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LESSONS FROM THE UK'S POLICY MIX ON SOCIAL COHESION



Rosie Collins
Charlotte Knights

*He aha te kai a
te rangatira?
He kōrero, he kōrero,
he kōrero.*

What is the food
of the leader?
It is knowledge,
it is communication.

Social cohesion is a *generative or animating* quality, which is the outcome of actions taken together in a shared place – a city, community, or country.

We think of social cohesion as the foundation on which a community or nation can navigate complexity and challenges. When social cohesion is present, it supports diverse forms of relationships and enables communities to navigate their ambitions and tensions without requiring uniformity of views. Without it, communities lose this ability to negotiate the risks of political action or to coordinate strategically together.¹

In practice, social cohesion takes both soul and a ‘city’. The structural and material conditions for social cohesion matter immensely. An extractive economic system which concentrates wealth and power is at odds with social cohesion. In practice, the geography of a physical place needs to provide broad access to the means to dwell, trade, recreate, and sustain social relationships, as the basis from which people imagine, bid for, and act on competing visions of the future.

A systematic review of strategies to improve social cohesion has found that most approaches to improving social cohesion tend to prioritise the ‘what’ but overlook the ‘how’ – the soul not just the place. While most strategies recognise the need to raise awareness of harmful power dynamics, counter negative stereotypes, and offer opportunities to sustain contact across diverse groups of people, researchers found many overlook the vital role of leadership and teaching as animating forces behind these relationships.²

Both physical and animating factors are necessary but not sufficient to change social norms towards ethical and economic fairness and vitality. The basis of our research programme on social cohesion is to identify strategies which incorporate the value of both factors through practice.

¹ Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2021. “Culture, Institutions and Social Equilibria: A Framework.” NBER Working Paper No. 28832. National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w28832>.

² Orazani, S. N., Reynolds, K. J., & Osborne, H. (2023). “What works and why in interventions to strengthen social cohesion: A systematic review.” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 53(10), 938–995. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12990>.

This year, we analysed the UK policy community's social cohesion action space, looking at what the UK has pursued to improve its social cohesion.

The United Kingdom shares a colonial history with Aotearoa, has long experience of immigration and ethnic diversity, and has articulated strong ambitions to improve social cohesion.

We used this common interest as the basis for reflecting on the UK's community's action space related to social cohesion as it affects their community groups and government organisations. The UK has produced extensive strategies, programmes, evaluations, and white papers and spent significant resources investigating solutions, making it a meaningful repository for learning from gaps between their stated intentions and lived outcomes.

Table 1 summarises the main styles of action we identified as present in the UK's social cohesion landscape. An extended version with descriptions of the UK's major activities is included in Appendix 1.



Table 1 *Styles of action in the UK's social cohesion system*

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
SOFT POWER – change based in intergenerational and interpersonal relationships <i>influencing, engaging, learning</i>	Cultural and narrative influence	<i>Strengthening family life (Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households); This Place Matters; Jo Cox Foundation – Moment to Movement</i>	Shapes public narratives and shared meaning about belonging and identity, drawing people toward inclusive norms.
	Community and public diplomacy	<i>Integrated Communities Strategy - Action Plan; All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration; Ministerial Roundtables (antisemitism/Islamophobia); Vulnerable Persons/Children's Resettlement Schemes</i>	Builds cross-group trust through structured cooperation, listening, and mutual recognition, domestic analogues to public diplomacy.
	Norms, rights, and inclusion	<i>Hate Crime Action Plan; Race at Work Charter; Lord Walney's Review on Protest Rights; Revised National Planning Policy</i>	Reinforces shared values through legal protections and policy standards, projecting inclusive behaviour as the expected norm.
	Knowledge and evidence infrastructure	<i>ONS Subnational Data Strategy (Levelling Up); Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT); NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard; Electoral Commission Diversity Strategy; Dame Louise Casey's Review</i>	Generates credible evidence and frameworks that shape perceptions and inform debate.
MEDIATING POWER – change based in navigating ambitions and tensions of political life <i>designing, brokering, repairing</i>	Deliberation and collective judgement	<i>Climate Assembly UK; Future of England Survey (Cardiff University / CIP); Education Act 2002 (framework for civic formation and participation)</i>	Creates structured spaces for people to reason together across difference.
	Translation and boundary-spanning relational work	<i>British Future; Belong; Together; After the Riots; University of Kent (AFT UK Evaluation); Integrated Communities Action Plan (2019); Integration Area Programme (2018); Let's Talk Loneliness Campaign</i>	Helps groups, institutions, and communities interpret one another's experiences.
	Conflict resolution and repair	<i>Remedi – a Sheffield-based restorative justice charity delivering restorative mentoring, victim services, and hate-crime victim support in partnership with Youth Offending Teams and Police and Crime Commissioners.</i>	Navigates harm and breakdown without resorting to punishment or denial.
	Institutional brokerage and coordination	<i>Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Devolution Deal; Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper (2022); Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021); The Khan Review (2024)</i>	Coordinates power between central government, local authorities, and communities.
	Skill-based cross-cultural capabilities	<i>RCT: Community English Lessons; Youth United Foundation; Intergenerational Music Making (IMM)</i>	Builds shared practice across age, culture, and language differences.

Table 1 continued

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
PROVISIONING POWER – change based in resourcing <i>resourcing, enabling</i>	Place and asset provisioning	<i>Community Ownership Fund (COF); Community Renewal Fund (bridge to UK Shared Prosperity Fund)</i>	Provides shared physical capacity, like community spaces, facilities, locally held assets.
	Targeted integration and language capacity	<i>Integrated Communities English Language Programme; Community English Language Programme; Integrated Communities Innovation Fund; Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper</i>	Funds practical capability to participate, especially language access, via programme grants.
	Safety, safeguarding, and risk-management regimes	<i>Prevent programme; Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT); Police Race Action Plan; STAND UPI!/Streetwise</i>	Aims to provide protection and risk reduction, but often operates through adversarial security logics that tend to undermine trust.
	Data, standards, and coordination infrastructure	<i>Local Digital Declarations; MHCLG inclusive tech / council commitments; Facing All the Facts; Behavioural Insights Team projects</i>	Provides common tools and interoperability for local coordination, plus implementation capacity (templates, trials, experimental delivery).
SANCTIONING POWER – change based in principles and limits <i>regulating, enforcing</i>	Legal protections, statutory authority, and intervention powers	<i>Equality Act 2010; Localism Act 2011</i>	Statutory rights and anti-discrimination law setting minimum standards of inclusion and equality.
	Regulatory oversight and inspection	<i>Ofsted inspection powers (including downgrading schools promoting separatism or failing to promote inclusiveness)</i>	Monitoring and enforcement that incentivise compliance through assessment, penalties, or withdrawal of approval.
	Safeguarding and risk-management regimes	<i>Prevent Duty guidance (England & Wales, 2023); New Victims' Strategy</i>	Systems to identify, prevent, and respond to harm or perceived threat.
	Professional standards and training requirements	<i>Local police training requirements</i>	Mandated practices that regulate conduct within public institutions.
STRUCTURAL & DEVOLUTIONARY POWER – change based on redistributing authority and resources <i>economic outcomes and fairness</i>	Foundational spatial and economic provisioning	<i>Housing affordability and tenure security; density and land-use regulation; anti-displacement and regeneration controls; street design and everyday public infrastructure</i>	Reshapes the distribution of resources, stability, and decision-making authority, setting the limits of what other styles of action can achieve.
	Wealth distribution and economic concentration	<i>Progressive taxation and local revenue tools; land value capture and property taxation; limits on extractive rents and monopolistic structures; fiscal devolution to local government</i>	

Three dynamics stand out as consequential for social cohesion outcomes.

While there is a broad range of actions, there are three key issues that stand out:

- a reliance on output-based evaluation
- heavy use of competitive funding rather than long-horizon strategic allocation
- an absence of coordinated assessments which could help decision-makers navigate the stark tensions between its stated social goals, unequal economic policies, and exclusionary and racialised security rhetoric.

Together, these create short-termism by overlooking the function of durative relationships, which are the foundation of positive social cohesion. We noticed that UK government actors, incentivised to “sound official”, often struggle to value the meaning-making function of memory and hope in shared life, what Walter Benjamin called the two qualities of an epic.³

Without this mythic register - storytelling - that meaningfully appreciates differences in lived experiences and social knowledge types across groups, it is difficult for the UK’s policy actors to confront gaps between their technocratic rhetoric on social cohesion and the relational styles of action which can build or inadvertently erode cohesion. Without being able to situate their own power or styles of action in relationships, the UK policy space also suffers from a lack of continuity or durable commitments to improve social cohesion. The end result is that, while the efforts are well intentioned, they are not humanised and localised.

1 The impact of short-termism and policy churn is being overlooked by policy advocates.

Evaluation regimes in the UK’s social cohesion policy mix overwhelmingly privilege outputs and activities that are easily counted and audited at a point-in-time, rather than outcomes experienced over time.

For instance, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG UK) Annual Report (2023-24) tracks inputs and outputs such as funds allocated, homes built, and projects delivered, but provides limited analysis of how these relate to stated social missions, including reductions in loneliness, prejudice, or community violence.

In practice, counting what is legible pulls attention toward intermittent actions that centralise control among key policy actors, and away from the devolution mechanisms and slower feedback loops that support mutuality, trust, and the stamina to hold conflict and engage uncertainty. Because investment plans are often required to align with national frameworks and ministerial priorities rather than support local devolution processes, a selection of projects that are easily deliverable in short timeframes tend to be in focus. Where multi-year evaluation does occur (such as that led by the Anne Frank Trust UK), it tends to appear as the exception rather than the norm.

Box 1 contains a worked example of the Levelling Up Agenda Theory of Change for its *Pride in Place* objective, where relationships are almost entirely absent from the expected evaluation framework.

While some capability funding does exist to help community groups navigate government funding processes on an ongoing basis, this is not widespread. Near Neighbours is one example of this, working as an NGO that supports social integration in areas affected by community violence, combining grants with continued skills-based support so local groups can plan over longer horizons. Such models remain the exception.⁴

³ Benjamin, Walter. 1969. “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov.”

⁴ The organisation provides small local grants and tool kits to support local project leaders in securing their own funding and to lead workshops (e.g., for instance on evaluation methods, group facilitation, smart target creation, etc).

2 Resources tend to be allocated through immediate competitive mechanisms rather than sequenced across a coherent and durative picture of need.

Across the UK funding landscape, we found little evidence that funders coordinate or sequence investment over time. Competitive bidding is a dominant mechanism, which privileges the strongest application at a single moment rather than the strongest strategic case across years. A 2023 Local Government Association review of over 400 grants found nearly one-third were allocated through competitive processes, advantaging larger organisations with dedicated bid-writing teams and generating administrative burden that displaced local learning and delivery.⁵

This design has two predictable consequences. First, money moves slowly and unpredictably: reviews of Levelling Up, the Community Ownership Fund, and successive migrant integration programmes have all identified slow spending and delayed funding announcements. Second, one-off capital awards arrive without the operational funding needed to sustain what they create. The Community Ownership Fund, for instance, offers up to £250,000 to “rescue” non-viable community assets like pubs, village halls, sports facilities, libraries and community centres, on condition communities take on the remaining debt, but little accompanying funding exists to keep those places running once acquired.⁶

Although local authorities no longer bid for UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations as they did under earlier programmes, local competition remains the default mechanism for selecting grant recipients *within* places, reproducing the same dynamics at a smaller scale, where better-resourced local organisations are still best placed to navigate application and compliance requirements.



⁵ Local Government Association, *Fragmented Funding* (London: Local Government Association, 2023), <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/fragmented-funding-report>.

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, “Community Ownership Fund Round 4: Prospectus,” GOV.UK, last updated May 31, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-round-4-prospectus>; Shared Assets, “Community Ownership Needs More Than a New ‘Right to Buy,’” Shared Assets, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.sharedassets.org.uk/resources/community-ownership-needs-more-than-a-new-right-to-buy>.

3 Social cohesion policy has generally operated in parallel, rather than within, wider economic strategy.

The UK's action mix does not integrate social cohesion with economic strategy, and this disconnect has contributed to deteriorating cohesion outcomes. A 2024 analysis found that women from Black and Asian backgrounds have experienced an estimated 13 per cent decline in living standards due to policy changes since 2010, with Black women facing average annual losses exceeding £5,000.⁷ But in practice, there is little evidence that cohesion policy has been designed to respond to economic shocks of this kind.

Other incoherencies also go against social cohesion objectives but without clear mechanisms to evaluate or address these. Programmes like Prevent (a targeted anti-terrorism programme) attracted significantly more funding than migrant integration programmes, signalling central government priorities and shaping what local authorities were realistically able to deliver. In 2007, the £6 million Prevent Pathfinder fund targeted around 70 local authorities in England, largely selected on the basis of relatively high Muslim populations (often cited as around 5 per cent or more). In 2008, this was expanded into a three-year £45 million programme, with funding extended to a much wider range of local authorities, including those with sizeable Muslim populations (commonly described as around 4,000 or more), significantly broadening the programme's geographical scope.⁸ Although presented as a multi-agency initiative, operational responsibility drifted toward policing, particularly in regions such as the West Midlands.⁹

Box 1 sets out the Theory of Change underpinning the UK's Pride in Place strategy. In this, cohesion is framed as an outcome of place-based investment (e.g., safety, regeneration, community engagement, and culture), with pride, satisfaction, and social capital flowing downstream. However, the framework does not engage with how economic conditions, fiscal capacity, or austerity shape whether such interventions can be sustained, leaving unclear how durable cohesion would be funded at scale.



⁷ Women's Budget Group. *Where Do We Go from Here? An Intersectional Analysis of Women's Living Standards Since 2010*. London: Women's Budget Group, September 2024. <https://www.wbg.org.uk/publication/where-do-we-go-from-here-an-intersectional-analysis-of-womens-living-standards-since-2010/>.

⁸ In West Yorkshire, local authorities were initially hesitant to implement Prevent despite the region's association with the Bradford riots and the 7/7 bombers. Following sustained pressure from national government, they proceeded with implementation but sought to mitigate the policy's perceived aggression by rebranding it under alternative labels, such as the 'Pathfinder Fund'. But rather than fostering trust, the strategy intensified feelings of surveillance and suspicion among Muslim communities. Thomas, Paul (2010) *Failed and Friendless: The UK's 'Preventing Violent Extremism' Programme*. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 12 (3). pp. 442-458. ISSN 1467856X

⁹ At a national level, the 2009/10 House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry recommended a formal demarcation, assigning Prevent to the Home Office and the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, while migrant integration and social cohesion efforts were to sit with the Department for Communities and Local Government. In practice, this separation remained largely administrative. Operationally, the programmes continued to intersect, creating the appearance of strategic alignment while embedding fundamentally conflicting logics of trust-building and surveillance.

Box 1: The UK's Pride in Place strategy

Pride in Place: A Theory of Change from the Levelling Up Agenda¹⁰

IMPACT

By 2030, Pride in Place – people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community – will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top-performing and other areas closing.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

1) Increased pride in living in the local area

2) Increased satisfaction with the local area

3) Increased social capital (improved social fabric)

	Pillar 1 Safety & Security	Pillar 2 High Streets & Regeneration	Pillar 3 Community Engagement	Pillar 4 Culture, Heritage & Sport
INTERIM OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perceptions of ASB* levels Reduction in recorded ASB incidents Fewer people experiencing or witnessing ASB More ASB incidents resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perceptions of local area attractiveness Increased use of / satisfaction with local amenities Increased satisfaction with the natural environment Increased high street footfall and decreased commercial vacancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement in the local area, including in civic action, volunteering and local decision-making Increased sense of neighbourhood trust, belonging and community spirit Improved relationships between people from different backgrounds Reduced loneliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased engagement in regular cultural activities and heritage activities Increased engagement in sporting activity, including active travel and sports events More opportunities to participate and greater representation in culture, heritage and sport locally Decrease in heritage at risk
OUTPUTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More police presence at ASB hotspots More youth activities in local areas Repairing of damage inflicted on victims and communities Removal of litter Fewer unresponded incidences of ASB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New / improved community facilities including spaces for community activities Regenerated local areas including revitalised high streets Affordable homes (housing LT missions) Maintained / improved local parks, green and blue spaces, air quality, sound urban environments and cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frameworks for local level engagement: covenants, governance and delivery Survival / improvement and accessibility of community assets including accessible spaces for community activities New volunteering opportunities and community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguard culture/heritage assets and local sports teams Upgrade / deliver high quality cultural and sport venues Culture and heritage-led regeneration Recognising cultural heritage Frameworks for local engagement and delivery
INPUTS & ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of additional police officers Interventions targeted at young people, such as youth activities and safe spaces More powers to housing associations and landlords Crack down on illegal drugs and neighbourhood crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High streets, green space and amenities interventions Housing interventions including through the housing missions Natural environment interventions Waste management interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community action and engagement interventions Communities and integration strategies Community funding including Community Ownership Fund, Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, Community Wealth Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting of cultural / sporting events Interventions to support / maintain / preserve cultural, heritage and sports assets / facilities Interventions to preserve intangible culture and heritage Investment in grassroots sports and local cultural events

Source: UK Government, Narrative for Pride in Place, January 2024.

*ASB refers to anti-social behaviour.

¹⁰ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Update on the Pride in Place Mission (London: DLUHC, January 25, 2024), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b2348bf2718c0014fb1d29/Narrative_for_Pride_in_Place.pdf.

Pride in Place: A Theory of Change from the Levelling Up Agenda

The UK's Pride in Place objective and associated Theory of Change (TOC) represents a coherent attempt to improve social cohesion, but the choices its authors made about how to organise change are also revealing of technocratic policy culture's limits. We see the same tendency across New Zealand's policy systems, with focus on analytical tools that decompose what government does rather than help us reflect on it in concert.

In this TOC, anti-social behaviour is given top billing, while the shared infrastructure, services, spaces, and events that grow cross-cultural relationships are neither in focus nor resourced. The language does little to suggest that communities might develop their own interpretations of what matters, or that devolving that authority is itself a source of pride. Asset ownership, local power, and collaborative capacity are absent.

This framing privileges what James C. Scott calls *techne*, diminishing the type of intuitive, hidden forms of social knowledge and networks that cohesion depends on, what he calls *metis*.¹¹

Techne is the formal, procedural knowledge behind institutions – evidence, metrics, frameworks, regulations. It is learned through professional channels and travels easily across contexts because it is legible and comparable.

Metis, a different type of social knowledge, is more hidden. It reflects the tacit know-how built from sustained practice in a particular place with particular people, based on judgement, timing, relational attunement, and a sense of what to do in the moment that preserves relationship and dignity. This is the generative or animating force that creates durable social cohesion.

The pull toward *techne* here comes from an incentive to seem in control, with a legible plan that starts from scratch, rather than efforts that situate government in interdependent relationships with place and people. In practice, however, people make meaning from experiences of uncertainty and action: where they are seen for their choices and social skills and can stay in accountable relationships. This distinction around sources of social knowledge is altogether missing from these documents, rendering the TOC a technocratic instrument likely to produce intermittent activity without creating the broader conditions for social relationships to deepen.



¹¹ Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Assessed against the criteria, the UK's social cohesion policy mix shows recurring structural weaknesses that limit its capacity to sustain relational social cohesion over time.

Cohesion is named as an outcome but not designed for as a process. There is a strange reluctance to recognise that social cohesion primarily takes place between people, and abstracting from people in a place and how they interact with each other, misses the point. We observe five major lessons for New Zealand:

- 1. Continuity is thin.** Short funding cycles, competitive bidding, and repeated programme resets undermine the persistence that trust, norm transmission, and local leadership require. Objectives are framed as long-term but instruments are short-term and episodic. Long-term, devolved, and non-punitive funding is more likely to support knowledge that is transmitted through practice.
- 2. Cohesion policy runs in parallel with economic policy, not through it.** Economic and social policy cannot run on separate tracks; without addressing upstream exclusion, cohesion efforts are undone. Worse, social cohesion policy can be weaponised to further exclude people. If economic policies lead to poverty, housing insecurity, or centralisation of decision away from those affected, then social cohesion is not a serious component of policy setting, rather a convenient parallel strategy that is abandoned in the face of other priorities.
- 3. Participation is encouraged, but agency is rarely devolved.** Communities are positioned as delivery partners or consultees, not as co-authors of priorities, norms, and trade-offs. This weakens legitimacy and limits the development of intergenerational leadership and practical judgement. The opposite of this is place based leadership and decision-making.
- 4. The policy mix leans on techne and underinvests in metis.** UK policy does not seem to recognise the value of sustained relationships, or the cost of interrupting them. Robust legal protections, minimum standards, and infrastructure investment are foundational, but they do not generate cohesion without relationships based on sustaining patterns of action, social interaction, and collaborative encounters. Awareness-raising and engagement are present in the UK strategies, but the way it is done, the how, does not create genuine engagement or local leadership needed to sustain these efforts. That local cohesion cannot be faked.
- 5. Process quality matters as much as programme choice, if not more.** This is the how more than the what. Competitive funding, audit-led evaluation, and short-term pilots weaken relational capacity and narrow the judgements that can be made about a community's holistic needs. Delivery and cultivation are different crafts, and cohesion depends on the second.

Lessons for New Zealand

From analysis of the UK system, we see:

- Structural conditions are necessary but not sufficient. Robust legal protections, minimum standards, and infrastructure investment are foundational, but they do not generate cohesion on their own, as this takes relationships. Social cohesion, as a capacity to adapt and coordinate, depends on how lived practices are resourced, protected, and supported to persist over time. For example, replace one-off consultations with standing local assemblies that meet regularly and make binding recommendations. And require all capital grants for community infrastructure to include funded stewardship and activation plans for at least five years.
- Policy design must distinguish delivery from cultivation of action and “thick” shared life. Activities, assets, and services can enable cohesion if paired with governance arrangements that support shared authorship, conflict navigation, and the exercise of local judgement and discretion. Treating trust and belonging as downstream effects risks repeating the UK’s delivery-heavy pattern and sidelining relationships as the basis for change.
- For social cohesion, process quality matters as much as programme choice. Long-term, and devolved funding arrangements (i.e. no cliff edge funding arrangements) are more likely to support metis-based knowledge transmission. Funding capacity building in community should be a high priority. For example, fund long-term, place-based facilitation roles embedded in schools, marae, libraries, and sports clubs. Or it could be support for long-lived youth cohorts organised around shared work (events, stewardship, projects) commitments.
- Social cohesion policy must integrate economic governance and build economically inclusive systems. Without addressing wealth concentration, housing insecurity, and fiscal centralisation, cohesion efforts are undone by structural exclusion. Economic and social policy cannot run in parallel. For example, shift migrant and refugee settlement from service delivery to co-governed local settlement boards with budget authority.
- Finally, digital and youth contexts require explicit attention. As social life increasingly occurs online and across generations, cohesion strategies must recognise that metis is also produced through digital practice, peer moderation, and shared creation. This could be high schools as a facilitation hub, to better involve parents at this critical stage of life when our traditional schooling drops this very involvement.

Social cohesion is not produced by delivering the right combination of activities to communities. It is produced by creating the conditions in which communities can develop their own capacity to navigate difference, hold difficult conversations, and look after each other over time.



Next steps

These questions shape our current research. Through interviews in 2026-27, we are studying how values of cooperation, inclusivity, and solidarity are taught, structured, and practised across Aotearoa communities.

We are speaking to people involved in teaching and education work, in person and online; volunteering and community organising; and policy development, particularly those designing or advising on interventions that influence social connection, participation, or public trust.

If you work in any of these areas and would like to share your experiences or insights, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch via:

rosie.collins@simplicity.kiwi

Appendix 1: Styles of action in the UK

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
SOFT POWER – change based in intergenerational and interpersonal relationships <i>influencing, engaging, learning</i>	Cultural and narrative influence	<p>Strengthening Family Life (Archbishops’ Commission on Families and Households) – independent Church of England commission reviewing family life and issuing evidence-based recommendations to government, business, and church.</p> <p>This Place Matters – year-long research partnership (launched May 2025) by UCL Policy Lab, Citizens UK, and More in Common; drew on polling of 13,000+ people and focus groups to map social connection across Britain and inform cross-party cohesion policy.</p> <p>Jo Cox Foundation – Moment to Movement – government-endorsed community-events campaign using grants and local activities to reduce loneliness and build connection.</p>	Shapes public narratives and shared meaning about belonging and identity, drawing people toward inclusive norms.
	Community and public diplomacy	<p>Integrated Communities Strategy – Action Plan – MHCLG plan orienting new arrivals to British life and values, targeted at areas of economic disadvantage.</p> <p>All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration – cross-party parliamentarians creating dialogue and policy on integration (e.g. Ukrainian Welcoming Scheme roundtable).</p> <p>Ministerial Roundtables on antisemitism & Islamophobia – listening sessions chaired by Home and Housing Secretaries in response to rising religiously motivated hate crime.</p> <p>Vulnerable Persons / Children’s Resettlement Schemes – pre-arrival integration booklets covering law, health services, rights, and everyday life in Britain.</p>	Builds cross-group trust through structured cooperation, listening, and mutual recognition, domestic analogues to public diplomacy.
	Norms, rights, and inclusion	<p>Hate Crime Action Plan – inter-ministerial strategy covering prevention, reporting, response, and victim support.</p> <p>Race at Work Charter – Business in the Community-developed public pledge for firms to improve workplace race equality.</p> <p>Lord Walney’s Review on Protest Rights (2024) – independent review on balancing protest with democratic function and protecting elected representatives.</p> <p>Revised National Planning Policy – frames integration and exclusion through housing, accessibility, and community facilities.</p>	Reinforces shared values through legal protections and policy standards, projecting inclusive behaviour as the expected norm.
	Knowledge and evidence infrastructure	<p>ONS Subnational Data Strategy (Levelling Up) – improves quality and accessibility of local data so leaders can see what is being spent where.</p> <p>Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT) – Home Office team set up after the 2001 riots to identify good practice and policy gaps.</p> <p>NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard – mandates race-equality data collection and published action plans across NHS employers.</p> <p>Electoral Commission Diversity Strategy – commitment to identify and remove barriers to electoral participation among diverse communities.</p> <p>Dame Louise Casey’s Review – 800+ interviews and 200+ written submissions; flagged segregation, lack of social mixing, and inequality in isolated areas.</p>	Generates credible evidence and frameworks that shape perceptions and inform debate.

Appendix 1 continued

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
MEDIATING POWER – change based in navigating ambitions and tensions of political life <i>designing, brokering, repairing</i>	Deliberation and collective judgement	<p>Climate Assembly UK – 108 demographically-matched citizens deliberating on Net Zero, feeding directly into the UK Net Zero Strategy.</p> <p>Future of England Survey (Cardiff / CIP) – academic tracking of public attitudes to UK constitution and post-Brexit Leave/Remain identities.</p> <p>Education Act 2002 – introduced citizenship education covering shared values, diversity, and democratic knowledge.</p>	<p>Creates structured spaces for people to reason together across difference.</p>
	Translation and boundary-spanning relational work	<p>British Future / Belong / Together – After the Riots – think-tank analysis of 2024 riot triggers and the longer-term factors that eroded cohesion.</p> <p>University of Kent, AFT UK Evaluation – multi-year social-psychology study of Anne Frank Trust schools programmes’ attitudinal impact.</p> <p>Integrated Communities Action Plan (2019) – cross-departmental delivery plan operationalising the Integration Green Paper.</p> <p>Integration Area Programme (2018) – five local pilots (Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall, Waltham Forest) adapting shared goals to local conditions.</p> <p>Let’s Talk Loneliness Campaign – cross-sector anti-stigma campaign; published the Emerging Together action plan with the Tackling Loneliness Network.</p>	<p>Helps groups, institutions, and communities interpret one another’s experiences.</p>
	Conflict resolution and repair	<p>Remedi restorative mentoring model – a Sheffield-based restorative justice charity delivering restorative mentoring, victim services, and hate-crime victim support in partnership with Youth Offending Teams and Police and Crime Commissioners.</p> <p>National Vulnerability Learning Programme – frontline officer training to identify and support vulnerable people before they are drawn into extremism.</p>	<p>Navigates harm and breakdown without resorting to punishment or denial.</p>
	Institutional brokerage and coordination	<p>Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Devolution Deal – one of seven devolution deals; elected mayor, devolved health and social-care budgets, obligation to reduce inequality gaps.</p> <p>Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper (2022) – programme of twelve National Missions to close geographical inequality by 2030.</p> <p>Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) – independent review into racial and ethnic disparities, concluding geography and culture still shape outcomes.</p> <p>The Khan Review (2024) – independent review of GB social cohesion, flagging disinformation and identity politics as key threats.</p>	<p>Coordinates power between central government, local authorities, and communities.</p>
Skill-based cross-cultural capabilities	<p>RCT: Community English Lessons – randomised trial evaluating whether free community ESOL improves migrants’ sense of belonging in British society.</p> <p>Youth United Foundation – national uniformed youth collaboration (Scouts, Girlguiding, Boys’ Brigade) building cross-cultural shared practice.</p> <p>Intergenerational Music Making (IMM) – four national projects pairing youth groups with local care homes to build citizenship and respect.</p>	<p>Builds shared practice across age, culture, and language differences.</p>	

Appendix 1 continued

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
PROVISIONING POWER – change based in resourcing <i>resourcing, enabling</i>	Place and asset provisioning	<p>Community Ownership Fund (COF) – MHCLG support for communities to take ownership of at-risk community assets, Business Improvement Districts, and shared local amenities (complementing the Community Right to Bid under the Localism Act 2011).</p> <p>Community Renewal Fund – post-pandemic £220m pilot programme (2021-22) bridging to the £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund; invests in communities, local business, and skills as part of Levelling Up.</p>	<p>Provides shared physical capacity, like community spaces, facilities, locally held assets.</p>
	Targeted integration and language capacity	<p>Integrated Communities English Language Programme – community-based English provision for migrants under the Integration Strategy.</p> <p>Community English Language Programme – programme for low-level English speakers with emphasis on access for marginalised groups.</p> <p>Integrated Communities Innovation Fund – £7m (2018) seed-funding pot for local pilots (interfaith dialogue, digital inclusion hubs, etc.).</p> <p>Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper – umbrella policy framing for the integration programme.</p>	<p>Funds practical capability to participate, especially language access, via programme grants.</p>
	Safety, safeguarding, and risk-management regimes	<p>Prevent programme – Home Office counter-extremism work in priority areas, targeting behaviours that antagonise social fabric.</p> <p>Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT) – Home Office funding for civil-society and community organisations delivering counter-extremism objectives.</p> <p>Police Race Action Plan – force-wide reform of police practice and training to build trust in victimised communities and remove racial profiling.</p> <p>STAND UP! / Streetwise – MHCLG-funded 3-year interfaith schools programme (50+ schools) on antisemitism and Islamophobia, with teacher training.</p>	<p>Aims to provide protection and risk reduction, but often operates through adversarial security logics that tend to undermine trust.</p>
	Data, standards, and coordination infrastructure	<p>Local Digital Declarations – MHCLG voluntary pact creating common technology patterns so local services can coordinate and improve together.</p> <p>MHCLG inclusive tech / council commitments – declaration-based commitments on inclusive technology and shared culture change across councils.</p> <p>Facing All the Facts – EU-funded project (to Dec 2019) coordinated by CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe, building law-enforcement and public-authority capacity to record and respond to hate crime; UK police bodies have engaged via the wider Facing Facts network.</p> <p>Behavioural Insights Team projects – applied behavioural science to integration messaging (e.g. Social Capital in the United Kingdom: evidence from six billion friendships).</p>	<p>Provides common tools and interoperability for local coordination, plus implementation capacity (templates, trials, experimental delivery).</p>

Appendix 1 continued

Style of action	Focus of action	Examples of action	Mechanism of change
SANCTIONING POWER – change based in principles and limits <i>regulating, enforcing</i>	Legal protections, statutory authority, and intervention powers	Equality Act 2010 – consolidates anti-discrimination law; defines protected characteristics and prohibited conduct; anchors structural-equality enforcement. Localism Act 2011 – devolves legal authority to local government, enabling tailored local action in each area's interests.	Statutory rights and anti-discrimination law setting minimum standards of inclusion and equality.
	Regulatory oversight and inspection	Ofsted inspection powers – ability to downgrade schools that promote separatism or fail to promote inclusiveness (e.g. the “Trojan Horse” case, Birmingham 2014); enforces the Education Act 2005 and Prevent Duty Guidance.	Monitoring and enforcement that incentivise compliance through assessment, penalties, or withdrawal of approval.
	Safeguarding and risk-management regimes	Prevent Duty guidance (England & Wales, 2023) – statutory guidance under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, forming the Prevent strand of the overarching CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy (whose four Ps are Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare); the Duty places specified authorities under a legal obligation to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. New Victims’ Strategy – 2025 update strengthening victims’ rights and the review mechanism following public consultation.	Systems to identify, prevent, and respond to harm or perceived threat.
	Professional standards and training requirements	Local police training requirements – force-level programmes (e.g. British Transport Police with Community Security Trust / Tell Mama; Surrey Police with Dimensions disability charity; Kent Police with Changing Faces).	Mandated practices that regulate conduct within public institutions.
STRUCTURAL & DEVOLUTIONARY POWER – change based on redistributing authority and resources <i>economic outcomes and fairness</i>	Foundational spatial and economic provisioning	Housing affordability and tenure security – who can stay put in a place long enough to invest in relationships. Density and land-use regulation – who lives near whom, and whether neighbourhoods mix by class, tenure, and background. Anti-displacement and regeneration controls – preventing gentrification harms that fracture established community ties. Street design and everyday public infrastructure – the physical fabric of encounter – pavements, parks, transit, high streets.	Reshapes the distribution of resources, stability, and decision-making authority, setting the limits of what other styles of action can achieve.
	Wealth distribution and economic concentration	Progressive taxation and local revenue tools – who accumulates and who funds shared capacity. Land value capture and property taxation – capturing gains from rising land values for public benefit. Limits on extractive rents and monopolistic structures – curbing concentrations of private power that hollow out community capacity. Fiscal devolution to local government – moving revenue-raising and spending authority closer to communities.	



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