

# **Community Induction Programmes: Supporting People to Move to Non-traditional Areas in Oldham & Rochdale**

## **An Evaluation Report**

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>5</b>
Bellshill, Rochdale	5
Chadderton – Oldham	6
Similarities and differences	8
<b>2. Methodological Approach</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. The Study Findings</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Bellshill, Rochdale</b>	<b>12</b>
The provider perspective	12
The community perspective	14
<b>Chadderton, Oldham</b>	<b>18</b>
The provider perspective	18
The community perspective	19
<b>4. Discussion &amp; Observations</b>	<b>23</b>
Responding to BME housing needs and facilitating a move to non-traditional areas	23
The longer-term impact of the schemes on the areas and residents	23
The extent to which the schemes have led to greater ethnic integration and cohesive communities	24
What makes a successful community induction programme?	24

## **Introduction**

Oldham and Rochdale are two of the districts of Britain which have witnessed a significant inward migration of new populations with origins in Pakistan and Bangladesh. These new communities have traditionally settled in specific areas within the two boroughs and cultural and social infrastructures have subsequently developed in these areas. Overcrowded housing remains a major problem despite improvements in the 1990s. Over one fifth of Pakistanis and over one third of Bangladeshi households are overcrowded according to official definitions, in both Boroughs. The lack of suitable and affordable housing in these traditional areas has meant that the more affluent households who can afford housing of their choice have moved to more prosperous areas. Those that remain continue to experience housing disadvantage with few new larger properties being built in the area and long waiting times for social rented housing.

The Community Induction Programme (CIP) is a scheme which was initially developed in Rochdale and then subsequently implemented in Oldham in response to the housing pressures experienced by households living in traditional Asian areas. It was designed to encourage such households to move to more suitable properties in adjacent non-traditional areas through the provision of support both during and after the move to a new property by the relevant housing agencies and partners.

This report documents the findings of an evaluation of the Community Induction Programme (CIP) developed in Rochdale and Oldham.

## 1. Background

This section provides the contextual background to the two schemes.

### **Bellshill, Rochdale**

Since 2005/6 a CIP has been in operation on the Bellshill estate in Rochdale. Initially this was supported by a project worker from Ashiana Housing Association (2005/6 and 2006/7) and latterly by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing staff. The Bellshill estate was chosen as a pilot area for the following reasons:

- Its direct proximity to the traditional BME areas within the Borough; and
- The relatively low level of demand for properties within the estate and increasing void rate;

The CIP involved identifying a number of vacant properties in close proximity to one another on the estate and 'reserving' these for potential BME households who were on the housing waiting list and who were living in traditional BME areas. While there was no initial demand among these families for the Bellshill estate, the staff involved in the CIP contacted BME applicants to discuss a potential move to Bellshill. While the lack of available properties in the traditional BME areas meant that rehousing within their chosen area was unrealistic within the next 8-10 years, the opportunity to move to a suitable property which would solve their overcrowding and within a relatively short time period was seen by some applicants as an attractive proposition, especially under the CIP. In recognition of the difficulties that might be faced by those BME households initially moving to the area, such as isolation and harassment from existing community members, it was decided to move a number of BME families to the estate at the same time to those 'reserved' properties. The type of support provided to such families under the CIP included:

- Personal interviews with potential movers on to the estate to discuss their concerns and highlight the range of support that would be made available;
- Accompanied viewings of the properties and, where appropriate, introductions to adjacent neighbours;
- Practical assistance with the actual house move, such as organising removal companies and the disconnection and connection of services;
- Details of the contact details of key staff in case of experience of hate crime/racial harassment; and
- Information about local community facilities and services that they could access.

The intention of the programme was that the support provided would be tailored to the needs of the individual families rather than it being a generic service. This meant that a great amount of staff time was involved in supporting these families in terms of telephone and personal contact and dealing with issues as they arose. An

underlying element was that any incidents of hate crime/racial harassment would be investigated and dealt with quickly and effectively.

By summer 2009 it was reported that 45 BME households had been supported to move on to the estate with a minimal number of these (estimated to be 3) subsequently being rehoused off the estate.

### **Chadderton - Oldham**

Through discussions with staff involved in the Bellshill initiative, First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) developed a similar project in the form of a dedicated Tenancy Support Service, designed to provide support to new and existing tenants who were either in the process of moving or had moved to a non-traditional area. The service was designed to generate and sustain a demand for housing in non-traditional areas and increase the housing options, initially among the BME households within the Borough and ultimately, for all households. It also had the explicit objective of ensuring that the number of FCHO tenancies reflected the level of housing need in the BME communities and the service contributed to the work that was being undertaken to reduce overcrowding and meet the needs for larger family homes through broadening the housing options for BME families: those often living in the most deprived areas with the poorest housing conditions and in properties which were often too small for their families needs. The aim then, was to support such households to move to non-traditional areas and satisfy their housing needs, while at the same time, responding to their sense of isolation and abandonment in what they perceived to be an alien environment. The long-term vision was that this service would underpin the wider promotion of community cohesion within the Borough enabling people from different ethnic backgrounds to live side by side as opposed to living 'parallel lives' which was highlighted by David Ritchie in the report produced following the Oldham disturbances in 2001.

The type of support provided to families included:

- Accompanied viewings of potential properties in the non-traditional areas, which could include informal introductions to neighbours and other community members, especially existing BME tenants within the area;
- Security surveys of properties working closely with the Community Safety Unit and the Police;
- On-going support for the first 8 weeks of the tenancy and ad hoc support as requested beyond this time period;
- Regular advice surgeries provided as an extra mechanism to provide vital support to both tenants and residents in the locality, focusing on issues relevant to them;

- A co-ordinated response to tackling hate crime and racial harassment through working with other partners (such as the Community Safety Unit and the Police) to ensure incidents or issues which arose were dealt with effectively through for example, having a common reporting mechanism, a number of reporting centres throughout the Borough and weekly partner meetings to review the type and level of race/hate crime that had been reported over the previous week. Linked with this was a support package which was provided to all those who became victims of hate crime/racial harassment which incorporated both practical and emotional support; and
- The provision of an out of hours support service for victims of racial harassment with tenants being advised of the availability of this service and the associated free phone telephone number as part of their tenancy 'sign up' pack;

In addition to the formal support noted above, individual staff members would routinely contact individual households to gauge the extent to which they were settling into the new area and offer general support required to assist with this. An important element was the promotion of a range of community development activities which were taking place in the area designed to engage with all sections of the community and to help break down stereotypes and build positive relations within the community.

Unfortunately, no comprehensive up to date information was provided about the service in terms of the number of households and the form of the support provided over the life of the project. However, an internal report noted that in 2004/5 the service supported 142 families to move to non-traditional areas and provided on-going support to enable them to maintain their tenancies: just one family chose not to remain in the area. Furthermore, staff had assisted 102 victims of racial harassment during this time frame.

FCHO's 2006 annual report notes that the Tenancy Support Services was recognised at the annual RaceActionNet conference as providing "innovative work in supporting victims of racial harassment and marginalised communities". It was also described as "an inspirational project that highlights how focused resources can change the settlement patterns of minority families into non-traditional areas. The approach is innovative and one whereby the organisation is trying to sustain change. This initiative deals with a number of very important issues in relation to dealing with hate crimes, moreover by providing a support package to victims it gives a clear message that racism will not be tolerated. "By increasing housing choice across the borough it has to be a massive step in the right direction."

As noted earlier, the CIP pursued in Rochdale targeted a particular estate, while the FCHO initiative was borough wide. An early decision was taken by the Project Steering Group to identify the Chadderton area as the primary geographical focus for identifying households who had participated in the CIP and who could be approached regarding the evaluation.

## Similarities and differences

In essence then, both schemes have a number of similarities but also a number of important differences.

- The RBH scheme was introduced on one estate which was adjacent to the traditional BME area and which was exclusively White. The FCHO scheme on the other hand was introduced across the Borough and in some cases, the non-traditional areas already had a BME presence:
- The RBH scheme targeted BME households who had initially applied for re-housing within the traditional BME areas of the Borough, while the FCHO scheme tended to target households who had previously been victims of hate crime or racial harassment or that they wanted to move to the non-traditional area;
- The RBH scheme tended to provide support which reflected the households' needs in relation to transition and settlement within a new area, while in the case of the FCHO scheme, the primary focus was that of responding to hate crime/racial harassment and then secondly, supporting transition and settlement; and
- The RBH scheme was more targeted in terms of attempting to respond to an identified supply and demand of properties in specific geographical area, whereas the FCHO scheme was more general in its approach.

## **2. Methodological Approach**

The evaluation of the two schemes involved three main phases. Phase 1 involved familiarisation with the scheme documentation while phase 2 focused on the views and experiences of those staff closely involved in the schemes. The third phase involved interviews with a range of households who had either direct or indirect involvement with the schemes.

Each of these research phases will be described in turn.

### **Phase 1: Familiarisation with scheme documentation**

This initial phase was designed to provide the evaluation team with a detailed appreciation of the background to the schemes. However, very little written evidence was forthcoming. This in part seemed to reflect the fact that there had been staff changes since the schemes were initially implemented and the current staff involved had limited knowledge of what documentation had originally been produced. Secondly, the schemes were not necessarily seen as discrete projects from the point of view of FCHO or RBH but rather one element of a more wider ranging policy to respond to the housing needs of the local BME community and address community cohesion. Hence, it was felt to be difficult to isolate information which specifically related to the two CIPs. As such, information about how the schemes were envisaged to operate and their original objectives had to be gleaned from the interviews with the current scheme staff and as such there was a reliance on anecdotal evidence.

### **Phase 2: Interviews with scheme staff**

A semi-structured interview was held with one of the lead officers involved in the CIP at RBH. Contact was made with Ashiana Housing Association who had originally been involved in the scheme but none of the staff felt sufficiently knowledgeable about the scheme to comment and the original staff member was no-longer in post. A focus group discussion was held with four staff involved in the scheme at FCHO. The staff consulted were asked specifically to comment upon the following:

- The identification of potential BME 'movers';
- The nature of the support (both initial and longer term) available to the potential movers;
- How success of the schemes would be identified;
- What elements of the scheme were felt to have been successful and which less so;
- Views on the transformation of an area from being non-traditional to a BME traditional area; and
- Elements of good practice that could be identified from the schemes and their potential replicability elsewhere.

### **Phase 3: Interviews with those households directly or indirectly involved in the project.**

Initially four potential groups of community members were identified who it was felt could contribute to the evaluation of the schemes:

1. Households who took part in the schemes and moved to the new areas;
2. Households who were provided with the opportunity to move to new areas but for some reason chose not to;
3. Households who took part in the scheme but who then moved out of the area at a later date; and
4. People from the wider community (both 'new' and 'traditional' areas).

However, it proved impossible to identify from the records maintained about the schemes details of those households who had declined the offer of support to participate in the scheme (group 2 above) Also, given the very small number of households who had participated in the scheme and then decided to move out of the area, they also proved difficult to track down (group 3). It was also decided not to pursue the idea of consulting with BME households living in the traditional BME areas about their views of the schemes as it became very evident at the commencement of the evaluation that such individuals, unless they had been involved in the schemes to some extent, would have very little knowledge of them. Hence, the primary focus was upon only two community member groups: those who had participated in the CIPs and were still living in the area; and members of the 'host' community in these non-traditional areas. However, in addition, one BME tenant was interviewed who was already a long-standing member of the host community in Chadderton, Oldham and a second BME tenant who had subsequently moved off the estate.

Those involved in the schemes were asked to consider:

- Their experience of the schemes and reasons for their involvement (or non-involvement);
- Their views on some of the barriers and benefits of the schemes;
- The degree to which the schemes has led to a change in opinion/attitude
- The extent to which the schemes has led to an increased or decrease sense of 'place' and 'belonging';
- Their views on the success of the schemes in terms of increasing the diversity of the area and the impact of this;
- Their long and short-term intentions for remaining in the areas in which they live;
- Their views on how the schemes could be improved/amended to facilitate its replication in other areas; and

- Their views on how, in the longer-term, interaction/cohesion between residents can be maintained with a minimum of external input.

Those contacted from the wider community who live in the scheme areas were asked to comment on:

- Their perception of the Induction programme;
- Their perception of how the local community has changed due to the influx of new households;
- Issues within the community that arose due to the change in the ethnic mix of the area; and
- Their overall view of the sustainability of the ethnic mix in the area in the long-term and particularly, any additional future support needs.

Difficulties were also experienced in making contact with potential respondents and both FCHO and RBH took the lead in making contact and promoting the research with them. Where telephone contact details were available, the individual tenant was contacted directly to arrange an interview: where no such contact details were available a letter was sent to the tenant's address. This latter approach yielded a poor response. The direct contact approach was more successful, although some of the potential participants declined to take part on the basis that they did not feel that they could comment informatively about the CIP. Ultimately, in the case of Chadderton, Oldham, 10 BME tenants who had participated in the scheme were interviewed as were 5 non-BME residents from the area and one long-standing BME resident. In relation to the Bellshill scheme, 6 BME tenants who had been supported to move to the estate were interviewed as were 4 long-standing White residents. In addition, a BME tenant who had moved out of Bellshill was also interviewed.

### **3. The Study Findings**

#### **Bellshill, Rochdale**

##### **The provider perspective**

The staff member currently involved in the CIP was asked to reflect on which she felt were the major features of the scheme and, particularly, those elements which it was felt had been successful or unsuccessful as well as commenting generally on the extent to which the scheme had contributed to community cohesion.

A small number of existing families either moved off the estate, or sought re-housing elsewhere in the Borough. While there was an element of 'White flight' this was not necessarily simply a consequence of the introduction of Asian families into the area but also in response to a more pro-active approach to combatting anti-social behaviour by RBH and partner agencies and some of those who elected to leave the estate had contributed to the level of anti-social behaviour on the estate. It was felt that this movement of a number of established White families off the estate changed the dynamics of the estate, making it more receptive to change.

It was suggested that there was some hostility by the White 'host' community to the introduction of BME households onto the estate. While specific incidences of hate crime/racial abuse were dealt with as required by RBH and the local police, it was felt that on reflection, more work should have been undertaken with the host community to explain the nature of the scheme and what it was trying to achieve as well as highlighting the potential benefits for the community as a whole of having a more diverse community. Much of the community consultation work that did take place was often in response to specific incidences of racial conflict that arose rather than any initial preparatory work to actively engage the local community in the implementation of the scheme.

The decision to 'reserve' a number of vacant properties on the estate for the scheme and move a number of BME families altogether onto the estate was seen as an important factor. Moving individual families onto the estate as and when properties became vacant, it was felt, would lead to a sense of isolation and exposure to hate crime and racial harassment: the impact of such potential problems was less evident when families were relocated at the same time. This approach, it was also suggested, helped develop a sense of community and identity among the rehoused BME families from the onset.

Another important feature of the scheme was the pro-active approach adopted to incidences of hate crime and racial harassment, with incidences being investigated quickly and perpetrators dealt with accordingly. It was suggested that a zero-tolerance approach to this type of activity on the estate contributed to the positive experience of the BME families during their initial settlement on the estate. Although no specific figures were quoted, it was suggested that the level of crime and anti-social behaviour has declined over the period that the scheme had been in operation.

It was recognised that, at least initially, the scheme was very labour intensive both in terms of identifying potential BME applicants who would be prepared to move onto the estate and in terms of the initial support required by such families. The nature of the support necessitated working with a range of agencies and this was time consuming, however, as relationships between the various agencies were established this became less of an issue.

From the staff perspective, the scheme should be regarded as being successful based on the following observations:

- There has been radical change around in the level of demand for rehousing on the estate, from one of very low demand to one now where there is a waiting list and, particularly, demand from BME households from elsewhere within the Borough. However, one notable consequence of this is that the increased demand for properties on the estate has meant that many of the rehousing applicants from among the White community living on the estate (e.g. sons and daughters of current tenants) are experiencing difficulties securing properties and have had to move to other parts of the Borough;
- The vast majority of BME households who have been rehoused on the estate, especially those who were some of the first families to receive support to move, have remained on the estate. In the minority of cases where the household has subsequently decided to move away from the estate, it is difficult to determine why the household chose to move: it is suggested that other mitigating factors rather than a negative experience on the Bellshill estate could have been instrumental;
- A number of the BME and especially Asian households who have moved onto the estate have now exercised their Right-to-Buy, signifying a willingness to invest in the area and a longer-term commitment to the estate. This is seen as an indicative measure that the image and hence popularity of the estate is changing for the better; and
- The ethnic dimension of the estate has been transformed from one which was exclusively White British/White Irish and hence, perceived to be a 'White only area' by non-White communities, to one which is ethnically diverse. While many of the initial BME households who moved into the area were Asian, more recently, a much more ethnically diverse range of households, such as Black and White Other groups, have moved onto the estate.

Primarily on the basis of the above, the CIP was, therefore, perceived by the staff involved to have had an important impact in relation to the following:

- Responding to the high demand and lack of supply of properties in traditional BME areas;
- Providing realisable solutions to the levels of overcrowding and unmet housing needs experienced by some of the BME households;
- Offer the potential to move to an adjacent area while maintaining existing community support networks due to their proximity to the traditional BME area; and

- Contributing to community integration and cohesion by facilitating the development of a more ethnically and culturally diverse community and, more specifically, providing support to the local community to engender greater integration.

Although staff felt that the above were all potential contributing factors to the overall success of the induction programme, one specific concern was highlighted which it was suggested could, in the future, have a detrimental impact and reverse the elements of success achieved. It was acknowledged that when the scheme was initially developed little thought had been given to the 'desired ethnic mix' of the estate either in terms of the proportion of BME households on the estate or their ethnic diversity. As the popularity of the estate among BME households has increased, reflecting the increasing proportion of BME households living on the estate and the more positive image of the estate, the number of BME households on the housing waiting list for this estate has also increased. Given that the level of housing need among this BME applicant group (primarily due to the level of overcrowding) is often higher than that identified among non-BME applicants, the most recent movers onto the estate have all been from the BME community. This is also likely to be the pattern in the future. Hence, an unintentional consequence of the initial success of the CIP could be to transform the estate from an exclusively White to almost exclusively BME/Asian area: in essence, extending the traditional BME to encompass Bellshill.

### **The community perspective**

This section focuses on the views of residents of the Bellshill estate: first those BME households who had moved onto the estate via the CIP and then secondly, a group of long-standing White tenants. The experience of one BME tenant who subsequently moved off the estate is also highlighted.

#### ***The BME residents view***

Among the six BME tenants interviewed, three were Pakistani, one was Kashmir and the remainder described themselves as British Asian. Four of the interviewees were women. Of the six one was aged 22-25, three were in the age range 26-35 and two were between 36 and 45. Three of the group had been living in the area for between 5-6 years, two mentioned three years and the sixth had moved to the estate around 9 months prior to the interview. Two of the longer-standing residents have bought their home through RTB. While all six respondents were, prior to moving onto the estate, living in different parts of Rochdale, they were all either living in overcrowded conditions or their home was in poor physical condition:

'It was too small. Only two bedrooms. The walls were damp and they were cracking.'

'We needed our own space we had two small children.'

Only one of the group had family or friends living near Bellshill:

'Neighbours over the road moved in two weeks before me and told me about the area. They warned me about it.'

All six respondents stated that prior to being contacted by the CIP team they would not have considered living in the area and indeed, only one respondent had heard of the estate:

'It had a reputation for racial harassment.'

Two of the group stated that they felt that they had no choice but to accept a property on the Bellshill estate as this was all that was offered to them:

'I was told that it was not a nice area but I had to move because it was the only house available.'

'I didn't want to live here, I wanted to live nearer to my brother, but that wasn't an option.'

### ***Support provided***

In the interview a distinction was drawn by the interviewer between any initial support that was provided as part of the CIP to assist them move into the area and subsequent support provided on an ad hoc basis by request. In relation to the former support, there was little recognition that they had received anything more than a staff member showing them around the property, although one of the group did comment that she had received a redecorating voucher. Beyond an accompanied visit to the property, none stated that they had received support with the practicalities of moving home, meeting their neighbours or settling into the area generally. However, two of those who had been living in the area for 5-6 years did comment that they had received some written information about the CIP and some services/activities available within the locality:

'I was given a lot of information about the Council's strategy to move Asian people in and told of the support available. I was given some money from the council for redecorating. They removed my rubbish when we moved in. We got leaflets offering gardening services and about the Residents' Association.'

Most could not recall being introduced to their immediate neighbours by staff:

'No, we were not introduced but were told that there were White families living next door and that other Asian families were moving into the area.'

Two did comment that their neighbours (both White) introduced themselves which they appreciated:

'One of my neighbours who is White introduced herself to me which was good.'

Two of the three long-standing residents did comment that they were informed by staff that they were some of the first Asian families to move into the area and that 'things would improve over time.'

It is not surprising then that a range of views were elicited by this group when they were asked to formally rate the type of support they had received when they moved into their new home: two were positive, two were negative, one felt unable to make a comment and the sixth felt that the question was not applicable to them!

All but one of the consultees could not identify any additional support that they would have liked: the sixth felt that staff did not listen to his concerns at the beginning:

‘We should have been listened to more in the beginning and acted on our complaints.’

With regard to on-going support, around half the group acknowledged that they were in receipt of support. In the main this related to having the contact details of RBH staff and the police who they could contact if they were experiencing any problems:

‘I know who to contact and I know that they are available if I experience any more problems.’

‘Police and the Council – I have a personal number to call and they will come around ‘on call’.’

This sense of having someone in authority who would respond to their concerns was seen to offer piece of mind and engendered a greater willingness to complain.

### ***Problems in the area***

All of the six respondents had experienced problems when they first moved onto the estate to a greater or lesser degree. The longer-standing residents were the most likely to experience the most severe and wide ranging forms of hate crime or racial abuse:

‘They broke the doors on the house and the car windows. They popped the car tyres and smashed bottles. They threw stones and sticks and they stole from my garden. There was also some physical abuse: they threw stones at my father. They swore at my mother.’

There was still perceived to be a problem with youths causing a nuisance on the estate, although this was seen by the long-standing tenants as being less of a problem now than it had been when they first moved onto the estate. This was partly due to the fact that some of the problem families were no longer living on the estate:

‘A few trouble makers have moved on now. There have been some improvements – there used to be more intimidation by young men and teenagers of passersby.’

The approach of the Council and the police to dealing with problems on the estate was generally praised:

‘The Police helped us. They told the neighbours to leave us alone and gave notices out. They were ringing up everyday to check that we were okay and they were doing the same with the other Asian families too.’

Five of the six respondents were positive about the neighbourhood and it was suggested that:

'It has become more racially mixed and the area has settled down more. The Council has introduced more Asians and there is less drugs and violence.'

All but one of the group would recommend the estate to other people from their ethnic group. Four of the six expect to remain living on the estate in the longer term: the two that wanted to move referred to wanting a bigger property.

The experience of the one BME tenant who had moved off Bellshill was very negative, having been the subject of abuse and intimidation by one of his White neighbours. He felt that he was not given the appropriate level of support by the police of RBH and ultimately, decided he would have to leave the area. He commented:

'If they want people to live there, they need to put in CCTV, a proper police presence 24/7 and a very good community office. I don't think it is a good idea to force different ethnic groups together like that – if it is a white area, then leave it as a white area, same for Asian areas. They should only be mixed on new build estates.'

### ***The White residents' view***

The four White tenants from the estate had been living in the area for at least 10 years, three were women and they tended to be aged 26-35. There was general recognition that a number of Asian and other BME households had moved into the area. It was suggested that some of the Asian families were the target of racism, although it was also suggested that some of the problems that exist on the estate were not racially motivated but rather were due to problem families generally.

There was felt to be a degree of integration between the BME and White households and this was felt to be particularly noticeable among the younger school age children who went to the same school:

'Those that have lived here a long time do get along with each other but not really those that have moved in. There is some mixing between White and Asian people especially at school but I don't notice it on the estate.'

However, among the adults, integration was less apparent: some of the Asian households were described as 'keeping themselves to themselves' to avoid confrontation:

'The Asians stay in their houses. They would get targeted if they were seen. I have some Asian friends, some people get on.'

It was felt that there was a general lack of understanding among residents about different cultures and this contributed to racist attitudes:

'People don't seem to know about each others culture. I went to a group 20 years ago which mixed White and Kashmir cultures and this helped people to mix. But language barriers can be a problem too.'

The overwhelming view was that racism was a serious problem on the estate, especially among some of the White youth and that many of the Asian families were being 'defiant' by staying – this resilience was praised. It was suggested that more activities for young people were required on the estate which would help them integrate more and occupy their time. Suggestions included establishing an estate football team or a youth club. Local agencies had previously experienced difficulties in promoting initiatives which were aimed at both White and Asian teenagers,, although this is perhaps less likely to be an issue where the teenagers are all from the same estate.

## **Chadderton, Oldham**

### **The provider perspective**

Staff awareness of the history of the scheme was somewhat patchy as most of them had not been involved in its inception or during the earlier years and staff turnover was identified as a particular problem as the focus of the scheme may have changed. It was suggested that the scheme had specifically targeted two tenant groups: those BME households currently living in the borough who had experienced some form of hate crime or racial harassment and as a consequence, want to move from the area but felt that they needed support to overcome their experience; and those BME tenants who had expressed a desire to move to the Chadderton (non-traditional) area.

Both groups were offered a range of support in a similar way to the CIP in operation on the Bellshill estate, namely accompanied viewings of properties, assistance moving into their new home and support throughout their initial settling in period. However, it was made clear by the staff that a very flexible approach had been adopted by them, reflecting the needs and circumstances of individual households. A particular emphasis had been on responding to experiences of hate crime and racial harassment in the host area and this had necessitated working closely with a number of agencies, such as the police.

No evidence was available on the number of households who had been supported to move to a new area or specifically Chadderton and generally there was a reliance on individual staff member's knowledge of working with particular families rather than information being stored centrally.

Staff did feel that on balance the scheme had been a success, although acknowledging that there was still isolated problems in the area which required their intervention. They suggested that there had been a degree of integration between the host community and the new BME households and that generally most residents had responded positively to the influx of new BME families. They also suggested that the reason why the induction programme had been successful was related to the following:

- The prior existence of a small number of BME families living in the Chadderton area which they suggested had given the area a more ethnically diverse feel than other areas in Oldham and contrasting with Bellshill in Rochdale; and
- The new BME households were not from a single ethnic group but represented a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups, some of whom were from the White minority community (e.g. Polish).

Emphasis was also given during the early years to the development of a range of community-based activities to provide a range of opportunities for people from different ethnic groups to meet and get to know one another. This included specific one-off community events such as activities for children, health awareness raising and introduction to members of the existing Resident's Association. This was seen as one of the most influential factors from the point of view of the scheme staff since it actively encouraged integration and avoidance of feelings of isolation.

## **The community perspective**

### ***The BME residents' view***

Ten BME tenants living in the Chadderton area were interviewed: two were Bangladeshi, two were Polish, and one each were Pakistani, Kosovan, Polish, Black African, Bengali and Afghani. They ranged in age from 22 to 55 and the majority were women. They had generally moved to the area due to the poor housing conditions of their previous property or due to it being demolished. One of the group had experienced prolonged racial abuse by neighbours.

Most of the group knew the area and viewed it favourably:

'It has a good reputation. I was shocked when they offered us a house in the area.'

'I knew about the area and it was quite nice.'

All but one would have considered moving to the area prior to being contacted by FCHO.

### ***Support provided***

For some of the respondents the researcher had to explain the nature of the CIP as some of the group appeared to be unaware that they had participated in the scheme. Perhaps not surprisingly then, few of the group reported receiving any direct support from FCHO staff, with the exception of being shown around their new home or receiving a redecoration voucher. However, at the same time, few of the group felt that they needed support. They did acknowledge that they were given contact telephone numbers if they needed help and advice and, in some cases, they reported having been contacted some weeks after they moved into the house by staff to check on how they were settling in:

'A housing officer came after 3 or 4 weeks and asked how things were going – there was no need to report any problems.'

'I seem to remember someone ringing me to check that everything was okay.'

None of these residents felt that they had support needs, although it was suggested that more information about the area and the facilities/amenities within the locality would have been useful. Only one of the nine was negative about the support received, suggesting that racism was not being tackled by FCHO.

With reference to on-going support this had been provided when requested and generally related to the reporting of anti-social behaviour or racism from White youths in the area. It was suggested that when they did experience problems, FCHO and the police were quick to respond:

'If there is an incident of racial harassment, I know who to contact and I know they will come out quickly. You feel reassured by that.'

### ***Problems in the area***

Half the group had experienced some initial problems when they first moved into the area often relating to young people being anti-social and being verbally abusive, but such episodes were either dealt with directly by the tenants by approaching the parents of the perpetrators or the police dealt with the issue:

'Small things have happened, nothing major. There was some verbal abuse from other children towards my children. I went around and spoke to the parents and they were fantastic. We have had no problems with them since.'

The area was generally regarded as being quiet with few problems.

All but one of the BME residents was positive about the area, suggesting that it had a range of good facilities close by, such as shops, schools and the mosque:

'It has good services and the shops are nearby. This is the best area in Oldham to live.'

All but one would recommend the area to other people from their ethnic group:

'We already have done and we know Asian people who want to live here and have asked me to keep an eye out for properties.'

The ethnic diversity of the area was also seen very positively and it should be noted that none of the group perceived the area to be predominantly White prior to moving to the area. In some cases, the area and the mix of different cultures was seen as being preferential to living in a traditional BME area:

'Some Asian people are living here but we prefer living in a mixed area as it is quieter. We have lived in areas with lots of Asians before and we didn't like it as there is too much talking and noise. We prefer a quiet, mixed area.'

'I'd recommend anyone to live here – it is good to live in a mixed community.'

One testament to their general positive experience of living in the area is that all but one of the BME residents would want to remain in the area long-term and indeed, three were looking to buy their home:

'We want to buy our house, we like the area and the people.'

The one person who wanted to leave suggested that this was due to the property rather than the area.

'I don't like the house it's damp.'

### ***The White residents' view***

Five long-standing White residents living in Chadderton were interviewed for the project. Three were women and they were between 35 and 65 years of age. Two had lived in the area for over 20 years, one referred to 16 years, another to 13 years and the fifth, to slightly less than eight years.

A common concern was that of young people causing trouble in the area, especially in summer and although such problems still exist, it was seen as less of an issue now than it had been previously. Only one person felt that the anti-social behaviour among some of the young people was racially motivated:

'There is an undercurrent of racial tension from some local youths from the area. People throw stones and eggs at Asian neighbours houses.'

Four of the five were positive about the recent influx of families from different ethnic backgrounds, although it was suggested that the area has a small number of long-standing BME residents. Indeed, the arrival of such households was seen as benefiting the community generally in that it engendered a greater sense of community spirit, something that the older, more established White residents felt had been lost:

'There used to be a good sense of community but as people have moved on it's changed: it's not the same. People stopped being good neighbours. However, a lot of Asians are living here now. Some don't like it but often they are better neighbours than the White people are.'

'The Asians have a good community spirit in their own culture and they have brought that with them here.'

It was also suggested that there was a general sense of integration among and between the newer BME residents and the long-standing White group:

'In this area we talk to one another quite a lot. My neighbours even gave me the keys for their house when they went on holiday to Bangladesh. They appreciate it when we talk to them in a normal way: they know we're okay and so they are okay with us.'

'At Eid the Asians go to each others houses and include White families too.'

Four of the five White residents consulted would recommend the area to other people. One of the group suggested:

'Our area is a good example of where people from different background can live together.'

A second offered a note of caution:

'Yes I would recommend it. It's a nicely mixed area, good for families but not without its problems but it's not bad at all. I wouldn't want anyone who has a problem with Asians living around here.'

The Pakistani respondent who had been a long-term resident of the area was equally complimentary about the area and the influx of households from different ethnic groups:

'Everybody is friendly here. It's never been an area with a lot of problems. Yes, there are isolated instances but they are generally dealt with by the police. Most of those who move here make an effort – you can't force them to like one another but most do make an effort.'

## **4. Discussion & Observations**

This final section provides an overview of the main findings from the evaluation and specifically considers the following issues:

- The success of the scheme in terms of facilitating a move for BME households experiencing housing need from BME traditional and non-traditional areas;
- The longer-term impact of the schemes on the areas and residents;
- The extent to which the schemes have led to greater ethnic integration and cohesive communities; and
- What makes a successful CIP?

Each of these will now be examined in turn:

### **Responding to BME housing needs and facilitating a move to non-traditional areas**

The evidence from both the Bellshill and FCHO schemes suggests that the CIP was instrumental in responding to the housing needs of the BME households. By moving to non-traditional BME areas they were generally able to improve their housing situation either in terms of their housing conditions by moving to a better quality property, or overcrowding by moving to a larger house.

### **The longer-term impact of the schemes on the areas and residents**

A distinction needs to be drawn here between the two schemes. In the case of Bellshill, the introduction of predominantly Asian households on a White estate met with initial strong resistance from the host community and many examples of racism, especially from the White youths, were a common feature in the interviews with the BME families. Some 'problem' White households were removed from the estate and others left voluntarily, the decision to initially move a number of Asian families onto the estate together meant that they individually felt less isolated and provided mutual support. In contrast, the Chadderton area of Oldham already had an ethnically diverse community albeit only a small number of non-White households. It is important to note that from the residents perspective that the area was seen as constituting 'a large estate' rather than a number of distinctive areas. However, importantly, it was not either regarded by the residents or perceived by those living outside the area as a 'White only' estate. A second distinction between the two schemes is that in the case of FCHO a range of ethnic groups were supported to move with no single ethnic group appearing to dominate the process. This greater ethnic diversity was less likely to contribute to community divisions based on specific ethnic origins.

One of the RBH staff involved in the scheme did allude to a potential future problem with the scheme at Bellshill. As the popularity of the estate among the Asian community grows, this is likely to lead to a greater demand for properties on this estate from this community and given their poor current housing conditions than many other communities, they are likely to be seen as being in priority need. The effect of this could be that some of the existing White households move off the estate and the number of Asian households living there could increase further. Potentially,

the estate could be perceived by the wider community as being an 'Asian area' and the existing BME traditional area expanded to incorporate this estate. This would seem to be in direct contradiction to the original rationale for the CIP in the first place. There is less likelihood of this occurring in Chadderton due to the fact that it is a larger geographical area and it is perceived to be ethnically and culturally mixed. In this sense, then it can be argued that the longer term impact of the scheme in Chadderton is potentially positive both for the BME and host community. The future is much less certain in the case of Bellshill.

### **The extent to which the schemes have led to greater ethnic integration and cohesive communities**

A significant barrier to the greater integration between the different ethnic groups on the Bellshill estate has been the level of racism and harassment directed towards the Asian households. While generally the authorities have responded quickly to reported incidents, such incidents are viewed by both White and Asian households as being an impenetrable barrier to integration. In some cases the Asian households have elected to remain in their home and avoid contact with other members of their community: a situation which is exacerbated by the lack of community-based activities on the estate which support and nurture community integration. On the whole then, there is little evidence that the scheme in Bellshill has, with the exception of limited social networks developed on a very individualist basis by some community members, resulted in a greater ethnic integration or cohesive communities. Furthermore, given the comments noted above, this is not necessarily likely to occur as the level of racism and harassment declines as this could lead to a further influx of Asian households. Many of the Asian households who have moved to the estate want to remain in the area and have or are looking to buy their home and this is despite the problems experienced suggesting a high degree of community resilience.

In the case of Chadderton, there pre-existed a degree of community integration and this formed an important foundation for the future integration of the different BME community groups as they moved into the area. The development of a series of community-based activities to further engender community integration was also influential. There are strong signs of a sense of community cohesion evidenced by the recognition among the long-standing White residents of the value of having an ethnically and culturally diverse community and their desire that in the future new households moving into the area will need to accept this diversity. However, it is unclear whether this view would still prevail if a significant number of non-White households moved into the area.

### **What makes a successful community induction programme?**

On the basis of the evidence derived from the two schemes it is possible to identify features which could be regarded as contributing to a successful CIP.

#### ***Strategic management of the process***

It is imperative that there is a strategic appreciation of what is trying to be achieved by a CIP accompanied by regular monitoring of the changing ethnic profile of the area/estate to ensure that the original objectives are still achievable. Close monitoring of the dynamics of an area can only be successfully achieved if monitoring procedures are in place to facilitate this. Interventionist practices need to consider ensuring that the community transformation leads to an ethnically balanced

community rather than one increasingly dominated by one ethnic group. This may require a degree of social engineering in the sense that a more selective approach to BME households wanting to move into the area may be required to attain a more ethnically balanced community. While there may be some reservations about adopting a more 'directive' approach to CIPs, without such intervention, these types of schemes run the risk of ultimately only extending the traditional BME areas and further segregating different ethnic communities spatially and culturally.

### ***Choice of ethnic groups***

There is potentially a greater chance of success for this type of scheme if a range of ethnic groups are supported to move into a non-traditional area. This could also impact on whether the transforming area is seen predominantly being a 'mixed' community or one associated with just one particular ethnic group. In the former case, this will also mean that the area is less likely to be attractive in the future to just one or two ethnic groups and so avoid becoming simply transformed into an extension of the BME/Asian traditional area.

### ***Choice of area***

CIPs are more likely to be successful if they are not targeted at small geographical areas such as estates with a homogeneous community. Rather, the focus should be on wider geographical areas where there already exists an element of ethnic diversity even if only on a relatively small scale. A second consideration is that where the identified area has existing problems, such as anti-social behaviour, these should be tackled prior to the movement of BME households into the area. In this way there is a clear distinction in the minds of the host community between existing problems and the settlement of BME households.

### ***Movement of a number of households together***

There are important benefits to supporting a number of BME families to move to a new area at the same time. This can help develop a sense of mutual support among the new households, combat any sense of social or cultural isolation on their part and help to establish a 'foothold' on the estate. Where a number of households move in at the same time they are less vulnerable individually for targeted discrimination by members of the host community towards one specific family.

### ***Consulting the host community***

As a precursor to implementing a CIP and moving BME households into a non-traditional area, consultation needs to be undertaken with the host community to explain the purpose of the scheme. Existing Resident's Associations or other community groups can be a useful starting point. It is important that the host community appreciate some of the potential benefits for the community of greater ethnic and cultural diversity. The organisation approach to anti-social behaviour should also be explained and the benefits of this to the community at large. Residents need to have a clear understanding of the pro-active approach of the various agencies towards the reduction in the level of harassment targeted at the BME households. Even where the host community covers a large geographical area, efforts should still be made to engage with local groups and particularly community leaders who have influence with other residents..

### ***Responding to hate crime and racial harassment***

A rapid response to incidences of hate crime and racial harassment is essential to facilitate the settlement of new BME households. Equally, all members of the community should feel confident that the relevant agencies, and particularly the police, will respond to all incidents of anti-social behaviour and not just those that are racially motivated. All residents should expect a zero-tolerance approach to racism and harassment.

### ***Flexible support package***

The evidence from this study suggests that the nature and type of support provided as well as the timing of the support will need to reflect the needs and expectations of the individual households concerned. Practical as well as emotional forms of support are important as is the household knowing that they have someone they can contact if problems arise. The timing of the withdrawal of such support will need to be negotiated with each family and will be influenced by the changing needs of the family over time.

### ***Development of community-based activities***

The findings highlight the importance of developing a range of community-based events and activities which encourage greater integration among the community alongside the implementation of the CIP. These should be developed by local agencies working collectively and in partnership with residents. The absence of such engagement opportunities is likely to contribute to a sense of social isolation among the newly arrived BME households and result in them being generally reluctant to engage with the host community.

### ***Extending the CIP***

The CIP was developed and implemented within a social housing context, although some of the properties within the implementation areas were privately owned. This would suggest that such schemes can work successfully in mixed tenure areas. However, whether or not CIP can be successfully applied to estates or areas with predominantly private sector properties requires further investigation