

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**A POLICY TO TACKLE
SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Draft 1.4

Definition

Social exclusion is a term used to refer to the experience of specific communities, neighbourhoods, families and individuals. They will have either, a combination of linked problems (such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime, ill health, cycles of early pregnancy, family breakdown and isolation) or one particular characteristic (such as minority ethnic backgrounds, being in care, old age, drug dependency or abuse, mental illness or a disability). This may mean that their quality of life is significantly disadvantaged compared with the opportunities available to the majority.

The Huntingdonshire Context

In general, Huntingdonshire is a relatively prosperous area. Figures for unemployment, crime and teenage pregnancy are low. Skill levels, average income, the quality of housing and the health of the population are good. However, the generality of this data hides a range of situations in which relatively small sectors of the community are particularly susceptible to social exclusion. In Huntingdonshire these include young people, elderly people, people with disabilities, women, those on low incomes, those living in rural areas, those living in particular poor urban neighbourhoods and those people of an ethnic minority background isolated from mainstream service provision. (List not definitive or exhaustive).

Tackling Social Exclusion

Huntingdonshire's Community Strategy is the vehicle by which the Council and its partners commit themselves to delivering the environmental, economic and social well being of the District. To achieve that well being in all communities, it is necessary to tackle social exclusion and its causes. Consequently, this should not be seen as an issue in isolation from others facing the Council. It sits alongside other policies which tackle issues of equity including the Supporting People Strategy, the Equality Strategy, the Community Safety Strategy, the Customer Service Strategy, the Communication & Consultation Strategy and the Racial Equality Scheme. (Others?). Moreover, it needs to be seen as an issue which **informs** and **guides** all other Council policies, plans and services. Tackling social exclusion is not about providing the same service to everybody. It is about embedding the principles of equity within and throughout the organisation, to ensure that as far as is possible Council services are available to everybody, whatever their circumstances, communities are included by those services and that their views are taken into account in the processes used to develop services. Consequently, there are a range of criteria against which policies, plans, and services need to be checked.

A Check List for Social Inclusion¹

- Identify socially excluded groups and their particular problems
- Engage in meaningful consultation with socially excluded groups
- Engage in dialogue with the voluntary sector, particularly carers' organisations
- Increase the awareness of Council and other providers' services amongst socially excluded groups
- Identify unmet need and gaps in service provision (all providers)
- Explore both internal and external partnership approaches to meeting unmet need
- Promote activity in community-based organisations
- Involve local people in decision-making forums or partnerships
- Identify measures which will prevent or minimise exclusion
- Charge Members and officers with the responsibility to promote equity and challenge discrimination or stereotyping
- Identify support mechanisms to enable people to receive services
- Ensure that partners, including the Council's contractors, promote social equity
- Promote diversity in the Council's workforce

¹ Social Inclusion is the means by which Social Exclusion is tackled

Measuring Progress

Although tackling Social Exclusion may be embedded into all of our thought processes and actions by means of the checklist above, we need to be rigorous in testing the effectiveness of our activity. The Council is a large organisation and the changes required to tackle social exclusion will not happen overnight. The following process will need to be undertaken to develop the work in this area and ensure that progress is made.

- Identify the scale of the problem
- Identify priority areas (service based or community based - probably both)
- Develop action plans and set targets for improvement
- Evaluate and measure progress
- Publish performance against targets
- Share improvements internally and externally
- Re-evaluate priorities

Outcomes, Measures and Targets

The schedule attached identifies some key outcomes together with the measures and targets which will be used to monitor progress against the policy. (Note that these are examples only. There needs to be corporate buy in to an agreed set of outcomes)

SCHEDULE OF OUTCOMES RELATED TO TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

OUTCOME	MEASURE	TARGET	TIMESCALE
People with disabilities can access Council Services	Proportion of households where an individual has a disability which limits access to services	25%	2005
Minority Groups are involved in Council consultation exercises	Satisfaction level of minority groups	75%	2005
Council staff recognise discrimination	The number of complaints received which allege discrimination	Nil	2005
Community and welfare rights information is readily available	Number of services with Legal Services Commission Quality status	3	2004
Low levels of poverty	Income support claimants as proportion of adult residents	1%	2005