



**High Peak Borough Council**

*working for our community*

# **Social Inclusion Strategy**



**July 2003**

# HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

## SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Borough Council's strategic approach to promoting social inclusion, and to tackling social exclusion, in the High Peak.

1.2 We have adopted the Government's definition of social exclusion as our starting point:

*"A shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown".*

1.3 Recognising the importance attached to tackling social exclusion, our Corporate Plan ("Improving High Peak") specifically includes as one of its 4 key aims:

***"Aim 1: Supporting People***

***To promote social inclusion and enable communities and individuals to participate in improving the quality of life in the High Peak."***

1.4 This, in turn, is reflected in our political structures, which include an Executive Member with a specific portfolio for Community and Social Development. This position is complemented by a Social Inclusion and Community Select Committee, which helps develop policy and scrutinises decisions from the Executive. This structure helps ensure that social inclusion underpins our strategies and activities.

### 2. Our Approach to Social Inclusion

2.1 We have been helping disadvantaged people and deprived and isolated communities in the High Peak for many years and in many ways. We do this both through our policies and services and through our rich history of successful partnership working, aiming to ensure that social inclusion is embedded in our work and our ambitions. We work closely with our partners - particularly Derbyshire County Council, Connexions, the Primary Care Trusts, the Police and the voluntary sector (e.g. High Peak CVS) - since many issues are ones which we cannot, or should not, deal with alone. Where appropriate, we offer a referral service to agencies and organisations better suited to help. Nonetheless, there are many areas where we can, and do, take a lead role in helping to tackle social exclusion.

2.2 Our social inclusion activities and services revolve around a number of themes:

- Working with communities in areas of high deprivation and rural isolation
- Improving access to services for everyone
- Promoting a safe and healthy environment
- Improving local employment opportunities
- Reducing the impact of low income

- Providing advice on welfare rights
- Empowering local communities to help themselves
- Committing to securing equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices throughout the Council and the High Peak.

2.3 We already carry out, and remain committed to, a whole range of initiatives designed to improve the quality of life of people feeling excluded. Examples of our activities addressing social exclusion under each of these themes are set out below. They are by no means comprehensive.

**i) Working with communities in areas of high deprivation and rural isolation**

2.4 Gamesley ward (Glossopdale) is within the top 10%, and Stone Bench (Fairfield, Buxton) is within the top 25%, of the most deprived wards in the country. We have a long and successful track record of working closely with these local communities and of delivering a range of improvements, including:

- Developing and managing a community-based, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Scheme at Gamesley, linked with a Healthy Living Centre programme, overseen by an elected Board with a majority of community representatives (all local residents).
- Developing and managing a wide-ranging SRB Scheme for Buxton and the Peak District, including specific projects (e.g. support for the Education & Training Centre) at Fairfield.
- Operating a neighbourhood Housing Office at Gamesley.
- Providing financial and practical support, including an office, for Gamesley Residents Association and the Residents of Fairfield Association.
- Being actively involved in the Sure Start programme at Fairfield.

2.5 Parts of the High Peak are deeply rural (notably within the Hope Valley) and suffer from isolation and poor access to services. Deprivation is often 'hidden' because it is not as concentrated as in the towns. We work with local communities to address rural deprivation. In particular, we are active partners in the Peak District Rural Action Zone Steering Group, which promotes the case for, and secures funding for, supporting the Peak District economy. The Steering Group manages and co-ordinates a range of programmes to address these issues, including:

- Rural Development Programme
- European Objective 2 Programme
- Leader+ Programme

**ii) Improving Access to Services for Everyone**

2.6 We consider the need for readily accessible services for everyone as a very high priority and are presently investing heavily in a range of service improvements. Our activities and services include:

- Investing in our Network 2005 initiative, which includes a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and a Call Centre, ensuring extended hours and improved access to our information and services by all sections of the community.
- Locating 4 kiosks in rural areas to help extend accessibility to our services to the more isolated parts of the High Peak.
- Ensuring that all Council publications are available on request in Braille and in other languages.
- Introducing measures to improve our engagement with hard to reach groups, particularly through our improving relations with the voluntary sector.
- Operating a Council housing allocations policy designed to ensure that those in greatest need benefit.
- Running Carelink, our 24-hour helpline for older people, people with disabilities or anyone who may need immediate assistance, day or night. This service provides care and support at the press of a button 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Providing Disabled Facilities Grants (for private housing) and disabled adaptations (for Council housing) so that disabled and elderly people can modify and continue to live in their homes.
- Running the Homelessness Forum, with our partners, including Social Services, Probation, Connexions Service, Health Authority, Youth Service and voluntary sector.
- Employing a Community based Housing Advice Worker to improve our effectiveness in tackling homelessness.
- Providing new supported housing for young people (16-25 age group).
- Supporting the Millennium Cellar (Glossop), Buxton for Youth and New Mills Basement, drop-in centres that provide a range of information and advice for young people.
- Providing core funding to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, enabling it to secure funding for advice in the community (e.g. advice sessions in doctors' surgeries).
- Giving grants to voluntary groups that work to benefit disadvantaged groups, e.g. Volunteer Bureaux.
- Ensuring planning applications are available for viewing at a wide range of locations, including at Town and Parish Council, as well as at Borough Council, offices.
- Reaching Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, and developing a Race Equality Scheme, ensuring none of our policies or services discriminates on grounds of age, gender, disability, race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.
- Implementing an improvement plan to ensure disabled access to our public buildings
- Hosting the annual national Disability Rights Conference.

### **iii) Promoting a safe and healthy environment**

2.7 A safe and healthy environment is crucial in providing a good quality of life and we undertake several measures, in partnership with other service providers, to ensure we play our part in achieving this:

- Working closely with the Police and other agencies, with a particular emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour, which is a matter of great concern to many High Peak residents, despite being a low crime area. We have produced a Booklet to offer residents and community groups practical advice in reducing and tackling the problems associated with anti-social behaviour and have instigated measures to deal with specific problems, e.g. through Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Banning Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.
- Running a campaign to reduce the number of burglaries by bogus callers by helping vulnerable people feel safer in their homes, as well as encouraging more Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.
- Developing Crime Prevention packs to 'hotspot' areas to assist the victims of crime.
- Being a key partner in the Domestic Abuse Reduction Partnership (DARP), a multi-agency initiative to address issues around domestic violence.
- Operating CCTV systems in all our town centres.
- Working closely with the health sector and being involved with Health Improvement Programmes, recognising the links between health and social exclusion.
- Developing healthy living programmes, such as no smoking areas and provision of healthy eating options in restaurants, promoted through our Food Safety Team.
- Supporting specific fitness/health programmes, including Exercise on Prescription and High Peak Walks for Health.
- Providing special fitness sessions for people aged 50+, for women, for children and for those with permanent or temporary disabilities at our Leisure Centres and swimming pools.
- Developing an 'Active in the Community' programme which arranges activity sessions in community venues, such as village halls.
- Contributing to the provision of young people's facilities, including playgrounds, playing fields and skateboard parks in several communities.

#### **iv) Improving local employment opportunities**

2.8 Providing improved access to training and job opportunities not only helps create a more thriving local economy but also is often the key to enabling people to secure a higher standard of living. Measures we undertake to improve training and job opportunities include:

- Working with our partners to manage regeneration programmes (including Single Regeneration Budget, Objective 2, Leader + and Market Towns Initiative Programmes) with a whole range of projects designed to tackle social and economic exclusion and leading to better job prospects, education opportunities and skills. These include the Village Agents Scheme, Peak Business Support, IT Training Clubs, Furniture Project and Volunteer Car Schemes.

- Opening up industrial land and promoting inward investment, business start-ups and expansion of existing firms to improve the opportunity for businesses to create local jobs.
- Working closely with the University of Derby to secure its development in Buxton and increase the range of further and higher educational opportunities available throughout the High Peak.

## **v) Reducing the Impact of Low Income**

2.9 Helping people to reduce the impact of low incomes can make a considerable difference to their quality of life. Our activities in this area include:

- Running the High Peak Care & Repair Agency, which, through the Home Repair Assistance scheme, includes measures to alleviate fuel poverty, improve home security and carry out repairs and adaptations to homes of elderly or disabled people.
- Implementing a fuel poverty strategy, comprising:
  - comprehensive energy conservation programme in our housing stock.
  - being host authority for the Notts/Derbyshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, which aims to save precious resources and reduce heating bills.
  - grants under the Warmfront Scheme (HEES) available to residents on means-tested benefits to help with the costs of insulation and heating.
- Adopting planning policies designed to provide more affordable housing.
- Making recreation and leisure facilities as accessible as possible, including concessions for families, senior citizens, juniors, unemployed and disabled people.
- Participating in the County Council's B-Line Scheme, providing extra discount to young people on leisure facilities, public transport, shopping and entertainment.
- Providing a generous annual contribution to the County Council's Meals on Wheels Service.
- Giving a 50% reduction for pest control services for people in receipt of housing benefit.
- Providing a generous level of support to the Derbyshire Concessionary Travel Pass Scheme, encouraging mobility of elderly, disabled and other people through greater access to public transport.

## **vi) Providing Advice on Welfare Rights**

2.10 We are keen to encourage people to take up their entitlements to benefits and other support mechanisms, by:

- Providing comprehensive advice on Council Tax benefit and Housing Benefit Schemes, with over £15m paid out each year to people on low incomes.
- Agreeing arrangements and providing advice and suitable payment schemes to clear arrears and deal with difficulties with paying rent, Council Tax etc.
- Investing in a high standard Benefit Service, with all our indicators consistently in the top quartile within the national quality framework

- Arranging home visits by our Benefits & Housing teams to assist people with form-filling and to provide advice on housing issues and benefit entitlement.
- Campaigning to increase take-up of benefits with Derbyshire County Council's Welfare Rights Service, including producing a new set of leaflets available from CAB and local libraries.
- Being an active partner in the Derbyshire Community Legal Service Partnership.

**vii) Empowering Local Communities to Help Themselves**

2.11 We believe an important part of our community leadership role is about community capacity building, encouraging and helping communities to help themselves:

- We act as Accountable Body for a community based Single Regeneration Budget and Healthy Living Centre programme at Gamesley (Gamesley-on-the-Go). The Board is chaired by a community representative and comprises a majority of community representatives, elected by local residents.
- Through our role in managing the SRB6 Buxton and Peak District programme and contributing to the core costs of the Derbyshire Rural Community Council we contribute to the Village Agents Scheme, through which selected parishes are encouraged and guided to develop and implement their own village plan.
- Through the Community Safety Partnership we manage the Communities against Drugs initiative, through which community groups can secure funding for small-scale projects to provide activities to divert people from activities that might otherwise lead them into drug abuse.
- The Partnership has also produced a guide to offer residents practical advice to help them deal with all forms of anti-social behaviour, either by themselves or contacting the appropriate agency for help.
- Through our Community Grants scheme we fund a range of community groups and activities, including the Citizens Advice Bureau and volunteer bureaux, to whom people can go to for independent legal and other advice.
- Our Sports Development Strategy and programme encourages volunteers to take coaching and leadership qualifications to improve the development of a wide range of sports in their own communities.
- We are jointly developing a Voluntary Sector Compact with the community and voluntary sector.

**viii) Committing to securing equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices throughout the Council and the High Peak**

2.12 The Council's policy is to provide services fairly to all sections of the community and to ensure the application of fair employment practices. This means recognising, and responding accordingly, to the diverse needs of residents, workers and visitors to the Borough. The Council is committed to:

- Providing training and advice to ensure that Members and employees understand the policy and their responsibilities.
- Monitoring service usage to identify groups within the community whose needs are less well met.

- Taking action to widen service take-up across all sections of the community and ensure equality of access to services.
- Taking action to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good race relations and equality of opportunities.
- Consulting both service users and people who do not use our services.
- Promoting itself as an employer people are proud to work for and seeking to achieve a balanced workforce which reflects the local labour market.
- Ensuring systematic progress through the levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

### **3. High Peak Community Strategy (“Our Community.....Working Together”)**

- 3.1 The High Peak Community Strategy (March 2003) is the key partnership strategy for responding to community needs and aspirations. It provides the context for setting the priorities for our Corporate Plan and for the plans of our key partner organisations represented on the Derbyshire Dales & High Peak Local Strategic Partnership. It aims to ‘add value’ to the wide range of activities that we are already doing to improve the quality of life for communities in the High Peak.
- 3.2 The priorities developed by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) recognise the importance of social inclusion through its top 3 themes, which are:
- Facilities and services for young people
  - Healthy communities
  - Improving access to information and advice on rights and services.
- 3.3 The Community Strategy also aims to put in place the building blocks for improved economic opportunity, through its themes of:
- Supporting new and existing businesses
  - Education, skills and lifelong learning.
- 3.4 The Community Strategy promotes the importance of “getting communities involved”. This is to ensure local people can become actively involved in making the Community Strategy work; providing clear, co-ordinated information to let everyone know what’s happening; and being open and accessible, so everyone is able to take part regardless of their background, age, abilities or other factors.
- 3.5 With our partners, we will begin to develop several new projects designed to promote social inclusion during the forthcoming year (2003/04):
- A Youth Partnership to co-ordinate the development of services to young people.
  - A ‘Home-start’ scheme.
  - A ‘Handy person’ scheme to support vulnerable residents.
  - An Equalities Forum.
  - Electronic access to all key partner services.
  - A Voluntary Sector Compact.

- Expansion throughout the High Peak of the Glossopdale Business Start-up project, aimed at young, unemployed people.
- An Action Plan for skills and lifelong learning in the High Peak.
- Adapting services in preparation for Buxton becoming a University Town.

#### **4. Corporate Plan – “Improving High Peak”**

4.1 Having regard to the Community Strategy, our Corporate Plan (‘Improving High Peak 2003-2008’) places a high priority on promoting social inclusion. This is reflected in its key aims and actions.

4.2 Building on past successes, and our continuing involvement in activities set out in Section 2 of this document, our social inclusion priorities for the next 12 months (2003/04) are to:

- Review our services to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour and crime
- Target persistent offenders of anti-social behaviour in partnership with the police
- Develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Promote the involvement of young people in sport
- Develop detailed planning guidance on affordable housing
- Publish a Homelessness Strategy
- Review our policies and services to ensure they treat people fairly and equally in accordance with the Corporate Equality Plan.
- Secure development of employment land at Etherow Park, Hadfield.
- Establish a Landlords Accreditation Scheme to protect the safety and welfare of students living in private rented accommodation, so helping to improve access to high quality education and skills.
- Continue to implement our Network 2005 initiative, including making all our services available electronically and making County Council services accessible through our service centres.
- Setting up a joint working agreement between the Council and the voluntary sector.

4.3 Our Corporate Plan contains a core set of values, which we aim to live up to in everything we do. These include “empowering people” and “treating everyone equally”, consistent with our social inclusion agenda.

4.4 The Corporate Plan actions for promoting social inclusion are set out in the appended schedule.

## Aim 1: Supporting People

“To promote social inclusion and enable communities and individuals to participate in improving the quality of life in the High Peak”

Priorities (in order)	This year we will	By March 2004 we aim to have ..	We will have met this priority if by 2008 ...
<b>Top priority : Improve community safety by taking action to limit opportunities for crime and disorder</b>	Design and carry out our services to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour and crime  Target persistent offenders of anti-social behaviour in partnership with the police	Adopted planning guidance to 'design out crime'  6 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts in place	Fear of crime is reduced by 5% from 2001 levels
<b>Improve the health of the community</b>	Develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy to minimise the risk of ill-health from a cold home  Promote involvement of young people in sport	Secured energy efficiency improvements in 100 properties  Developed sport and recreation opportunities for young people in areas of low participation	There is a detectable improvement in life expectancy rates
<b>Ensure there is affordable housing in the Borough to address identified needs</b>	Develop planning guidance on 'affordable housing'  Publish Homelessness Strategy	30% of new homes on relevant sites which are 'affordable'  Provided outreach housing advice and help to 120 households threatened with homelessness	There is a 5% reduction in the number of households registering a housing need, based on 2001 level
<b>Ensure that the Council treats all residents fairly and equally</b>	Further review our current policies and services to ensure they are fair	External assessors confirm we keep Level 2 (of 5) of the Equality Standard	We have achieved Level 4

## Aim 2: Creating Jobs and Prosperity:

“To create a thriving economy which is responsive to the needs of local communities”

Priorities (in order)	This year we will	By March 2004 we aim to have ..	We will have met this priority if by 2008 ...
<b>Bring in the maximum amount of external funds to support businesses</b>	Secure a developer for industrial land in Hadfield (Etherow Park)	The Etherow Park site ready for occupation and building started on small business units	There is a 5% increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses
<b>Improve access to high quality education, skills and lifelong learning opportunities</b>	Create safer living conditions for students coming into the Borough for further education	Established a Landlords Accreditation Scheme to protect the safety and welfare of students living in private rented accommodation	98% of 18-24 year olds are in full-time education or employment

11.14

## Aim 4: Improving the Council:

“To be considered a high performing Council by our local community, partners and peers”

Priorities (in order)	This year we will	By March 2004 we aim to have ..	We will have met this priority if by 2008 ...
<b>Top priority : Make all services available electronically</b>	Implement our second ‘Electronic Government’ Strategy  Work with our Derbyshire Partners on providing joint access to services	65% of services able to be accessed electronically  County Council services accessible through our service centres	All services can be accessed electronically with links to Derbyshire County Council and the voluntary sector.
<b>Demonstrate continuous improvement in our services</b>	Carry out an action plan of improvements agreed following the assessment by the Improvement and Development Agency	Set up a joint working agreement between the Council and the voluntary sector	75% of residents are satisfied with council services  No services rate as ‘low performing’