley:

*'My mum grew up in Stevenage, and she's really racist. So, through my childhood, she said to stay away from other children. When I got to high school, there were loads of different people there. I saw that my mum was wrong. They're just normal human beings.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

*'I never saw a coloured person until I was about seven.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

They recognised the importance of exposure to other ethnicities in order to remove tensions. They felt that older residents would be harder to educate because they were not used to such diversity:

*'I think if you're set in your ways, it's quite hard to change what you think. It's so much easier for us because we were brought up in diverse communities.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

However, in Farley Hill, where the schools are integrated and mixed, respondents speak of how children still only play with other children of the same ethnicity they do not mix, when asked why they do this, respondents are told:

*'Our parents say we cannot play together.'* [Female, White, Farley Hill]

### 5.9 Social preferences of different cultures and alcohol

Of particular note, is that many White British residents feel that alcohol is a key issue to achieving cohesion. Respondents note that many social activities for White British respondents revolve around drinking in pubs or at home. They assume that because Muslim residents do not drink, that they would not 'feel comfortable' socialising in the same manner and that therefore this excludes them from forming social bonds with each other.

*'Because of their religion, a lot of them don't drink anyway.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'It's not that they don't want to, they probably do want to but don't have the social skills.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'Some people are very shy. I've spoken to some of the Asian women and some of them are very shy.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

*'It's just a different culture. If you did throw a massive barbeque and invite them they wouldn't feel comfortable.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

Interestingly, the Bangladeshi interviewee from Bramingham is Muslim and she spoke of her attempts to make friends with the neighbours and to be outgoing. She explained how she has invited people to family barbeques and taken home cooked food to neighbours' homes but that the friendship gestures were not returned.

*'Most do not acknowledge me...I have lived here for 8-9 years and I do not speak to 90% of the people here...I have four neighbours and only the father waves hello...I took samosas over two years ago, invited them to barbeques but they do not come over...I do not feel that they want to get involved...sometimes I think is it my ethnicity or am I unapproachable? ... I think it is my area, there are not that many Asians in this area. My mum lives in Biscot and she does not have any issues. She would not move here because she said she would not fit in.'* [Female, Bangladeshi, Bramingham]

Upon discussion about social activities revolving around alcohol, she stated that although she does not drink she still socialises with her friends who do consume alcohol, she does not feel it is a reason to not be involved socially with others. However, an Asian Female respondent in the Saints/Biscot group concurred that alcohol was a problem that kept them from mixing socially with others. The following is an excerpt from the group when they discussed the need for a community hub/venue:

*'It would be nice to have places where everyone mixes together. You make friends, you talk, you get to know each other.'* [Female, White, Saints/Biscot]

*'But a lot of Asian people wouldn't go there if they're serving alcohol, which is forbidden – that's how they would look at it.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

### 5.10 Media image

Like the residents in the workshop held earlier this year, respondents are keenly aware that Luton is portrayed poorly in the media and many cite the examples of it being rated in the top ten worst places to live and that 'we have the most extreme Muslims in the country'.

*'Whenever terrorism comes on the news it mentions Luton because of the large Muslim population. It always mentions it. I think people think of that.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

*'Luton's got a very bad name. People think it's full of terrorists. I think the communities rub along really well in Luton, the Asian communities.'* [female, White, Stopsley]

Respondents are conscious of the reputation of Luton, especially locally in Lewsey Farm. For some, the portrayal angers and upsets them but for most they do not appear to be bothered. They do not feel that it is as bad as the media portrays it and believe it simply needs positive press.

Asian respondents feel the press on their ethnicity is stereotypical and that 99% is not the truth:

*'I do not blame them....it is a lack of knowledge about our religion...they are frightened if someone has a beard and that is sad for people to fear like that.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

Some Asian respondents speak of 'non-Muslims' assuming that Muslims isolate themselves [a comment made by many non-Muslims during the research and somewhat confirmed by older Muslim respondents]. However, one respondent commented on the positive media that could be utilised and gave the example of the Muslim family in 'Eastenders' who portray their culture as well as a more westernised way of life that is 'not so extreme'.

Another media issue hindering cohesion are the banners put up by political parties such as BNP and UKIP. Some respondents find the immigration and asylum comments to be detrimental to cohesion:

*'You know, like, for example, with the political parties and whatnot. There is one there. I'm not sure if it's the BNP or if it's the UK Independence Party, and it was something about immigration and asylum. I don't know, 5000 asylum seekers come every week, and stuff like that.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

This particular respondent feels that people should understand that not everyone who is not White British is detrimental to the country and that they can positively contribute without being made to feel uncomfortable:

*'So, you know, if anything, myself personally, we've only bettered the country, in a sense that we're fully educated with degrees. My sister is a barrister, my brother is in the CID. We've only bettered the country so, you know, if people can see that. Even asylum itself can be of benefit to the country. You're taking experiences from other places, bringing them here and making it better. Someone like myself particularly, I feel I'm British, okay? I feel I'm part of this country, and I contribute to the country. However, we are made to feel uncomfortable here.'* [Asian, Male, Saints/Biscot]

## 5.11 Communication

All respondents accept that cohesion is facilitated by speaking English and that people who live in England 'need English to be their first language'. However, Asian

respondents in Saints/Biscot accept that their parents, despite living in Luton for 40+ years, still have very poor English language skills even though they know that classes are available locally. They feel that it should be accepted that the older Asian generation who were not educated here do not and will never speak English. This is something that other respondents are very irritated by:

*'If you're going to come over here, fine, but you have to come in and try and give something. You can't come here and expect us to do things for you. If you go abroad you have to learn the language. They won't help us so why should we help anyone else.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'They come over here and they're given a translator and everybody has to pay for it. I'm a firm believer that if you want to live in a different country you learn their language.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

Indeed, respondents whose children have attended [or do attend] predominately Asian schools speak of the poor English language skills obtained by the children:

*'It is a barrier to learning English...they are not very fluent...the kids lack exposure to other children.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

Whilst language is clearly the number one issue for communication, many people also rely on body language and facial expressions. One respondent felt that this was impossible to do with the very orthodox Muslim's as their traditional dress reveals only their eyes: 'you only see the letterbox'. Indeed, Muslim respondents who wear traditional dress or even just the headscarf feel that people look at them differently.

## 6 Community Cohesion: Achieving community cohesion

### 6.1 Introduction

Respondents were asked whether they felt community cohesion was achievable in Luton and what needed to happen over the next 10 years in order for that to occur. This section evaluates the results.

### 6.2 Is community cohesion achievable?

Generally respondents feel that it is an important goal and would hope that community cohesion could be achieved but not all are convinced that it can be. This is in terms of both individual areas and Luton as a whole. Even areas that feel that they are already cohesive [Stopsley and Bramingham] admit that they see themselves apart from other areas so are not cohesive across wards.

Older respondents felt that it would be a very hard task to get society to think less selfishly and more cohesively:

*'It's going to be hard work to get people to think about others as they would do themselves,' [Female, White, Saints/Biscot]*

Others fear that people are so busy with their own lives that they 'do not have the time' to put in the effort required or are disinterested.

Further, the strength of seeking commonality is so strong that for some, this is the only option. For example, the only way the Asian lady in Bramingham said she would feel like the area was cohesive in 10 years time is if more Asian people moved to the area. This would be better for her as they would stop, smile and speak to her. She did not feel that this was an achievable aim with the current demographic mix.

The importance of improving community cohesion was felt to benefit safety most of all but also, because respondents generally felt that the town was so run down that it had to be 'all about the people and NOT about the buildings or facilities':

*'You've got to like the people because that's all there is – Lewsey Farm as an estate is run down so far.' [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]*

In order for community cohesion to be achievable many returned to the point that money would be required in order to regenerate areas, create community centres and fund activities and education initiatives. This is primarily because residents do not feel that there is currently any impetus to draw people together.

A key factor in achieving cohesion was that residents have no pre-conceptions and an open mind. Ultimately, it was felt that being involved in making a community cohesive was 'down to the individual' and there would be people who wanted to and those that did not. Currently, they did not feel that there was a good enough incentive for people to be drawn in and help and so residents would simply carry on with their lives.



*'It's all down to people's tolerance. You're going to get people that are and people that are not. I don't think there's a lot that can change that apart from passing of the years.'* [female, White, Stopsley]

### 6.3 Measures to help achieve community cohesion

There were some clear recommendations made by respondents to help community cohesion, the following is a list provided across all groups [they are not listed in any particular order].<sup>9</sup>

14. **Role models:** Asian respondents felt that communities required more 'elder figures' to act as role models to young people to guide them and teach them that the Koran is peaceful and pull them away from extremism;
15. **Integrate activities:** This was seen as the key way to improve cohesion across Luton. All respondents felt that providing community hubs that were not restricted to one community [religious/age/interest group] would allow people to mix more cohesively. Indeed, Farley Hill residents felt that authorities currently rely on individual community groups to 'look after their own' rather than encouraging community groups to work together. However, there were seen to be clear barriers to this being completely successful:
  - a. Any sporting activities would preclude Asian female residents who would require separate 'women only' sessions; and
  - b. Providing activities where alcohol is not provided would strongly encourage Asian respondents to attend.

*'I don't like pubs – they cause so many problems for taxi drivers and other people in the night when people are out of it, drunk. I think they should shut down all of the pubs.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

Whilst this would encourage young families to attend a group, younger white male respondents did not envisage attending social activities without alcohol;

16. **Careful consideration of locations for cohesion activities needs to be considered:** Some feel that getting churches involved would help, allowing people to be exposed to different religions but seeing the peacefulness of each. However, others feel that working through churches and current community groups is a bad idea as they are already affiliated to certain groups and ideologies, for these respondents, having neutral locations and organisers would be the better way to address cohesive activities in areas;
17. **Local people employed to run activities:** A few respondents felt the best way to run activities would be to have local people run them to get them involved and encourage them to continue. However others feel nobody would give up the amount of free time required to do a successful job and so they believe the

---

<sup>9</sup> In some instances BMG has provided additional suggestions to a point raised by a respondent.



Council should run such initiatives as a business. Indeed, respondents in Farley Hill feel that authorities rely too much on voluntary resources and they should not expect people to do it for free;

18. **Improve current facilities:** Respondents felt greater attention should be paid to parks to make them more conducive to family activities: banning bikes; enforcing dog litter control; removal of graffiti and broken bottles and glass in children's play areas etc. Some respondents recall events like community BBQs and would like these reinstated;
19. **Enforce the use of English:** All respondents accept that cohesion is facilitated by speaking English and that people who live in England 'need English to be their first language'. One respondent felt that more opportunities should be provided to teach English at local schools and community centres and that Asian women in particular should be encouraged to attend [comment was made by an Asian woman];
20. **Improve the media view and perception of Luton:** Many admit Luton needs regeneration and has recently acquired a poor reputation for its race relations but they do not feel it is as run down as is portrayed. Some suggest having positive press, perhaps around meetings which allow people to be educated on other people's cultures and religions to improve knowledge and understanding;
21. **Creation of more jobs in local areas:** Many feel unemployment fuels cohesion issues. People feel the only work is in local shops, take-aways and taxis;
22. **Regenerate socially deprived areas:** In the more socially deprived areas such as Lewsey Farm and Farley Hill the general consensus was a need to regenerate the area like Marsh Farm had been. There is a lot of anger about the amount of money spent on Marsh Farm compared to other areas. These areas in particular were in favour of community centres/hubs but stressed the importance of providing affordable/free activities for residents.
23. **Utilise schools as the primary conduit to integration:** Have schools hold more family based activities as education is important to all and regardless of ethnicity, parents are said to be keen to be involved :

*'I speak to a lot of the mums at school. I have two Asian friends and they get involved with school activities and stuff. I think it's only through the schools that they do get involved, because of the young children.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

As schools are in catchment areas surrounded by distinct ethnicity groups it would be worthwhile arranging inter-school activities too. Indeed, some parents had noticed the benefit the movement of catchment boundaries had made on cohesion to date:

*'The council moved the catchment areas of the school ten years ago which was very good. You're getting a much better cross-section of people, it brings the school up. You get parents that are interested and go to the meetings, that's what it's all about. It hopefully brings everyone up.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

24. **Ensure the Council listens to the residents and actively consults them:** In Lewsey Farm in particular they felt their views were ignored on issues such as the Mosque and speed humps. Lack of consultation feedback and provision of reasons for decisions made is leading to resentment that is being deflected onto others;

25. **Educate people on the differences between cultures and religions:** Illustrating the benefits of a mixed society and showing what it does to help Britain was seen to be a good idea. It was thought that the 'bigger agenda' of why people are allowed to come to the country should be explained, illustrating the long term interest and benefits. It was felt that too many negative attitudes were caused by people focusing on the short term 'I lost my job' instead of focusing on the long term benefits:

*'For example, people can complain as much as they want about the Polish community, but let me tell you something, they bring a lot of work into this place. They bring a lot of experience into this place, and they're still building our economy here. They are doing it. It works both ways. The government wouldn't just let them in. They have top level understanding with the governments out there. Why are they just going to bring the Eastern Bloc into part of Europe? There's a bigger agenda.... It's all down to understanding and, I think, if the council or the government want people to have cohesion between them, they just need to explain. You know, this is the short term loss, these are the long term benefits. These people are coming in, we're not just letting them in, we're letting them in for a reason. They have a valid reason to be here. You know, we assess every application. Like I say, if there is an understanding then people will accept, and it makes things easier then'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

26. **Illustrate the figures of 'stop and searches' in local papers:** This was so that any one ethnicity would not feel 'picked on'.

## 7 Findings: Fear of Crime, an Overview

### 7.1 Introduction

This section commences the findings on 'Fear of Crime'. It provides an overview to the crimes and anti-social behaviour [ASB] experienced by respondents in their local areas and states how safe they feel. The ensuing sections offer greater detail.

### 7.2 Overview

Although each area is different there are specific crimes that all respondents are aware of occurring either in their area or in Luton generally, these are:

- Burglaries;
- Knife Crime;
- Fighting/brawls [predominately by young people]; and
- Vandalism of motor vehicles.

The table below presents an overview of crime by area, as depicted by respondents.

**Table 2: Crime by area**

Area	Perceived level of crime	Fear of Crime in area	Feel Safe: Day / Night	Knife Crime	Vandalism / Graffiti	Fighting	Drugs	Burglaries
<b>Saints/ Biscot</b>	Low	High	Day	Not mentioned	No	Some agree	Not mentioned	Yes
<b>Lewsey Farm</b>	High	High	All during the day, only 30-40 year olds at night	Not mentioned	No	Some yes, some no	Not mentioned in the area	Some
<b>Bramingham</b>	Low	Low	Day & Night	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Stopsley</b>	Low	Low	Day & Night	No	Yes but limited	No	No	Yes
<b>Farley Hill</b>	High	High	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Community Cohesion & Fear of Crime

The main perpetrators of the crimes are said to be young people, 'druggies' and travellers.

## 8 Fear of Crime: Experiences of crime by area

### 8.1 Introduction

This section examines the experiences of crime by respondents and people they know in the areas where the focus groups were held. It examines how safe residents feel in their local areas and discusses what concerns they may have.

### 8.2 Saints/Biscot

The respondents feel the area has low levels of crime and they rarely see 'any aggro' or police cars in the area. They find the place to be 'quiet', certainly compared to Bury Park, with nice housing stock. The children tend to play in their gardens or parks and are not roaming the streets. It was felt that everyone is reasonably polite and respectful towards each other.

One respondent feels the area is bad for litter but the other group members maintain that the council operates a good litter pick service. The main issues for this group are congested roads and a lack of parking.

Despite stating that the area has low levels of crime, three people have been victims of crime [all burglary] within the last eight years. The older woman's son [who is in his forties] was attacked by a gang of Asian boys a few weeks ago and had his bike stolen. Further, although they all feel safe during the daytime in the area, no one would leave their doors unlocked or their windows open during the day. At night, no-one would sleep with their windows open because of a fear of burglary.

*'At the moment I now close the windows but before I used to leave it open. I used to leave it open, my dad used to be downstairs and then when he used to go to bed he used to close all the windows and go to sleep. Now my dad's in Bangladesh my mum's like, 'Make sure you close the window.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

One of the telephone depth participants has had her car vandalised, which she has reported to the police but not heard anything since. However, she feels that vandalism occurs all over Luton and it not specific to the area. The other telephone interviewee says that whilst he has not been a victim of crime his neighbour has been burgled and his mother does not feel safe, either during the day or at night and so she stays at home. However, he feels that this is natural because she is old. He does however mention that groups of youths 'hang around' Tomlinson Avenue near the shops and he can understand why other people feel scared because it can be intimidating.

*'Hanging out, outside shops, but once again, you'll hear them murmuring. Me, I'm a young lad, I'm alright. I wouldn't be scared of them. I'm not really bothered, but I can understand perhaps other people being scared of a group of guys in hoods, hanging around, talking between themselves.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

All respondents [apart from the youngest male] said they would only go out at night if it was 'necessary' or if they were with other people. However, they all feel that Bury Park is much worse at night [although OK during the day] because of the 'drunks and druggies'. The young man feels safe because he says his family is known in the area and people will therefore not touch him.

*'I wouldn't say avoid it. I mean if we go out we go like two/three together. I won't just go on my own.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

Interestingly, after the discussion, one of the young Asian women told the moderator that she often goes out at night on her own but would not say so because 'uncle' [the Asian elder] would be upset with her.

All respondents feel safe alone at night in their immediate road and anywhere else in Kingsway if they are with others - except for the older White British woman who does not feel safe.

Respondents did not feel there were issues with vandalism or graffiti in Kingsway.

### 8.3 Lewsey Farm

Spontaneously, respondents think that crime is a big issue, not just in Lewsey, but in Luton generally. They do not feel that Lewsey is any worse than the rest of Luton:

*'There's no more crime than anywhere else.'* [Female, White, Lewsey]

The neighbourhood watch respondent says that it is the *fear* of crime and that it is not that bad in the area or the rest of Luton. The rest of the group sort of agree that they know it is the fear rather than the reality, but it is still acknowledged as a practical worry for them. There are certainly areas that are less safe [according to them], for example, Bury Park.

In Lewsey farm, 'something very big will happen', like a shooting, and then 'it will quieten down for ages'. The big aggravations are said to be caused by people who live in the area, not outsiders.

There is a perceived large problem with drugs in the area, for sale and for use. There is also a big problem with 'post code' gangs amongst boys from LU3 and LU4. However some disagree that there are gangs. The group also mentioned that burglaries occur across the area.

In regards to being victims of crime, the two younger males in the group have been 'jumped' a few times. It is unclear if this is due to them being EMOs or because they are white and not Asian.

The majority of the group feel worried about walking around the estate on their own at night and the older people never go out alone at night. However, they all feel that this is true in most places and for most people:

*'If you're walking home at night on your own, you're going to be paranoid no matter where you are. I think it's just normal. ..' [Male<sup>10</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

*'...I'm with you there...' [Female<sup>11</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

*'...That's life.' [Female<sup>12</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

Respondents that would go out on their own are in their thirties and forties:

*'I'd walk around Lewsey Farm any time of night because a lot of people I just recognise – from picking up my kids at school, walking around, I know people on every other road through having a large family, working in the community – so I wouldn't feel afraid. But somewhere like Bury Park where I'm not known...It's a different community and it's not as diverse – is that the word – as us.' [Female<sup>13</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

The places where respondents feel the safest are at home and on their roads in both the day and night time.

In regards to anti-social behaviour [ASB] there is a big debate about what is defined as ASB. Is it parking without consideration [Mosque]? Is it letting dogs poo in the park? Stabbings? Shootings? Sale of drugs? Kicking a football around? Loud music, especially driving around in cars blaring it from their sound systems?

*'My neighbour playing Shirley Bassey at 6am in the morning?' [Male<sup>14</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

The group seem to think the definition depends on your perspective:

*'If people are scared, or if they feel vulnerable, people would call a group of 10, 15 13 or 14 year olds standing on a corner, they'd say, 'Oh anti-social behaviour'. But all these youngsters are doing is having a chat.' [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]*

*'If my 12 year old goes out on his own, I say to him, 'stick with your friends. Don't go off'. And people are going to call that anti-social behaviour' [Female<sup>15</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

---

<sup>10</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>11</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>12</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>13</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>14</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>15</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

No matter which way you perceive ASB, the group agreed that there is not much in Lewsey Farm and that generally the area is simply run down, most of all in people's perception of the place.

*'Isn't it a shame that we can't ever shout loud enough to say invest before there's a riot. There isn't one coming up, but if you keep on picking on Lewsey Park you're going to create problems.'* [Male<sup>16</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

### 8.4 Bramingham

Overall, the respondents in this group felt that crime is very low in the area, with the exception of burglaries. However, they feel that this is likely to occur being a more affluent area next to a more deprived one like Marsh Farm.

*'This area's targeted by burglars and car thieves because they think they can get a nicer car or whatever.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

One respondent has had their car 'keyed' and another had their van set on fire; however they said that 'the kids did that because the fire brigade said they were going on strike and they wanted to see what would happen'.

One expanding area of crime in the area is said to be dog fights. Many respondents have seen residents goading their dogs at others, particularly in Bramingham woods.

*'If you get caught with a knife or gun you get arrested but if you get caught with a dog, what can they do?'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

*'It's so obvious, I came across a couple and they goad the dogs against each other and then you know that dog's going to take it out on someone else.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

Despite the perception of low crime in the area the younger respondents in the group believe that there is knife crime in the area and cite examples of muggings at the cash point at 'Sainsburys'. They believe that these crimes are 'swept under the carpet' by the authorities and the press in order to have Bramingham retain its 'nice, quiet, safe' reputation.

Generally respondents in this group feel safe in the area during the day and at night, it is in the town centre that they all express concern [please refer to the section on Luton Town Centre]. Other areas of concern for this group were:

- High Town, particularly near the train station;
- Dallow road at night;
- Bury Park; and

---

<sup>16</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled



- Marsh Farm near the flats.

## 8.5 Stopsley

Respondents in Stopsley do not feel that there is any ASB in their area, they also feel that there is extremely low levels of crime. The crimes that do occur are said to be caused by the ‘travellers’ who either reside in the permanent camp or who are visiting those that do. The main issue appears to be burglary/theft – anything from children’s sporting kit to birds of prey to food from local shops.

*‘It’s not to do with people, but travellers. The police don’t do anything about it. Caravans. A couple comes round two weeks later to say to be careful.’ [Male, White, Stopsley]*

*‘My daughter works in Somerfield, and the amount of stuff they steal. They do their weekly shopping but just don’t pay.’ [Female, White, Stopsley]*

*‘Not just birds. They do burglaries as well. They’re all connected by mobiles. They come from all over, drop in and create havoc. A lot of them come into my own shop to sell the birds they’ve nicked.’ [Male, White, Stopsley]*

Aside from theft, travellers are seen to be the cause of ASB such as riding motorbikes across fields and ‘tearing them up’, noise pollution and ‘hanging around’ in groups that are intimidating. However, some respondents feel that this is conducted by young people in general and is not caused only by the travelling community.

Whilst some are resentful of having the camp ‘just because we have got the fields and open space’, others are now resigned to the situation:

*‘It’s got to the stage where, if you’ve had it so long, it’s like the norm. It’s a bad attitude to take, but because it’s happened so often, no one’s done anything about it. As a community there’s nothing you can do.’ [Male, White, Stopsley]*

Generally respondents feel safe during the day and at night anywhere in Stopsley. They are all mindful of travellers and theft but there are few concerns about other crime. There is one exception and that is one or two areas of the village where respondents fear they will be attacked or mugged. One respondent has been attacked and now takes a taxi from his home to the sports centre so he can avoid walking past those areas. The areas are: St. Thomas’ alleyway, Braders Hill and People’s Park.

*‘People’s Park, a lot of people say it’s quite bad. There are drug addicts around there during the day. A lot of people I know have been attacked and mugged during the day.’ [Male, White, Stopsley]*

Alleyways were generally seen to be areas to avoid, particularly at night. However, a few respondents noted that since ‘right-aways’ had been put in place round alleys near residential properties, they felt considerably safer.

*'We used to have trouble with the kids. It's a shared road. People have got garages down there. We used to have trouble with the kids hanging about in the alleys, because it's dark. A lot of graffiti, burglaries. The council have actually put these gates on and it's great. I feel really secure.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

## 8.6 Farley Hill

This area was deemed to be the most susceptible to crime, even by the views of the respondents in the group. Fighting, 'druggies', attacks and ASB were all said to occur regularly. Although curfews of 9pm were said to be in place and 'the best thing they ever did', respondents are still wary of the groups [or as they see them 'gangs'] of young people in the area.

Many have witnessed or been victims of crime and drugs are prevalent in the area with all respondents having seen 'the cars with tinted windows' of the dealers that frequent the area.

Aside from drugs, a key issue in the area is gangs. Respondents said that these are primarily formed on ethnicity and cause a great deal of friction in the area. However, if the members of the gangs were to go into the town centre, these frictions are ignored as 'postcodes' become more important than 'local, ethnic grievances'. In effect, the group agreed that a young person could be hitting someone of a different ethnicity in Farley Hill on a Friday evening but standing by his side to hit someone from Bury Park in the town centre on a Saturday evening. The key focus of fights was seen to be 'reputation' [please refer to the section on 'who is responsible and why' for further information].

A key area for concern is the 'sheds' as they are known. They are the main place for people to hang out and smoke, drink, fight and have sex. This is because the area is enclosed and 'out of sight' of many and predominately in the dark. However, it is also next to the entrance of many flats and people have been attacked walking past them. One respondent detailed an attack on her neighbour [also present at the group] as she said her neighbour was too frightened to explain what occurred herself<sup>17</sup>:

*'She walked past the sheds to her flat and saw two men smoking in there. They followed her to her flat and posed as policemen. When she opened the door they pulled her out and dragged her down the stairs and beat her up.'* [Female, White, Farley Hill retelling an attack made on her Asian, Muslim neighbour]

This incident was not seen to be 'out of the ordinary'. The sheds, coupled with the lack of lightning outside the front doors on the flats were key concerns for residents.

The 'Parrot Pub' is the main pub in the area, situated on the edge of the shopping court. It is renowned for being racist and no Black or Asian residents can go in without

---

<sup>17</sup> Please note that this quotation is paraphrased from the moderator's notes due to there being no transcription from this group.

'repercussions'. However, some White British residents who are relatively new to the area say that they also feel that 'trouble' would occur if they were to go into the pub.

The respondents feel that the authorities are fully aware of the issues they are experiencing and mention that curfews and ASBO's are in place in the area. They also speak of people being evicted; drink and drugs being confiscated; CCTV being installed and more police officers being seen. Unfortunately, the eviction process is long and the ASBO's and curfews do not appear to be having the desired effect. Young people are seen to be 'flouting' the ASBO's and there is no-one to police them, despite the main police station being 5 minutes away.

Specific areas for concern are 'Tinsley' and the parks, which are renowned for underage drinking, fights and drug use.



## 9 Fear of Crime: Worst areas of Luton

### 9.1 Introduction

Discussions of fear crime by location are always likely to generate responses as to 'the worst areas' or places where residents feel the most fearful. This section briefly reviews where those areas are and perhaps why residents feel that way about those locations. Please note that whilst quotations have been provided to illustrate points about specific areas in this section, respondents across all focus groups listed concerns and fears about these areas.

### 9.2 Overview

The worst areas of Luton for crime are repeatedly listed as Marsh Farm [particularly the flats]; Hockwell Ring; Lewsey Farm and Farley Hill. Respondents would not go to these places even during the day time due to 'druggies' and gangs. The young Asian man from Saints/Biscot commented that if he was to go to these areas people would ask him what he was doing there:

*'I went the other day to Marsh Farm and there was a gang there that said, 'What are you doing in my area?'" [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]*

### 9.3 Marsh Farm

Marsh Farm has a reputation for riots and burning cars which was publicised through the media a few years ago. Respondents also feel it is a central point for many crimes:

*'All sorts of things happen – drugs, knifings, cars.' [Male, Black, Lewsey Farm]*

Others speak of groups of young people drinking and smoking marijuana and rubbish left around. One area that was viewed to be particularly bad was Arrow Close. A respondent spoke of many teenagers hanging around that area being intimidating and that they often break the key fob entry systems to get into the area. Further areas for concern are the garage blocks because:

*'They become a wall and they hang out behind it...it's a place to drink, smoke and be noisy...because it is secluded...it is not an open area, it is 'closed'.'*  
*[Female, Asian, Bramingham]*

However, the bad reputation of the area is not necessarily based on personal experience; many based their opinions on 'word of mouth' or the media:

*'I used to think Marsh Farm was horrible but that's because I listened to what people said and I never really knew it.'* *[Female, White, Bramingham]*

Some believe that the issues are caused in this area because of the high volume of people residing there.

When asked what they fear might happen if they were to go to Marsh farm, many believe they will be attacked or mugged.

### 9.4 Hockwell Ring

The Lewsey Farm respondents explain that the concern in Hockwell Ring is the 'massive group of kids making aggro' that people are very scared of. The group is a mixed ethnicity group but 50-60 of them.

### 9.5 Bury Park

The back roads in Bury Park are mentioned as not being safe. Further, it is perceived to be a renowned area for prostitution:

*'I went to walk up the road to the taxi rank and by the time I got there I'd been asked about five times if I wanted some business. That's the reason I would feel unsafe in Bury Park, because of the prostitution.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]



## 10 Fear of Crime: Luton Town Centre

### 10.1 Introduction

Although the majority of the questions were focused on local areas, the research was also interested in understanding how fearful or otherwise residents were of the town centre. This section explores residents' feelings of safety and crime levels in the town centre.

### 10.2 When do you feel safe?

The majority of respondents felt that it was OK to visit the town centre during the day but would not want to go there at night.

*'I used to go down to the town every Friday and Saturday and I used to feel safe. I went down there to pick my niece up the other week and I had all the doors locked.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

For the respondents in Saints/Biscot group, they questioned why Asian people would want to go there as they 'don't drink or go to discos'.

*'Not really because as an Asian community we don't really go out clubbing or things like that, unless it's like somebody's birthday or a wedding. Some kind of celebration, that's the only time we would go out. We wouldn't go to the pubs or clubs.'* [Female, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

However the young Asian man says that his friends go to Namco and Galaxy but frequently get into fights with other Asian teenagers. He explains that as soon as a fight starts people ring on their mobiles and other people come down and it soon becomes a large brawl.

*'People just make one phone call and so many people come. From one phone call.'* [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]

The centre is felt to be particularly bad at weekends and on student nights because of drunkenness. However, some feel that this is true of any town centre due to British culture.

*'It's our culture, at the end of the day, isn't it? It's Brits and their drink.'* [Male, White, Bramingham]

### 10.3 Key issues that cause concern

There are issues which surround those that are unable to handle their drink and cause disruption as a result of it. Many respondents are able to cite incidents of alcohol fuelled disputes and anti-social behaviour such as noise, litter, vomiting etc that is caused by alcohol. However, the greater worries about the night time culture are



crimes committed as a result of alcohol or as a perceived consequence of a night time economy [e.g. unlicensed?<sup>18</sup> Taxi drivers taking advantage of drunken women]:

1. **Large groups of people:** Young people congregating make others feel fearful of ‘accidentally’ doing something that will entice a fight:

*‘...People now travel in packs and if you upset one person in the pack you’re going to end up in hospital.’ [Male<sup>19</sup>, Lewsey Farm]*

2. **Date rapes:** One respondent spoke of his daughter’s drink being ‘spiked’ in the town centre:

*‘She went to a perfectly respectable pub. You often don’t encounter things kids do because you don’t go to the same places as them.’ [Male, White, Bramingham]*

3. **Disreputable taxi drivers:** Respondents mentioned that women in particular were most likely to feel safer if they arranged to get to and from the centre by taxi. However, one respondent mentioned how her friend got a taxi home last week and the driver took her down an alley and tried to ‘touch her up’. She had not been drinking and so she was alert enough to fend him off. The respondent was concerned about how that might have been different had her friend been drinking and this created greater concern amongst the rest of the women in the group:

*‘I’d get a taxi into town on my own or going home from town. Just common sense, you make sure it’s from a taxi firm. On a night out I wouldn’t walk around town on my own.’ [Female 1, White, Bramingham]*

*‘I may be a bit different because I was attacked when I was younger. I would rather be indoors. It terrifies me when you say your friend got attacked in a taxi because you used to think if you got into a taxi you were safe and going to get home.’ [Female 2, White, Bramingham]*

4. **Drug users:** Respondents from the Bramingham focus group were particularly fearful of this:

*‘If someone’s drunk you can handle them, but if they’re on drugs you haven’t got a clue what they’ll do or what they’re carrying.’ [Male, White, Bramingham]*

*‘I feel more safe with a tramp than someone who’s out of their head on drugs.’ [Male, White, Bramingham]*

---

<sup>18</sup> It was not possible to identify during the group whether the taxi was licensed or not.

<sup>19</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

## 10.4 Areas for concern

The centre is general is said to be dangerous due to the aforementioned issues. However, there are two generic areas that cause residents concern within the town centre, these are:

1. **The side streets in the centre**, which are renowned for stabbings:

*'Most feel safe in the town in the day time. Most unsafe area of the town is off the side streets when people have been drinking because that's where most of the stabbings happen. You've just got to be careful.'* [Female, Black, Lewsey Farm]

And:

2. **The underpasses**, particularly at night. Respondents would prefer to try and cross over the busy roads instead.

*'You've just got to be careful. I used to live in the area where you had to go under the underground to get to the other side of the flats. It didn't matter what time. If it was after 12:00am, I actually used to run in the middle of the road instead of going under the underground. I would actually run and dodge the cars to actually get over, because I wouldn't go back under the underground. It's just safer.'* [Female<sup>20</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

---

<sup>20</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

## 11 Fear of Crime: Who is responsible and why?

### 11.1 Introduction

All respondents were asked who they felt was responsible for crime and anti social behaviour. The perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour are believed to be mainly young people and 'travellers'. However, as to who is responsible, it is interesting to note that many find the authorities and the parents to be the guilty parties. As such, this section explores why young people are committing crime and being anti-social and who is ultimately responsible for that occurring.

### 11.2 Who commits the crime/ASB and why?

The perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour across Luton are said to be predominately young people up to the age of early twenties; mainly boys but a few girls; Asians and Whites. However in Stopsley, the 'travellers' are perceived to be the main cause of crime and ASB.

#### 11.2.1 Young people: disaffected, bored, un-disciplined

The majority of respondents feel that social deprivation, boredom and lack of aspiration are the key drivers to young people committing crime and ASB. The area where these issues were the most pronounced was Farley Hill and they were very clear as to why young people are behaving this way.

The group feel the issues stem from the high volume of teenagers in the area, many of whom are expelled from education, out of work and bored. As a result they have turned to drugs and crime. Most feel that the parents of many of the teenagers are 'on benefits' and do not have aspirations and so are not teaching their children to be anything more than they are.

There is a clear feeling that lack of anything to do and a deprived area is exacerbating the issues. The young people in the group mention that the only sporting facility is the basketball court attached to the community centre. However, it is also a car park for the centre too and the young people are often told that the parking takes preference over the use of the area as a court. There is a museum at Stockwood Park but this is not of interest to the young people on the estate. When asked if transport to the town centre [where more activities are available] was an issue, the group disagreed stating that the bus services were good but that the town centre was not a safe place to be and this deterred them from going.

The combination of these issues has led to groups of young people collating together and 'forming gangs'. These groups are said to be influenced by music, TV, film and computer games which illustrate and define the 'gangster' lifestyle. Anything that is viewed to be 'disrespectful' to a member of a group will lead to altercations and this could be something as small as 'looking at someone the wrong way', 'walking into another person's 'territory' or 'saying something inappropriate in earshot of a group member'.

Respondents in Stopsley feel that young people 'expect something for nothing' and that society has allowed them to feel that this is the way it should be. They feel that activities and jobs are available but that people feel the opportunities that are available are 'beneath them'. For example, a young male in the group explains how he trains new staff at Sainsburys [he is 19] but that many 'drop out' after training:

*'We had ten in training. Five were on the dole before. Within twelve days of working, they didn't do any. They wanted a proper job in their eyes, not working on the till in Sainsbury's.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

### 11.2.2 Travellers and no repercussions

For the respondents in Stopsley, the travellers are undoubtedly seen as the main perpetrators of crime in the area, mostly due to theft and burglary. Some respondents believe this is because their culture does not contain the 'same moral compass' as UK residents, but the majority believe it is because there are no consequences to their behaviour.

A respondent in Stopsley details how a friend had caught a group of people [believed to be travellers] stealing his greenhouse so he phoned the police, they said they were not able to come out so he got in his car, pursued them and informed the police that if they did not do something about it, he would. When the police arrived they would not prosecute them because they said it was 'his word against yours' and so they let the thief keep it:

*'The police said it's a waste of time to prosecute because the travellers wouldn't turn up at court. What sort of message does it send? They were back two days later and took the garage door.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

## 11.3 Who is ultimately responsible?

Although young people and travellers are seen to be the perpetrators of crime and ASB, respondents feel that the responsibility of this lies elsewhere. The figure below illustrates who respondents felt were responsible and why.

As the figure below shows, there are clearly issues surrounding lack of discipline and respect, facilities to detain and suitably punish acts of ASB and crime and facilities to prevent them occurring in the first place. Perhaps the most aggrieved issue by respondents, aside from lack of parental control, is the lack of suitable punishment. Respondents clearly explain the issue surrounding burglary in Bramingham:

*'You can burgle someone's house and get caught three times before you get a custodial sentence that's completely wrong.'* [Male 1, White, Bramingham]

*'The other problem is human rights. All these people are obsessed by human rights. You take your rights away when you go into someone else's house.'* [Male 2, White, Bramingham]

Figure 1: Responsible for crime and ASB

### Parents

- They do not teach respect
- They 'do not know where their children are'
- They do not impose discipline

### Police

- For focusing on traffic violations rather than ASB
- Not having suitable powers to rectify the issues

### The judicial system

- For letting the police down when perpetrators are caught: there are no 'real' consequences for the crimes/actions committed
- Provision of preferential lifestyles in prison: *'My boyfriend went to prison and they had PlayStations and they love it. You get three square meals, television, radio. I think I'd like all that!'* [Female, White, Birmingham]

### Society in General

- Having allowed the situation to get this far
- 'People know their 'rights' more than their wrongs'

### Councils

- Not providing suitable activities/entertainment to keep young people from 'being bored'

### Media

- 'Get rich quick'; 'no work/effort but be rewarded' schemes and shows: Britains got Talent, X Factor, the Lottery
- Music - particularly rap music and the gangster lifestyle that originates from the USA
- Computer games - they have age restrictions but they are not enforced

Residents are aggrieved at a system that appears to not punish crime but the victim:

*'One of my son's friend's motorbike was stolen by traveller kids. The police recovered it and the mother had to spend £280 to get it back.'* [Female, White, Stopsley]

*'I knew someone that had their bike stolen. They'd have to pay the council to get the bike back, so it was better to almost get a new bike.'* [Male, White, Stopsley]

Ultimately, respondents state that they fear that the police are now too afraid to action anything or they believe that the police perceive it to be a 'waste of resources' to catch criminals and prosecute because they know the judicial system will not back them up.

## 12 Fear of Crime: What would make residents feel safer

### 12.1 Introduction

This section focuses on what residents feel would allow them to feel safer, both in their local areas and in Luton as a whole.

### 12.2 Making Luton safer

In order for residents to feel safer in Luton and their local areas the following would need to occur.

7. **More visible police/PCSO's.** A large proportion of respondents felt that more visible police presence would ultimately make them feel safe. However, a considerable number felt that this would not help [particularly those in areas with high crime levels]. The older respondents tended to feel they would feel safer but younger respondents said they knew that PCSO's had no authority to arrest or make a difference long term and that those causing the issues knew this too. Younger respondents were also more likely to feel that the police were fearful of criminals and drug addicts [specifically those they knew would be carrying weapons] and so hesitant to act. They also believe that if police do arrest someone that the courts will not convict or not administer a suitable punishment [please refer to earlier comments].

*'A more active police presence – but everyone is going to say that... PCSOs do seem to me to be quite young and unworldly' [Male, White, Lewsey Farm]*

8. **Better use of police time:** Some respondents suggested that rather than focusing on traffic violations or walking the beat, officers should go 'door to door' asking residents if they have any concerns or worries. They felt this would allow police to integrate better into neighbourhoods, build trust and allow the authorities to access more 'specific' issues.

*'Perhaps you should spend more time patrolling the streets and making people feel a bit more comfortable, and knocking on their doors and asking if they've got a problem. Did you know, for example, that there's been a burglary in someone's house? Perhaps you should knock around the doors and ask them if they've ever seen any other problems. Integrate with them, go and talk to them. Make them feel more comfortable. Get the police to knock on the door and say, 'Look, there's no problem here, we just want to know if you guys feel safe.'" [Male, Asian, Saints/Biscot]*

9. **Greater use of CCTV:** This was seen to be an extremely effective measure by many as it would at least allow the justice system to utilise 'evidence' to lead to convictions. However, those in the high crime areas stressed the importance of 'protecting' the cameras to ensure that they could not be broken and rendered useless. Key areas for CCTV were said to be: cash points; alleyways and enclosed areas such as garages/underpasses etc

**[Re: the need for CCTV at cash points]** *'That is a nerve-wracking place to go sometimes. There's always someone hovering behind you.'* [Female, White, Bramingham]

10. **Improved lighting:** Similarly to CCTV, this would make many people feel safer if utilised effectively: underpasses; train stations; alleyways etc. Bramingham residents would like lights provided on key 'dog walk' paths and 'walkthroughs between Bramingham and Marsh Farm' in Bramingham Woods.

11. **Regenerating areas:** Many respondents feel that making areas clean, tidy and respectable would ensure that residents would feel proud and keep the area that way too, in turn this would lessen ASB and crime and make the area safer:

*'You know what would make me feel safer, just having more money spent on the community. It's like having a new pair of shoes – you tend to look after them. So if money was injected into the community... the parks or community centre with things to do for youngsters, because one you bring them into the community more, they'd stop being rude...'* [Female<sup>21</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

12. **Improving community cohesion:** Although the research was in two separate parts, the vast majority of respondents concurred with the brief that community cohesion and fear of crime are closely linked. Many believe improving cohesion will greatly reduce crime and should abolish ASB.

*'...The more people you know, the less likely that you'll do something to them and they'll do something to you because everyone knows each other...'* [Male<sup>22</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

*'...That's what it used to be like in the olden days...'* [Female, White, Lewsey Farm]

*'...If everyone knew each other and my kids out and doing something he shouldn't be doing, I want someone to tell him off.'* [Male<sup>23</sup>, Lewsey Farm]

---

<sup>21</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>22</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

<sup>23</sup> Ethnicity is not recalled

### 12.3 Preventing Crime and ASB

Although not specifically 'measures to feel safer', respondents had a number of suggestions to prevent crime and ASB occurring in the first place, these included:

4. **Work schemes:** Instigate work schemes that help people find and stay in work. A key factor of such schemes was managing expectations and aspirations of people;
5. **Provision of affordable activities young people enjoy not those 'you think we enjoy':** Younger respondents felt that authorities and the voluntary sector set up activities that were not of interest to them or not affordable. They wanted activities to be put in place that they enjoyed and could finance themselves. Older respondents [30s-40s] and those that had previously run such activities, felt it was key to ask the young people what they enjoyed and allow them to take part in organising and running it. For example, conducting music concerts, rap evenings, sports tournaments etc;
6. **Ensure funding is equally distributed:** Not only should funds be provided to better the most deprived areas, but residents in other areas were aggrieved that 'because they do not cause trouble, they are ignored'. It was felt that improvements should be made to all areas and not focused on any one specific location as this caused an 'us and them' mentality that created more friction [respondents referred to 'postcode gangs'];

### 12.4 Dealing with Crime & ASB

If crimes or anti-social behaviour occur despite preventative measures, then respondents felt that authorities should review the judicial system – the way in which punishment is administered, the decision on what punishment to give and the severity of the punishment given. It was agreed that the punishment should be sufficiently severe to deter an individual from repeating the offense.

Respondents generally felt that community service was not a severe enough punishment but if it was to be administered, some felt that more 'shame' should be given to the offender. As such, boiler suits should be worn and their crimes and punishment should be advertised to the community.



## 13 Appendix 1: Topic guide

### 13.1 Introduction

- Moderator name, independent researcher from BMG
- Project commissioned by Luton Borough Council, to explore views on two separate issues: the first issue being community cohesion, which we will come onto shortly, and the second fear of crime – advise that the two issues are not intended to be linked
- We will spend about half of the meeting on each part of this – about 40-45 minutes on each – so we'll have to be careful on timing!
- Reassure re confidentiality; seek permission to record
- Explain ground-rules, e.g. please only one person speaking at a time. Also note some of the issues which we discuss will be sensitive: please be sensitive to the views of other people when they are expressing themselves, and also be aware that some people may say things that they don't like or agree with.
- Respondents to introduce themselves (first names, where they live, how long they have lived in Luton)

### 13.2 Community Cohesion 40 minutes

#### 13.2.1 Cohesion Section 1 (10 minutes)

- What does the term 'community cohesion' mean to you?
- Definition of community cohesion (poster on flip chart):  

*"Community cohesion is a measure of the ability of communities in society to function and grow in harmony with each other rather than in conflict. Communities may define themselves by neighbourhood, ethnic origin, age group, faith and other characteristics or interests. Cohesion will grow and develop when everyone in society recognises the right to equality and has respect for diversity (the differences between people). In Luton this is not just about ethnicity or religion, though this is part of the town's diversity. It's also, just as importantly, about differences which are to do with issues such as age (both for older and younger people), gender, sexual preference, which part of town you live in, what sort of opportunities you have, how much money you have, whether or not you have a disability, and so on. All of these issues have the potential to cause tension and division, but those differences can also be seen as positive, and something which makes the town a stronger and better place to live in."*
- What do you think are the benefits of community cohesion?
  - Would you personally benefit? How?
  - Would anyone lose out? Who/how?
- Do you think community cohesion is achievable? Why/why not? Which bits?

### 13.2.2 Cohesion Section 2 (10 minutes)

- What are the key issues with regards to community cohesion in your local area?
  - Moderator to record all the issues onto a flipchart. For each issue probe:
    - Is this issue more pronounced in your local area, as opposed to across Luton in general? If so, why?
    - Does this issue impact upon you personally? If so, how? (Moderator to probe to try to understand whether anyone feels personally that some aspect of their own identity, i.e. age, gender etc., makes them feel that they are part of a separate community)
    - What has caused this issue?
  - If required, prompt around:
    - Differences in prospects and opportunities;
    - Differences in wages between those that work in Luton, and those that live in the town (those that live in Luton earn much less than those that work there)
    - Younger or older people;
    - Gender;
    - Sexual orientation, transgender;
    - Disability;
    - Ethnicity, religion.

### 13.2.3 Cohesion Section 3 (5 minutes)

- Do these issues affect the way you feel about your neighbourhood? How do you think it might affect the image your neighbourhood amongst people living in other parts of Luton?
- Thinking specifically about your neighbourhood, which issues should be the priorities? Why?

### 13.2.4 Cohesion Section 4 (15 minutes)

- Thinking about community cohesion, describe how you would like your local area to change over the next ten years.
- Prompt if necessary around:
  - What specific issues would need to change? How? How would we know things had changed?
    - (If not already covered) prompt views on the themes emerging from the previous consultation:

- The role of the English language: is there a need to understand more about the barriers to learning English? Value of the council providing translations?
- The importance of changing media coverage/perceptions of Luton
- The idea that regenerating Luton for the benefit of all would have a positive effect on cohesion
- Ethnic and religious diversity in schools
- 
- How would you like people from other areas of Luton to perceive your area?
- How would you like your neighbourhood to look/feel?
- What difference might it make for you / your children or grandchildren?
- What are the particularly difficult parts? What might be easier or quicker to do?
- What happens in your local area which brings people together, or which could bring people together?

### 13.3 Fear of Crime 40 minutes

#### 13.3.1 Fear of Crime Section 1 (5 minutes)

- Thinking more generally about your local area (i.e. moving away from the specific focus upon community cohesion), what do you like about the area that you live in?
- What do you dislike about your local area?
- Has anyone been a victim of crime themselves, or had a family member who has been a victim of crime?

#### 13.3.2 Fear of Crime Section 2 (20 minutes)

- How safe do you feel in your area by day/night?
- Would you say that you have a fear of crime in your local area - during the day or at night?
  - If yes, why would you say that you have a fear of crime?
- Do you have a fear of crime when you are out and about in other areas of the town?
- Are there areas of the town centre that you avoid because of fear of crime or anti social behaviour?
  - At night, during the day, or both? Particular days of the week? Specific events or premises?
  - Why? What do you fear will happen? What has happened?
- And where do you feel most safe?

**13.3.3 Fear of Crime Section 3 (10 minutes)**

- (If not already covered) Do you feel that there is an issue with anti social behaviour in your area?
  - If yes, what sort of anti social behaviour?
  - What is the impact upon your area?
  - What is being done about this anti social behaviour?
  - What else do you feel needs to be done?
- Prompt if required: people being rowdy in public places, vandalism, graffiti, litter
- Who do you feel is responsible for crime and anti social behaviour?
  - Why/what drives those people/groups to behave anti-socially?

**13.3.4 Fear of Crime Section 4 (5 minutes)**

- What would make you feel safer in Luton – in the town centre, in the area where you live?



## Because people matter, we listen.

With some 20 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

Our business is about understanding people; because they matter. Finding out what they really need; from the type of information they use to the type of services they require. In short, finding out about the kind of world people want to live in tomorrow.

BMG serves both the social public sector and the commercial private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of technologies such as portals and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

