

MANIFESTO FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

CONCLUSIONS FROM A PANEL OF YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER RESIDENTS



Read online or download at:

<http://www.ippr.org/research/publications/social-connections-in-yorkshire-and-humber>

ABOUT THE PROCESS

On the weekend of the 30–31 July 2022, we brought together 14 participants who had taken part in previous focus groups as part of this research to discuss in more depth the potential solutions and policy ideas that could help people to feel better connected to others in their communities. The participants included refugees, asylum seekers and wider migrant groups and receiving communities, and residents came from each of the five research sites.

As part of this workshop, they heard from local organisations working on issues related to social isolation, loneliness, cohesion and community development in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Presentations were heard from the [Jo Cox Foundation](#), [Who Is Your Neighbour](#), [the Millside Centre](#) and [Migration Yorkshire](#).

The participants were asked to consider the benefits of social connection to them, including what it allowed them to do and how it made them feel, and then to think about what is needed to support social connections. They concluded the event by prioritising and developing policies to enable social connection that they feel should be acted on locally.

The manifesto below presents the groups conclusions in their own words, captured as faithfully as possible by IPPR researchers. It is a manifesto in three parts, covering:

- why social connection matters – what it allows us to do and how it makes us feel
- what we need to support social connection
- the key actions that should be taken locally.

As you read the manifesto, consider whether this rings true for your area. Could this have been written by residents in your town, city or village? What action can you, your council or your service take to enact the following?

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER RESIDENTS' MANIFESTO FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL CONNECTION

FEELING CONNECTED TO PEOPLE IN THE AREAS WE LIVE ALLOWS US TO...

- **Understand the people and the cultures of the area better and know more about where we live.** We can access local knowledge and understand how things work, such as how decisions are made, how to get around, and how to get involved. We have the opportunity to learn and practice the languages of our community – both English and the other languages spoken in our neighbourhoods.
- **Participate more easily.** Connections make it easier to do everything!
- **Meet people and make friends.** We have people around us we can share things with, including our worries.
- **Talk to people who are going through the same experiences as us.**
- **Know how to keep our children safe and happy;** know where good places are for them to go and who it is good for them to be around.
- **Know who to ask for help** and depend upon them to help us.
- **Help others.** We can do something good for the community, share our skills and give something back.
- **Say hello to people as we walk past;** we can connect with our neighbours.
- **Pop around to see people easily and feel welcomed,** without always needing to be invited.
- **Be accepted for who we are.** We don't need to put up a wall or hide who we are. We can be ourselves and be comfortable in who, and where, we are.
- **See the good in people,** build trust, acceptance and good relationships with others.

FEELING CONNECTED TO PEOPLE IN THE AREA I LIVE IN MAKES US FEEL...

- **Happy.** We are more relaxed and comfortable, and we see familiar faces that put us at ease.
- **Safer,** more supported and able to give our children more freedom to play in the local area. If something happened, we know we could ask for help.
- **Part of things,** that we belong, that we are involved. We feel less isolated.
- **Able to share things.** We are more confident to talk to people and share our experiences and can listen and learn from them too.
- **Trusted and purposeful,** because when we are truly connected to our community people know that they can come to us for help too: it's a two-way street.
- **Accepted** and that we are seen as part of the community.
- **That we are not alone;** someone is next to us, with us. We are in the same boat as others. We are a part of things, part of a community.

FOR US TO FEEL CONNECTED WITH OTHER PEOPLE IN OUR AREA, WE NEED...

- **Local places to go to make connections,** such as community centres, churches, mosques, and libraries.
- **For services to be provided locally to us.** We want what we need to be close by – including local food shops and doctors.
- **More support and encouragement to participate.** It needs to be made easy for us. This means we need to be communicated with clearly, in a way that works for us, to be welcomed warmly with a friendly face, and to be invited to come again. And for our needs to be met.
- **Local events,** where we have opportunities to meet people, and to find people with whom we have something in common.
- **Relationships with people we see regularly;** these might not be people we are good friends with, but they are day-to-day and help us feel part of things.

- **More activities to be cheaper or free to get involved with**, and running at a broader range of times. We need to be able to afford and have time to participate.
- **To be able to have control over our lives** – to be able to choose where we live and to be able to work. There need to be more opportunities for people from different backgrounds.
- **Respect.** We need to be shown honesty, kindness and generosity.
- **Trust.** Building trust within the community takes time and doesn't come from one-off events.
- **To be valued.** To offer and receive gratitude.

THE ACTION WE WANT TO SEE LOCALLY

- **Prioritise and invest in local and accessible education for adults and young people to ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for continued education and training for everyone, including asylum seekers.** Provide school leavers with a wide range of experiences and opportunities to learn within their communities – testing out their next steps and making the link to the kind of jobs that will be available in the future.
- **Local councils need to draw on the expertise in communities and support them to use their knowledge and experience.** This means involving communities in decision making and supporting them to deliver their own activities. This could include involving communities in decisions in how council money gets spent and having community representatives at meetings where decisions are made. Supporting communities should include recognising successes and helping with promoting activities through the council's communications.
- **Councils to support communities to bring local buildings back into community use.** Providing public spaces in neighbourhoods that meet the needs of people with diverse interests and from diverse backgrounds will revitalise our towns and cities, ensure that everyone feels welcomed and encourage people to spend time with each other socially. These spaces should be designed with the community and for the community, and not for making profit.
- **Local councils and organisations should invest in activities that bring people together and, collectively, are appealing to a wide range of people.** Not every event or activity will be for everyone – a broad range needs to be provided eg women-only events, events for young people. Activities could include street parties to build relationships between neighbours, learn about and share cultures and celebrate diversity. Those who are delivering services and activities make all the difference – they need the right skills and to have values and beliefs that align with the community and improving social connections.
- **Ensure public transport networks work for everybody**, by being an easy and affordable choice for all.
- **Respond proactively to community tensions** and prioritise and invest in tackling hate crime, discrimination and misinformation, including through education in schools and beyond.
- **Develop paid 'community champion' roles** that support individuals to use their social networks and life experience to promote health and wellbeing or improve conditions in their local community.

The progressive policy think tank

Citation: Mort, Qureshi A, Liuta J, Mahmood S and Yemane T (2022) *Building the foundations for social connection in Yorkshire and the Humber*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/research/publications/social-connections-in-yorkshire-and-humber>

Permission to share: This document is published under a creative commons licence: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>

Institute for Public Policy Research

IPPR, 14 Buckingham Street, London WC2N 6DF | www.ippr.org | [@IPPR](https://twitter.com/IPPR)

