

Riots to Resilience:

Five ways to turn lessons into action

Stories and experiences from the racist and Islamophobic riots of August 2024





“I have never seen an issue ignite the sector so rapidly. It has been really positive; people are trying to work together and enact systemic change.”

Local infrastructure organisation, North of England

Acknowledgements



Thank you to the 80 local and national community and statutory organisations for sharing with us their local and unique experiences of the August 2024 racist and Islamophobic riots and their aftermath. We now have a better understanding of what we need to do to better support communities affected by violence like this in the future.

This report brings together diverse voices from voluntary, community, faith and local statutory organisations across England. It reminds us what happened during the riots and the challenges faced in the response. These reflections demonstrate what we need to do to be more resilient in the future, so that when a violent, multi-site emergency happens again, we can do better together by being more prepared and restore connections across the community. We hope it feels like a reflective conversation between partners from different locations.

Please note: due to many participants wanting to stay anonymous, all quotations have been left unattributed.

We asked: **Do you think your local area is prepared for future riots?**

Only a **third** of the people we heard from said they thought their area **was prepared for future riots.**

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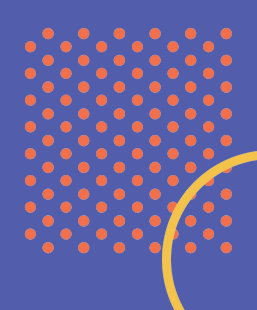
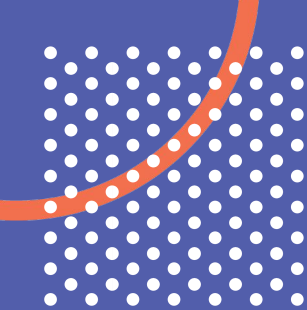
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01. Foreword from Robyn Knox MBE, Director, VCS Emergencies Partnership



01: Foreword: A Call to Strengthen and Unite

Robyn Knox MBE, Director, VCS Emergencies Partnerships

Over the Summer of 2024, tragedy struck the UK. Three girls, Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, were murdered by an intruder at a school holiday dance class in Southport. The incorrect naming of the perpetrator, and incorrect speculation he was a person seeking asylum and a Muslim quickly spread online, igniting violent, racist, Islamophobic and anti-migrant attacks around the UK.

Fear and violence spread rapidly, with the targeting of Muslims, refugees and people of colour in towns and cities across the country leaving people traumatised and afraid to leave their homes. With tensions and emotions high, hatred was normalised in conversations on social media, between individuals and in public spaces, turning places of refuge and safety into battlegrounds.

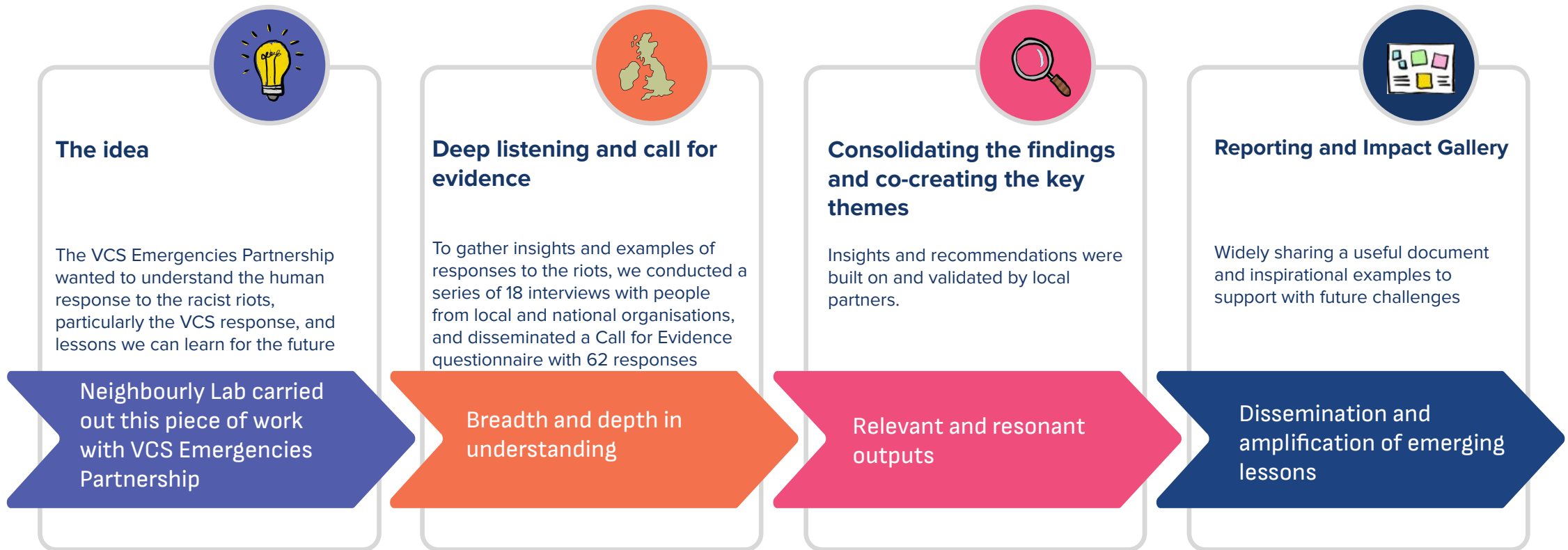
We witnessed the widespread impact of these events and saw this wasn't just about those directly targeted - it affected every corner of society. The VCS Emergencies Partnership connects voluntary, community and public sector partners before, during and after emergencies, so people and communities are always at the heart of resilience building and emergency management from the start.

Our role now is to learn, adapt, and help partners take action. This emergency exposed systemic, entrenched issues in our society and leaves us with lasting scars. The August riots demonstrated how a single shocking event can be a catalytic touch paper for widespread violence. Whilst love and solidarity eventually prevailed, it took time and left divisions unhealed in some places.

Lessons must be learned, and action taken to embed them. The Emergencies Partnership are not experts in social cohesion, but we know the threat of violence remains. The experience of our partners will help others to learn, prepare and strengthen resilience if confronted with this violence again in the future.

Funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, we partnered with the brilliant folk at Neighbourly Lab to hear the stories from our partners, and document what helped communities feel safer and more connected. They gathered insights and worked with partners to co-create a set of simple recommendations to help us all become more resilient. This report is a call to build stronger, more connected communities. The five recommendations are clear: we must act now, together, to prevent repeated mistakes to prepare our communities and ensure love and solidarity wins.

About this piece of work



Mapping contributors' locations

Thank you to the local and national partners as well as everyone who responded to the call for evidence questionnaire

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Local partners

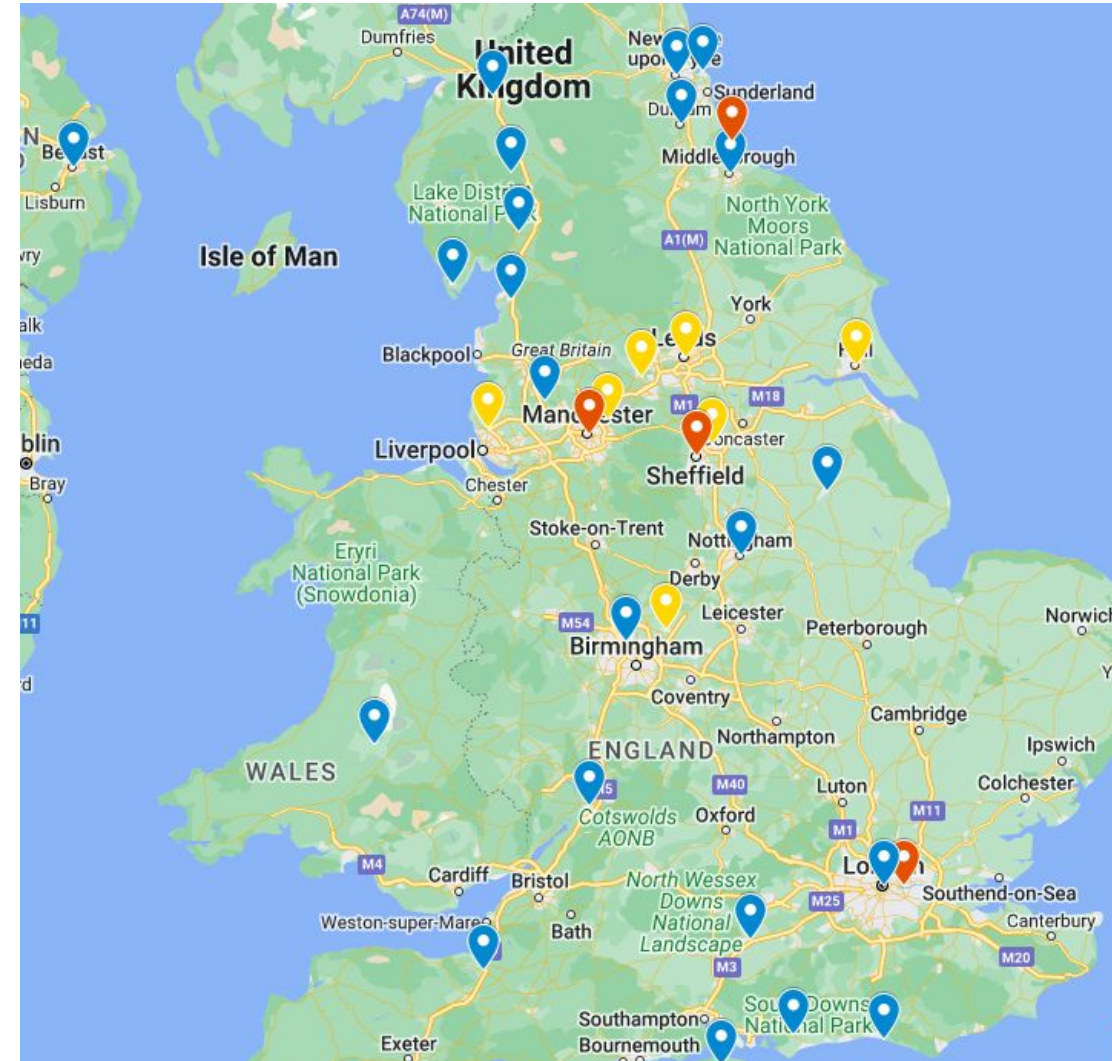
 - Local infrastructure organisations
 - Local authorities
 - Charities and non-profit organisations
- 

National partners

 - National infrastructure bodies
 - Local authorities and Combined authorities
 - Membership bodies
 - Charities and non-profit organisations
- 

Call for evidence

 - Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise Sector
 - Public sector organisations



02. Introduction: timeline of events, background to this report and examples of impact

Timeline of events

In London, far-right demonstrators clashed with police near Downing Street. Violence also broke out in Hartlepool, Newton Heath (in Greater Manchester), and Aldershot - several people were arrested including Middlesbrough's march organiser.

Far-right rallies across England were outnumbered by counter-protests. In Bristol, anti-racist protesters formed a protective line around a hotel housing people seeking sanctuary. Riots also broke out in Belfast, but never materialised in Cardiff.

In Birmingham and Plymouth, violent riots were opposed by anti-fascist protests. Violent attacks to people and places occurred in Belfast, Darlington and Burnley. A list of 39 law specialists and immigration services circulated on social media.

30 July

31 July

2 August

3 August

4 August

5 August

Since the riots

Following the murder of the three girls, a protest outside Southport Mosque turned into a violent riot, with objects thrown at the mosque and police. The riot was dispersed by riot police.

In Sunderland, mounted officers and riot police were attacked by rioters, the police station was set alight, and shops were looted. An anti-immigrant protest also gathered in Liverpool.

Hotels housing people seeking sanctuary in Rotherham and Tamworth were attacked by far-right rioters, and further violence was seen across England and Wales, including Solihull, and Hull. Counter-protestors came out in Weymouth and Cardiff.

On 7 August, anti-racist rallies were held across the country, involving around 25,000 counter-protesters - this was to stand against the far-right demonstrations that were planned. People protected buildings and businesses, and helped with the clean-up following the riots. Many people, however, still live in fear, traumatised by the riots. Funding is being distributed, and some policymakers are pushing for change.

Background to this report

Rising anti-refugee and migrant sentiment, polarisation and austerity have fuelled this complex emergency, setting it apart from others. This is because, by its very nature, it targets some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Additionally, it put further pressure on the voluntary and community sector in their efforts to repair and reconcile communities.

As with floods, fires and other devastating emergencies, the riots of August 2024 required an effective and coordinated response from voluntary and community organisations and statutory bodies. However, this was a humanitarian emergency, it was set apart by the fact that people in our communities were targeted. We all had a duty of care to protect them, prevent it from escalating and put in place processes to help us be more resilient and less divided.

We heard about residual fear among some communities, reminding us that support is not only essential at the peak of the emergency, but mechanisms need to be put in place to help communities support each other and develop resilience in its aftermath.

Many voluntary, community and statutory organisations played a critical role in responding to and helping their areas recover from the racist riots of August 2024.

However, this was not the case everywhere. The rapid escalation of violence highlighted that some places were unprepared to deal with this type of compounded emergency. Both types of experience offer important learning opportunities that are worth sharing widely. Whilst we can hope that an emergency like this will not happen again, we cannot guarantee it; so we have developed this framework to support organisations to become more prepared, make places more resilient and make civic emergency preparation and recovery a higher priority for all.

This framework highlights 5 key ways of making our communities more prepared for and resilient to future violent emergencies. It reminds of the importance of having deep and strong links with communities across lines of difference and establishes the types of leadership necessary for these situations and recovery from them. It explores the vital role of social and information infrastructures in our communities, in supporting safe places and trustworthy information sharing. It also reminds us of the importance of local history and using people's experiences of riots in the past to help young people understand the different choices they have.



Impact from the riots: Experiences of racism, Islamophobia, harassment, fear and vulnerability

Since the riots, organisations have reported that people feel an increase in racism, Islamophobia and harassment directed at them. Whilst many have expressed this was common before, most feel that it has grown worse.

People from diverse heritage backgrounds have shared how they have felt targeted with slurs and abuse, and some report having been physically attacked. Some say they feel frightened, vulnerable and that they no longer belong in their community. Others have stopped using essential services and have withdrawn from going out for errands and socialising, isolating themselves in their homes. This seems more acute for some women, who feel they stand out more in their local area.

Some people suggested the violence needed to be called out as racist and Islamophobic sooner. *“[It has been] referred to in different ways, condemning it, without being explicitly open on what it was about, the messages were not strong. People have not challenged racism.”* **Local council, North West England**

“Many were verbally abused, particularly whilst walking around our town. Many people stopped speaking languages other than English on our streets. Many parents asked their children not to go outside during the summer holidays, and even some adults were so fearful that they remained indoors. Our building was also targeted with racist and hostile stickers.” **VCFSE Sector, North West England**

“The impact of the riots varied but did involve some food banks closing early because of external concerns or having to put in additional safety measures. Others also found more direct racist language coming through from some established volunteers.” **National infrastructure organisation**

“We saw disorder in a number of towns in the Lancashire area on varying levels from relatively small numbers in a number of towns to full scale riots in Blackpool. We are a very diverse county and received information from staff that some felt vulnerable travelling to and from work and around and about their homes due to the disorder. We also had to manage and are still managing the consequences for the community who lived in the vicinity of the perpetrators address in West Lancashire, this has included media intrusion and threats of protests in the area.” **Public Sector, North West England**



Impact from the riots: Experiences of anti-refugee and anti-migrant sentiment

The scapegoating of migrants, fuelled by some national media, exploded after the mislabelling of the perpetrator of the Southport attacks. It included rioting outside and burning of hotels, attacking businesses, and making people afraid to be out on the streets. One VCS organisation told us, “*my client had his business burnt down for no other reason than he was a newcomer*”.

Spotlight Story:

There is still a latent amount of fear and some people are living in a state of uncertainty. Many are scared of being in a crowd wondering ‘who might attack me’ and prefer to stay behind closed doors. They are still in threat mode. Despite this the communities have been quite resilient and quickly tried to get back to normal. Some have managed to return to day to day life but they reported feeling more cautious, which has meant they have been slowly returning to use the services set up to support them. People have reported changing their route into the town centre, they are travelling in pairs, and some continue to feel afraid of more attacks.

Charity supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary, North East of England.

“I was the only one who personally knew individuals from the hotel. One of them said something heartbreaking: why do they want to kill us? It was horrendous. I should have stayed in Syria - I would have died with my mum.”

Local council, Midlands

“The strongest message was Islamophobia...but the Romanians were also targeted and other communities were indirectly affected. We went out on Monday to speak to the affected communities and some felt that people weren’t taking all the affected into account. It was visible on the streets that there were lack of people on the streets.”

Local infrastructure organisation, North East of England

“The wider migrant community just withdrew— a week after we had a drop in, people stopped coming out to access.”

Charity supporting refugees, North East of England

Impact from the riots: Experiences of support and solidarity

Despite the violence, we also learnt of key moments of solidarity demonstrated by the public toward those affected. They were key in preventing further escalation, not only promoting messages of unity and peace, but also protecting local mosques, businesses and hotels housing people seeking sanctuary in non-violent ways.

Volunteers and businesses came out after the riots to clean-up and rebuild. They wanted to show the affected communities that the racist and violent behaviours are not welcome and do not represent the wider majority. People felt strongly that they didn't want their area to be tainted by the far-right hate and violence. They wanted their communities to work together across lines of difference.

"Our service in Rotherham was on the frontline, supporting people that were trapped." **National charity**

"I feel proud to live in Brighton as it has a long history of tolerance & inclusivity and of standing up to attempts by the far-right to sow division. Therefore, I'm confident that if the far-right try to mobilize in Brighton, they will be opposed by the local population." **Higher Education Sector, South East of England**

"The response to the riots culminated in many people standing in support of the refugee communities by gathering in North Finchley outside of an Afghan greengrocers and also remaining vigilant about a law firm offering specialist immigration advice. As it turned out there was no counter demonstration from far-right and racist organisations." **VCFSE Sector, South East of England**

"A week after the riots, it was Slavery Remembrance Day and the carnival. All the diverse communities celebrated with costumes and music; the carnival was moved indoors but groups coordinated and people came and showed resilience." **Local infrastructure organisation, North East of England**

03. Five ways to build resilience for future emergencies: reflecting on emerging lessons and opportunities

03. Five ways to build resilience for future emergencies

1.

Know your communities

Strengthening connections across organisations of different size, scale and sector

2.

Know your leaders

Effective collaboration to lead the response and recovery

3.

Know your places

Identify the places and spaces that are open to everyone during an emergency of this type

4.

Know your sources of information

Minimising dis and misinformation through trusted communication channels

5.

Know your history

Harnessing local memory and mobilising unofficial leaders to inspire young people and help with healing

As a result of our conversations, we have elicited five interconnected ways that our partners in communities think will help people and places be more resilient to future racist riots.



“The riots are an indicator that division exists, and we need to understand the causes and roots of this. How can we strengthen our capabilities around talking about division and create space to understand what people's fears are.”

Infrastructure organisation, North West of England



1.

Know your communities

Strengthening connections across organisations of different size, scale and sector

The events of August 2024 served to remind us how powerful community can be, but also its fragility and vulnerability to division. Whilst some people were trying to break down years of co-existence and expose deeper inequalities, others were trying to protect and rebuild their communities.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see the importance of meeting, mixing, and working together across lines of difference. Many places reflected on the gaps in their knowledge and network of who lived in their communities and they might need specific support in the face of racist and Islamophobic targeting. Even those places that have worked hard entrenching diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism within their communities recognise this is ongoing work, and the responsibility of us all to build stronger connections.

The riots have provided an opportunity for more inter-community and inter-organisational collaboration that's based upon common goals and continues on an ongoing basis. This work can take place behind the scenes, for example through food banks and youth activities. Crucially, it needs to bring together smaller, grassroots community organisations with larger, more established ones. It is especially important to build these relationships so that organisations and communities are able to future-proof themselves: effectively monitor tensions and share information, concerns, and advice. Operating across lines of difference means that all groups will be represented, with clear communication channels so they can safely share what is happening in their communities. Many places have already started to make this happen, by reaching out and finding underrepresented groups, hoping that this will contribute to their community becoming more resilient to an emergency of this kind.



In many locations where there were well-established connections across faith groups and organisations of different size, scale, and sector, communities were better able to respond and share information, such as if people were coming from out of town to cause harm. People leveraged their existing networks and built on the trust that had been built over time either during

COVID or other activities. Developing stronger relationships by working together meant that there was swift and effective communication. Relationships helped in providing real-time updates to counter any mis or disinformation. People and organisations that were connected checked in with each other both during the riots and throughout the recovery phases.

In many of these locations, there were strong counter protests that stood in solidarity with refugees and affected communities. People mobilised together to condemn the far-right ideologies and hate messages, and demonstrated resilience through solidarity. People from these communities were keen to express solidarity and distance themselves from the actions of the far-right, sending messages of support, kindness, and peace. Many also tried to volunteer and help with the clear up afterwards.

Faith leaders showed compassion and solidarity with all those impacted by the riots. Some also bridged the divide showing care to those involved, bringing both tea and words of kindness.

Spotlight Story:

In an area in the North of England, there were riots, unrest and high tensions. The events deeply affected the local community, creating fear and division, and highlighting the need for both immediate and longer term support. An infrastructure organisation, with a longstanding presence in the area, played an important role in coordinating immediate emergency support, as well as being the liaison for the sustained recovery efforts and the ongoing fostering of community cohesion. This organisation was able to mobilise quickly as they had existing strong relationships established before COVID-19, which were further strengthened during the pandemic and upheld in the time since. They create opportunities for collaboration among multiple charities in their network, but appreciate that they need to work to identify any gaps, bringing in new community organisations and faith groups who may be new or not yet part of their network. This proactive and inclusive approach to outreach was essential to their response to the riots: sharing intelligence, reassuring residents, and aiding in recovery.

“The infrastructure organisations are well established and well trusted to be the intermediary and bridge builder and we have candid relationships with the council and police. We have invested long term in the infrastructure and connecting strength. It's about recognising this investment pays dividends in emergencies, it's about investing in relationships and building trust.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**

“We went to different places to ask people how they were feeling. We had simple messaging and frontline staff presence to understand what was happening.” **Charity, North East of England**

“The mosque came out and gave food for the Hull community... being present and being peaceful...they called out for local people to come against what happened.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North East of England**

“After the riots, there were community dinners with various organisations. They were talking about all the work they do in the community and some did not know about what each other did, the community dinners are a space for groups to take turns to get to know each other and it was an opportunity to come together and learn more about each other.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**



“We went in person to drop-in places...we went to see how the staff were feeling, to be present. The police over the weekend knocked on the doors of mosques...to support them.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North East of England**

“The counter protests and community organisation was great: showing resistance to and a complete rejection of the racist narrative that was being shared by far-right groups. Publicly and clearly referring to the riots as "racist" and "Islamophobic" and being clear about what was going on.” **VCFSE Sector, South East of England**

“After the riots we joined the council teams to do door knocking in the area where the riots took place.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North West of England**

“There was a strong sense of solidarity and mutual care at a time when people were struggling to gather factual information.” **National infrastructure organisation**



There were many locations which were less well connected, which meant that early warning systems were unprepared and accurate information was slower to be shared. We heard examples where a lack of coordination had a negative impact on the local response - resources and messaging were duplicated, making efforts seem confused and chaotic. People were not connected enough, for example through WhatsApp groups, so real-time information was delayed in reaching people, allowing mis and disinformation to travel uncontested.

Most commonly, we heard about organisations predominantly being connected with others similar to them (either in terms of delivery, mission area, size, or location) and sharing information between each other during the riots. These organisations believe they have a job to do in connecting with the community more broadly, with more diverse groups and organisations. They want to build relationships with these groups, and across lines of difference, to ensure everyone will be supported during a future emergency of this kind. Establishing solidarity and cohesion as a priority for all is a responsibility for all organisations. The resource challenges, in terms of time and funding, are well known, but those we spoke to agree that inter- and cross- organisational work will create longer-term benefits, helping to develop community resilience to emergencies like the riots.

"I felt there was no coordinated response from the council, it was frustrating. People were just calling the general phone line, and people going to different places and not coming together." **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England'**

"Word spread that there had been a man stabbing people from the riots, and people were heading to the mosque. This caused fears and panic, but the threat was not real. Time was spent countering this—it takes time to fact-check, but the pace at which misinformation spreads is overwhelming." **Local infrastructure organisation, North West of England**

"The work is in the hyperlocal neighbourhoods, it's about working in and between. For example tenants' associations and the local bowling club. The work needs to happen within streets of each other. We need to think about how we work at grassroots level. It's about social infrastructure place shaping work...at it's hyper local level." **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**

"There needs to be more money and if we really want to be prepared we have to tackle racism and migrant hate. We have to invest in different dialogues with multiple parts of the population and work with them to improve their life chances." **Charity supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary, North East of England**

1. Know your communities

How can we better know our diverse communities and strengthen connections across organisations of different size, scale and sector?

Reflections

- Do you know people in diverse local community groups and faith-based organisations?
- Do you know people in formal response organisations, how they might work and how you can support them during a violent emergency?
- Could you make connections with community and faith groups that may benefit from being part of a local emergency response?

Opportunities

- Conduct local outreach and invest in understanding who makes up your communities
- Develop good connections and broader relationships, identifying networks of trust with direct communication lines across local communities, so as many people as possible know how to connect with trustworthy information
- To nurture and update community connections and contacts regularly and keep the networks/groups lightly active so that relationships are built over time

2.

Know your leaders

Effective collaboration to lead the response and recovery

We know how important local organisations were in supporting communities during the riots. Central to an effective local response was how it was led and the systems that were in place for dealing with the immediate crisis, the recovery and the long-term impacts.

To be more prepared for future emergencies like the 2024 riots, community and voluntary sector organisations want the reassurance that appropriate responses are included in local emergency management plans. Organisations would like to know clearly what the protocols are for dealing with violent, racist and Islamophobic riots. These protocols should include: who the leader of the emergency response is; what the protocols for both de-escalation and community reassurance are; what the roles of different organisations in addressing the emergency are; who the key point of contact is, or who is leading the flow of information; who will lead on the recovery. These protocols will help organisations know what their role is and how they can best support both the response and their community. Trust in leadership is an essential condition for cross-sector and cross-organisation collaboration and for role execution to be effective. Leadership in responding to a violent emergency needs to include local law enforcement, local councils, emergency responders, voluntary and community organisations, faith groups, and local businesses.

Good leadership in the face of racist and Islamophobic riots differs from that in other emergencies - it needs leaders to be bold and compassionate in their response as well as being able to de-escalate the violence and minimise damage to key services. During the 2024 riots, effective leadership included: calling out the violence for what it was; stopping the violence from escalating; being seen on the streets; visibly standing in solidarity with those affected; and communicating and collaborating with a range of actors in different ways.

“We’ve held in-person meetings with faith groups...these discussions involved speaking directly with community members to better understand why these events occurred and to work with them toward meaningful solutions.” **Local council, Midlands**



In areas where there was effective leadership, the riot response tended to go more smoothly.

In these instances, there was an already established multi-agency approach in place and effective collaboration with local councils, police and voluntary sector organisations. Quickly people used the existing networks to share co-ordinated reassurance messages and an information strategy that meant all organisations were clear on their roles and responsibilities. It seemed that as long as leadership and roles were clear, it didn't matter so much who was coordinating the response as long as they had local credibility and reach.

“VCS organisations came together to support those most affected, and to ensure their response was connected to that of LRF partners (for example, key VCS organisations had the mobile number of the Police Duty Inspector when there was concern that there might be disorder). There were also some community gatherings to show support for those affected.” **VCFSE Sector, North West of England**

“A full multi-agency response including police, fire and health, and local authority is still in place to support the community in the area where the perpetrator of the stabbings lived...this has been positive for the community.” **Public Sector, North West of England**

Spotlight Story:

In an area of the North East of England, the police, working in partnership with the local council, took a proactive approach to engaging with the community and preventing further unrest. They increased their presence in affected areas which both reassured people and provided stability in areas where there was violent activity. They also exercised their power by issuing dispersal notices to maintain order, which, in the immediate emergency phase, was welcomed by many.

The police also acted quickly to communicate directly with the local council and the community to provide accurate information and for it to be shared more widely, combatting mis and disinformation. This clear approach to leadership helped to clarify the local situation, reduce misinformation, and prevent tensions from escalating.



However, in some places, local leadership seemed unprepared for the riots,

how sensitive they were and the negative impact the riots would have on individuals and communities. This meant that in some places, local leaders were slow, or failed, to give a unified response from their various organisations, or give clear messages to their community about what was happening, which was interpreted by some in the community as not showing support. This left some urgent needs of affected communities unaddressed and some organisations feeling frustrated as they believed the response efforts were inefficient and uncoordinated. Some responses they felt were ad hoc, relying on people making phone calls to others, rather than having clear mechanisms in place that were more efficient. In some places, volunteering after the riots also suffered from this lack of clear leadership and coordination, making support and clean-up seem chaotic and ineffective. People wanted a more structured approach to help channel their efforts.

“In Rotherham, police were present within hours of the riot starting, yet communication with the people being targeted was terrible; people were trapped in their rooms without any information about whether or not they would be killed or kept safe.” **VCFS Sector, National infrastructure organisation**

“Across England and Wales, the responses varied from strong proactive police presence to no or minimal police presence. Local community response was generally felt to be most effective in displaying community cohesion and trust to counter the attitude of protesters.” **VCFS Sector, England and Wales**

“It was only local community organisations contributing, there was no national support and very limited communication for local statutory agencies. We need more communication support and the recognition that local people in this area are willing and able to support and act.” **VCFS Sector, South East of England**

“The VCS were desperate to help and rally together. They contacted us, but we needed a process from stakeholders for emergency volunteering. It was disorganised and chaotic dealing with volunteers, people wanted to help but it was difficult to decide how best they could help and have impact.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**

2. Know your leaders

How can we have more effective leadership, collaboration and clearer systems in place from the outset?

Reflections

- Do you know have connections into organisations involved in formal structures of emergency response?
- Do you understand the range of organisations involved?
- Do you know who holds influence and trust in your communities? Are those unofficial community leaders and influencers connected to response structures?
- Do you know who to reach out to help calm and de-escalate a situation?
- Do you know who people in your community will turn to for leadership through response and recovery?

Opportunities

- Highlight the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary to lead in a racist and Islamophobic situation so that leadership is prepared and understand how it is different from other emergencies
- Ensure that community groups know who is leading different parts of the response
- Ensure that all leadership know the local community groups, where they are and who the key points of contact are
- Develop a network where formal resilience leaders and community leaders can build trusted relationships and collaborate

3.

Know your places

Identify the places and spaces that are open to everyone during an emergency of this type

Good social infrastructure refers to community places and spaces that are inclusive and accessible and are an environment that encourage social contact and mixing. These spaces and places are specific to the needs of local people and communities, and are there to support and welcome people. They could be faith spaces, community centres, schools or local businesses such as cafes - fundamentally they are there to support and promote positive outcomes among the local community.

It is important that people, whatever background they're from, know about safe places that are open to everyone, where they can go when there are racist and violent riots. These safe spaces need to be known to everyone and added to the emergency management plan as discussed in Chapter 2. It is crucial that people know where they can find a welcoming place and receive support in their community. These places can also be used for volunteers and residents to go to support others, to show solidarity with and stand as allies with those targeted.

These spaces also play an important role in rebuilding community resilience in the aftermath of the riots. They could potentially host future inter-community activities to bring people together across lines of difference, to build bridges. To support local strategies for the future, these spaces could provide a space for post-traumatic support and community conversations, listening exercises and, ideally, conflict exploration and resolution work as part of the recovery process.

Those places that had effective and inclusive social infrastructure seemed to demonstrate greater resilience to the riots.

Community centres that would normally house different organisations for activities, opened their doors and sent messages to organisations to let them know that they were open and a safe place if people needed somewhere to go to talk and share their concerns. In the aftermath of the riots, places that were not specifically designed as community centres set up creative and conciliatory initiatives to help people talk about their fears and concerns about the violence and racist and Islamophobic sentiment.

Many of these community spaces were used in the aftermath of the riots, especially in those areas which had seen high levels of violence and had significant residual impacts. The voluntary and community sector brought people together and worked hard to restore trust between local communities. In some instances the local council was also present. They did this through a range of initiatives including dialogue sessions and community cohesion events to help break down social barriers. Some areas also developed surveys to try and could quantify the impacts felt locally and measure fear and tension over time.

Spotlight Stories

In West Lancashire, local voluntary and community organisations formed a multi-agency group to coordinate community sessions, including establishing drop-in centres for people to share their concerns and to access targeted support. They also planned community days to bring people together across lines of difference.

In Leeds, some organisations were keen to increase understanding and connections with each other by holding community dinners. This allowed groups to get to know each other in an informal and safe space.

There were also creative initiatives, like in Hull, where a “tea and tolerance trolley” was hosted by an arts-based group and encouraged conversations about unity and peace.

A range of initiatives including community forums, dialogue sessions and public conversations were used to help people express their concerns and listen to each other. All of these things had the purpose of rebuilding relationships and reminding residents that they belong there. Diverse organisations convened at community centers to look at the challenges and identify what assets within the community could encourage service users to use during times of crisis.

“Meeting people in person is much more restorative. On Tuesday, we had an all-staff meeting, and it was cathartic. Spending time together in person, as much as you can, humanizes your context and situation. It also has psychological benefits: alleviating fear, providing reassurance and creating a sense of togetherness. The quicker we can bring people together in person, the more powerful it is, especially compared to the isolating and disconnecting experience of working remotely.” **Charity that directly supports refugees and people seeking sanctuary**

“It's about investing in cohesion...get people talking about things in the same room. There is something around investing in cohesion, integration and intercultural work as key principles - this will reduce pressure and flash points.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**

“When the counter demonstration took place in the city centre, I organised a safe space at the museum that could be used in the event of an emergency. Although this was something I felt important and wanted to do - it was anxiety-inducing and it disrupted our community activity.” **VCFSE Sector, North West of England**





However, this was not the case everywhere.

For some areas, where safe spaces were less common and there was limited collaboration, the disruption from the riots was widespread. It significantly impacted those who were accessing essential services. Many people isolated themselves and retreated to their homes, fearing being attacked or subjected to hate crimes, feeling so unsafe that they did not know where they could go and seek help.

This also affected those working in the services too. Many reflected that if they were better connected with other services and they knew that others would be in these safe spaces, the experience may have been less frightening and disruptive.

“I had to cancel an activity that was put in place to provide food and activities to young people seeking asylum as it was felt that the group’s safety should come first.” **VCFSE Sector, North West of England**

“Riots negatively affected all our members’ wellbeing and mental health. It took us several weeks to get back on our feet and restart our services.” **VCFSE Sector, North East of England**

“The riots disrupted our service and we had to temporarily reduce the offer to safeguard our clients. For example cancelling our weekly drop-in sessions, language classes and children’s activities.” **VCFSE Sector, North East of England**

3. Know your places

How can we identify the places and spaces that are open to everyone during an emergency of this kind?

Reflections

- Which local places, that are open to everyone, whatever their background, could become designated safe spaces in an emergency?
- Are there spaces where allies could go to offer support and volunteers could go to coordinate with clean-up and door knocking?

Opportunities

- Explore with statutory, faith, private sector and community partners a map of local spaces or businesses that are designated as safe for vulnerable residents and centralised to coordinate for allies/volunteers
- Make a list of these spaces available to all staff and community groups and organisations - keep it updated
- Add a list of safe places to crisis

4.

Know your sources of information

Minimising dis and misinformation through trusted communication channels

Having effective information infrastructure has been consistently shared as being essential for the prevention of, recovery from and resilience to these riots. Many organisations emphasised the importance of being able to obtain and share accurate information, working across sectors to prevent and counter the spread of mis and disinformation.

Whilst it is seen as essential to stem harmful social media posts and get on top of rapid and negative messaging with clear and trustworthy comms dissemination, effective information sharing is not limited to social media. Effective information sharing is multifaceted and complex. It includes tension monitoring and flagging early warning information; it involves statutory, voluntary and community organisations working together to share intelligence from the ground to build a broad and clear picture of what's going on. It also means working with the local press and media outlets to ensure that journalism brings people together and doesn't inflame further tensions. In some locations, local press celebrated the inter-community efforts, which was welcomed and reassuring. Through this communication, local organisations and faith groups can be supported in getting on top of their comms messaging and social media presence, so that communities know where they can find a reliable source for up-to-date, trusted and safe information.

“Civil society came together to ensure that people had good written information to understand the risks that they face, whether it was being on the far-right hit list or ensuring that refugees and people seeking asylum knew how to respond if attacked.”

National charity

For the information infrastructure in a place to work well, it involves ongoing trust-building and information sharing - regularly and before an emergency. This is so if and when an emergency like the riots happens, everyone knows who to trust, which comms platforms to believe, and they are able to share these sources of information onto others in their network, including both staff and clients. It means that mechanisms are in place for people to react quickly and in the most appropriate way. Having ongoing place-based information sharing, links to an earlier point in this report, about organisations knowing who is in, and what is happening in their communities.

In places where the voluntary and community sector organisations already had regular meetings with councils about and with their local community on related issues before any unrest, there were much stronger networks in place through which information could be shared effectively. It also meant that necessary people already had established 'seats at the table' at the outbreak of the riots. This had positive impacts locally, mitigating against the fear and crisis in communities and aiding in conflict reduction. The more inclusive and entrenched the information infrastructure was before the riots, the better able people were to act swiftly and support others during the riots.

Spotlight Story:

A council in the North of England developed an effective and proactive approach to monitoring community tensions and fostering good community relationships over time, which proved to be invaluable in preventing unrest at the time of the riots. They worked with community engagement teams, neighbourhood teams and VCS organisations to carry out over 800 strength-based conversations with residents from diverse backgrounds. This included specialist organisations being recruited to support the most vulnerable residents, such as refugees and people seeking sanctuary, to give their voices. The council also recognised the specific challenges and grievances in other communities, so ensured they listened to these residents by employing trusted people that were local to the area. This localised approach ensured trust and deepened the community engagement. The council also included VCS organisations in its tension monitoring meetings from the outset. This meant that at the time of the riots, they were able to flag potential early warning signs, address underlying issues before they could escalate. By engaging with a range of communities and using local knowledge, they were able to monitor and address tensions effectively.

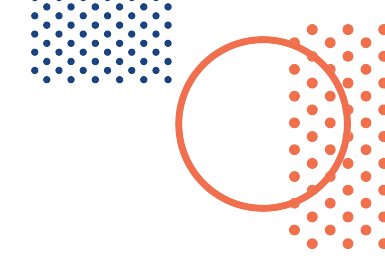
“We had tension monitoring meetings 3-4 times a day at first. We were in that room as the police knew us, we told them to invite partner organisations so that we could get messages out to the communities and hear what was going on.” **Local council, North of England**

“The local police team made arrangements to come onsite to answer questions from both members of the public and staff. Police colleagues liaised with local mosques to share intelligence which helped in giving reassurance to the community.” **Public Sector, South East of England**

“We have good reach with a breadth of leaders. We called a meeting and had over 80 community leaders attend to share intelligence and develop better understanding of facts of risks and how to mitigate risks. We stepped up really quickly. We used different comms mechanisms to allay fears where there had been speculation about certain areas.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North West of England**

“There was a WhatsApp group including local businesses that was set up within 24 hours and shared on the BID (Business Improvement District). On it, information was shared, with the council answering questions. There were real-time responses which helped businesses know the risks and if they could stay open.” **Local council, North West of England**





Where relationships between the community and voluntary sector and local councils was more fragmented, the communication in that place suffered. Some organisations reflected that information sharing was disjointed, slow to ‘catch up’ with what was happening in real time and it felt impossible to myth-bust and counter the mis and disinformation. In some places, there were no systems in place to identify whether information was true or not, and people struggled to know what was happening in their area. Without these reliable sources of information, people did not know who or what to believe, exacerbating fear and, at times, grievances within and between communities.

Setting up information infrastructure can feel quite daunting, especially when it sits alongside business as usual. People aren’t always used to working together and some may have not yet built the necessary relationships. It can seem like there are ‘too many’ voices, too much information to filter and too many communication channels. Whilst an essential part of any local prevention and response strategy for all emergencies, for violent, racist and Islamophobic emergencies like the riots, trustworthy information sharing is the only way to challenge mis and dis-information and support areas organise non-violent and anti-racist demonstrations. Inclusive meetings need to involve voluntary, community, faith, and statutory sectors, to ensure that residents’ voices are always reflected, and that everyone is included in a clear comms plan that is in place.

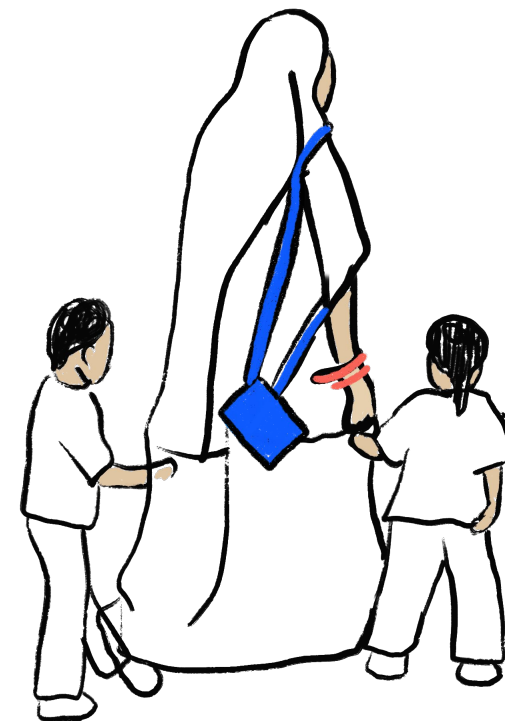
Spotlight Story:

In a community in the North of England, the lack of coordinated information-sharing infrastructure left residents vulnerable to mis and disinformation. This led to false reports about attacks on mosques and stabbings, further fueling fear and confusion. One partner recalled instances of being inundated with messages on “*WhatsApp, with fake videos being shared. We don't have the intel...it was hard to filter the information and propaganda. It was even hard for the police to keep on top of it. There was no guidance on how to translate these messages.*” This underscores the importance of having information infrastructures that help with information sharing and the debunking of harmful rumours. Without these in place, there are risks of communities reacting to unfounded threats.

“We were in these multi-agency meetings all feeding in information and I realised that no one from the VCS or faith community was in the room. There was a whole set of experiences that was missing. That’s something we need to change.” **Local council, North of England**

“The messaging was disjointed. There was a divide between public sector messaging and that of community organisations, with the latter often seen as more trusted. This gap complicated efforts to dispel fears and misinformation.” **Charity, North East of England**

“Nothing happened in terms of physical events that other places had seen. However, rumours and fear of far-right protest led the police and stakeholders to run an operation on the day. No one had turned up but the fear and anxiety was real.” **VCFSE Sector, Midlands**



Local media played an important role during the August 2024 riots by highlighting the support for the communities under attack, as well as voicing opposition to the far-right rioters and the violent attacks. They demonstrated pride in place, support for refugees and people seeking sanctuary and the importance of working together across lines of difference.

Some local news articles showed images of people embracing, standing in solidarity and helping clean-up. This helped to dilute some of the more inflammatory coverage that was seen in the national press.

Having positive relationships with the local press often feels like a luxury for smaller organisations, especially with so much other work to deliver and working with limited resources. However, the riots highlighted the necessity of having trustworthy, supportive and wide-reaching information sources. Local media can play a key role in supporting and shedding light on the valuable work of voluntary and community organisations in bringing communities together.

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Hull clean-up operation underway as community unite in aftermath of violence and destruction

"We stand for community"

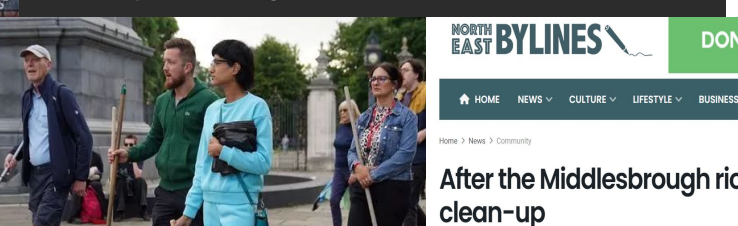
Minister praises 'really important' local media coverage of riots during Yorkshire Post visit

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27 photos as hundreds take to part in Middlesbrough clean-up following riots



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Windows were smashed and bricks were torn from the ground

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Windows were smashed and bricks were torn from the ground

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After the Middlesbrough riot: the clean-up

to others, and know how to use

4. Know your sources of information

How can we minimise dis and misinformation through trusted communication channels?

Reflections

- What communication channels are in place that are considered to be trustworthy and accurate?
- Are a broad, rich and diverse range of community organisations included in the emergency communication plans?
- What relationship does your organisation (and the sector more widely) have with local press?

Opportunities

- Support a broad, rich and diverse range of community groups to connect with emergency planning teams via networks of trust, social media and comms groups - so they are able to inform each other
- Help communities know who to follow for up-to-date, trusted and safe information to reduce disinformation
- Support local and responsible journalism, that brings communities together

5.

Know your history

Harnessing local memory and mobilising the unofficial community leaders to inspire young people and help with healing

Although many people shared that the places in which they lived felt unrecognisable, sadly in some places, far-right, racist, Islamophobic, and anti-refugee sentiment was not new. Nevertheless, the violence and hateful sentiment spurred many places into action, as communities worked to de-escalate tensions and minimise the harm done to both people and places.

Using local history, namely lived experiences of previous riots and civil unrest, and making it relevant to young people, can have a powerful and sustainable cohesive effect. This is especially true if young people are given agency in other decisions within their community.

Informal leaders are central to this. They reflect the socio-economic and cultural history of their communities. They are relatable, often more so than official leaders. Informal leaders know what is happening on a daily basis, and have trusted relationships with both individuals and a diverse range of organisations. Whereas, formal leaders are appointed to positions of leadership.

It is hoped that in the future, some of those that took part in the August 2024 riots could share their experiences, particularly of the consequences of rioting, to influence young people and guide them away from violence. They could use their stories as a warning about the personal, social and legal consequences that have affected them, focusing on the long-term effects that the riots had on their communities and promoting non-violence, inter-community collaboration and local resilience.

*When asked: what has enabled you to feel more prepared (for the future if there were more riots), one local infrastructure organisation said simply: "Lived experience" **Public Sector, North West of England***

“We’ve been here before. We don’t want it to happen again, it took a long time to heal. We work closely with each other to keep lines of communication open and remind each other that there is wisdom to be had from our history.” **Local council, North of England**

“In 2001, there were quite substantive riots in the borough that affected the community in different ways. There has been lots of work done over the years on divisions in the communities and concerns about hate crime. As a result, our borough is a place that has well established approaches to fostering community cohesion and addressing challenges. It's not unusual that we have involvement with the community to try and respond to tensions.” **Local infrastructure organisation, North of England**

“There is a real sense of ‘that wouldn't happen here’, and that has probably led to some complacency. There have been very strong anti fascist movements in the city in the past and my guess would be that any riot or protest would be met with a much bigger counter protest. I am sure that the police and others have a plan and it would be good to hear what others experience is to how the sector can input to that plan.” **VCFS Sector, East of England**





During the August 2024 riots, formal leaders, such as the local authorities, worked with informal community leaders to deliver strong messages to young people at risk of rioting or counter protesting. With this, clear, in person

announcements were delivered, showing an understanding of the grievances and concerns of the community. Local leaders, some of whom had participated in riots before, for example in 2001 or 2011, shared their own experiences of taking part. They highlighted the impact that the consequences had on their lives - such as criminal records or going to prison - as well as the long-term impacts on their families and community. Working together, formal and informal leaders communicated to their communities, including to young people, that their voices were heard and that they would all work together to restore stability.

“One of first things I did was pick up the phone to the Imam, asked him to get the people involved 20 years ago to come out and talk to the boys, to make them think twice about getting involved.” **Local council, North of England**

In some areas, there was a lack of trusted unofficial community leaders who could reach out to young people and help them learn from the past. Without these influential figures, it was more difficult to guide youth away from violence and unrest, to calm them down and to help them understand the long-term impact of their actions. In addition, there is often a lack of youth infrastructure and young people don't feel part of the conversation, adding to their grievances.

Spotlight Story:

In Birmingham, young people reacted to a spread of disinformation about a Mosque being under attack when there was no threat level. They had little trust in the police or religious leaders, and wanted to defend their Mosque. About 500 people turned up and it took time to encourage them to go home. As one person told us: *“young people have a trust deficit if they don't have a stake in society. They need trusted figures to influence them and that's not interfaith networks or political leaders”*.



Efforts to increase pride in place, tackle inequalities and build community resilience, may help to dissuade young people from rioting, reducing the likelihood of future violent emergencies.

Outreach programmes and workshops that are conducted in schools during non-emergency times, have an important role in expanding community understanding and inter-community cohesion. Many people talked about the wider issue of young people from all communities being easily influenced, and feeling a sense of responsibility for deterring them rioting. Most acknowledged that this takes time and commitment, with investment into opportunities and support for them through mentorship programmes. Here, connection and collaboration, for example through sports and drama projects, is crucial. It is important to help build relationships between people that some may have negative perceptions of, encouraging understanding and compassion for people across lines of difference.

Some people, when thinking about the long-term recovery of their communities, talked about young people taking the lead in addressing grievances and helping to prevent violence and hate. In order for this to work, they need to be part of the decision-making processes in their local place, contributing to planning, tension monitoring and conflict resolution. While there is much work to be done here, there are promising examples of where inter-community activities have been effective starting points. These are not always focused on young people.

“Educational outreach is really important as part of a local strategy. Taking people who have been involved in riots before can have a real impact. Unfortunately it's not enough as the kids go home and are getting different messages there. But it's a start and we have a responsibility to our communities.” **Community Organisation, North West of England**



Spotlight Stories

Organisations across the UK are adopting outreach and education initiatives to drive change for their local communities. This includes exhibitions that are designed to foster understanding and bring people together, provide training for the workforce in dealing with divisions and leadership and listening exercises.

In Tamworth, *“there’s an organisation that does an exhibition that shows the journey that a refugee goes through. This education and awareness raising needs to be across the community”*. Work such as this, which builds empathy amongst the local community, is a key way that organisations can help build social cohesion and community resilience. At an exhibition about Windrush in Sefton, the local CVS, which runs the Southport Caribbean Association, has been involved in raising awareness and educating the local community.

In Brighton, a local organisation has set up and implemented an Employee Assistance Program, which offers both counselling and targeted advice to their workforce. This service is part of their efforts to ensure staff and their families in the community have the space and help they need to heal from the racist riots.

As well as educational programs, various infrastructure organisations have been instrumental in connecting smaller groups with the services and resources they need to help their communities. In the North East of England, an Anti-Racism Coalition has been established to connect individuals and organisations, share information and move towards transforming their region.

“Community leaders who work with diverse groups are often in the best place to share. They stepped up as always and I’m grateful to them. They don’t get funding to do that stuff, but it is a really important safety net.” **Charity, North of England**

“It was effective because they looked like the community but had direct information from us - we called the high-vis jackets ‘badges of honour’.” **Local council, North West of England**

“We have had conversations with different funders about how we can work together to skill up the workforce to have conversations and build it into the work, every contact works. It is in the everyday that we need to feel able to address the divisions.” **Local council, North of England**



5. Know your history

How can we harness local memory and mobilise unofficial community leaders to inspire young people?

Reflections

- How is your local area harnessing 'lived experience' to prevent future rioting?
- Do you and your communities understand your local history and how it is evolving?
- What work is being done with young people so they are contributing to place?

Opportunities

- Harness lived experiences and document it to shape community preparedness and emergency plans
- Develop outreach programmes so young people can hear stories and experiences, that could act as a deterrent for future riots
- Work in a place-based intercommunity way so that there is mixing across lines of difference - to help prevent future riots

Framework recommendations: A summary of the five ways to build resilience

1.

Know your communities

Conduct local outreach and understand who makes up your communities

Identify networks of trust with direct communication lines

Nurture and update community connections and contacts

2.

Know your leaders

Highlight the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary to lead in this type of situation and understand how it is different from other emergencies

Ensure community groups know who is leading different parts of response

Develop a network where formal resilience leaders and community leaders can collaborate

3.

Know your places

Explore a map of local spaces / business that are designated as safe for vulnerable residents, centralised to coordinate for allies/volunteers

Make a list of these spaces available to all and keep it updated

Add a list of safe places to crisis management plans

4.

Know your sources of information

Support a diverse range of community groups to be connected to emergency planning teams

Help communities know who to follow for up-to-date, trusted and safe information to reduce disinformation

Support local and responsible journalism, that brings communities together

5.

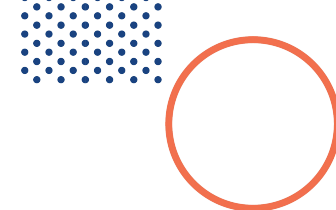
Know your history

Harness lived experiences and document it to shape community preparedness

Develop outreach programmes so young people can hear these stories and experiences

Work in a place-based intercommunity way so that there is mixing across lines of difference

04. Framework recommendations and final words



Final words from the contributors to this piece

"We need investment from political leaders, we need people with power and influence and cash. You need the national levers to change...and for the national to inform the regional. There needs to be more political pressure on LAs and combined authorities to have these conversations and do development work." **Charity supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary, North East of England**

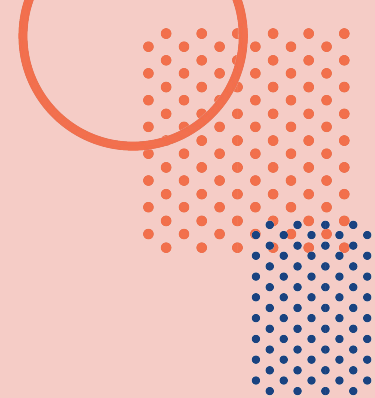
Throughout this piece, we have seen the incredible efforts of people to establish **effective communication and build trust** - both vertically (with local and national authorities) and horizontally (with other organisations, community groups and residents) - and to encourage **open dialogue and have difficult conversations to help heal and build resilience**. We have seen important local relationships support in identifying early warnings of rising tensions, and preventing violence from escalating in the future. It is important to acknowledge that all of this work is being carried out alongside or integrated within current work, as part of projects already being delivered or interventions that already exist on the ground. Cohesion and therefore resilience to future riots will be most **effective if it becomes everyone's responsibility, and working across lines of difference and across organisations becomes the norm at a place level**. If a racist riot does occur, communities need to know that they have the relationships in place for rapid and transparent response mechanisms to take effect and the ability to implement recovery plans. **Investment is needed to support this, and people working proactively and effectively to build social connections and support community resilience within what they are already doing is essential.**

For further information on
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05. Appendix:

Questions asked in the Call for Evidence Impact Gallery



Questions used in the Call for Evidence

1. What is the nearest town/ city that your organisation is based in?
2. Which sector does your organisation work in?
3. Can you briefly describe what happened in your area during the racist riots in early August 2024?
4. To better understand the effects of the riots we're interested in exploring both direct and indirect impacts on your organisation. Direct impact could mean experiencing immediate harm or disruption, such as physical damage to property, threats to personal safety, or direct discrimination. Indirect impact might include experiencing change in community relationships, or emotional and mental effects even if not directly involved in the events. With this in mind, would you say your organisation was directly impacted or indirectly impacted by the racist riots in early August 2024?
5. If applicable, please describe the impacts your organisation experienced?
6. How would you describe the response to the riots in your area?
7. What aspects of the civil society response worked well in your local area?
8. What could have been improved in the way civil society responded?
9. Since the riots, what actions have been taken to support community recovery?
10. Do you think that your local area is prepared for the future if there were more riots?
11. What has enabled you to feel more prepared?
12. What is needed to support preparedness?

Impact Gallery

1.

Know your communities

- London
- Leeds
- Newcastle

2.

Know your leaders

- Luton
- Durham

3.

Know your places

- Brighton
- Tamworth

4.

Know your sources of information

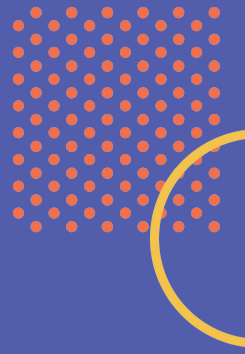
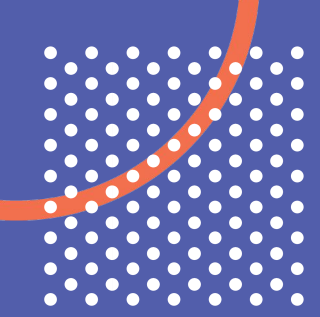
- Manchester

5.

Know your history

- Bradford
- Liverpool
- Oldham

This impact gallery is a collection of stories gathered through our interviews, the Call for Evidence questionnaire and desk research. These are just some of the effective responses that were seen from voluntary, community and faith groups and statutory bodies during the racist and Islamophobic riots.



Know your communities

Anti-Racist Counter Protests to Denounce the Riots

London



In London, several anti-racist demonstrations took place, with hundreds of people coming out onto their streets to condemn the riots and counter the support for the far-right. These counter protests showed how many people stood in solidarity with refugees, people seeking sanctuary and all communities that were affected by the riots; local residents made a clear example that racism, Islamophobia and hate was not welcome in their communities.

Demonstrations like these were seen across the UK and had significant and positive impacts. In London, it helped discourage further rioters and show those affected by the riots that they are supported.

"The history in London of anti-racist and anti-fascist movements over the last 100 years or more was crucial. People came out on the streets to visibly show that racism isn't welcome in their communities." **Interview with a Local authority**

Counter Protests Show Community Solidarity with Refugees and People Seeking Sanctuary

Leeds



More counter protests took place in other cities, for example in Leeds. With such vast numbers of people coming out to visibly denounce the riots and the rise in racist and Islamophobic rhetoric from the far-right, the local community made it clear that those rioting were a minority.

The impact of these demonstrations was widespread, with one interviewee describing how the number and size of the counter protests in Leeds was heartening to witness. They also talked about how they believed that the support from local communities in coming out to the anti-racist demonstrations helped to dispel further riots.

“People were really keen to help and show support, it was really impressive and encouraging.” Interview with a Charity

Community Stands Against the Riots and the Far-Right

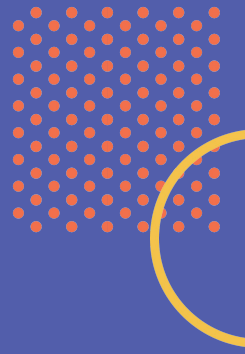
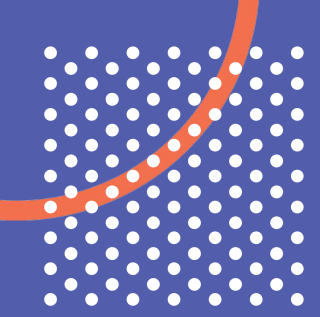
Newcastle



In Newcastle, there were 2 occasions of anti-racist demonstrations. Overall, thousands of locals gathered to counter the riots that were expected; they took up much of the city centre to stand in solidarity with those targeted by the far-right riots. The peaceful counter-protesters outnumbered the far-right protesters, as they sung songs and chanted 'Refugees are welcome here'.

Visible expressions of support and solidarity were vital to many that were directly and indirectly affected by the racist riots over the summer. Many people took comfort from the way that communities were standing up to the rioters and actively countering the rhetoric of the far-right.

"The solidarity shown towards migrants by local communities and charities was positive. Particularly the counter-protests on Wednesday, when targeted attacks on refugee support organisations were planned. One client said 'I feel OK now because there are many people that supported refugees out there. I appreciate that.'" Response from the Call for Evidence questionnaire



Know your leaders

Local Community and Voluntary Organisations Linked into Communication Channels

Luton



In Luton, there were existing channels of communication and information sharing that was utilised to by an infrastructure organisation to ensure a coordinated and cohesive response to the riots. The relationships that had been established were led by this organisation, bringing together local authorities, local leaders, and grassroots organisations.

At the head of the local response, this organisation, with the necessary resources and networks, was able to share accurate information, address concerns, and offer advice and counsel. This meant that smaller organisations were better connected, with more open and trusting relationships being built.

“We made sure that community and faith leaders could all access our chief executive at any time via their phone number. This meant that we could pass on information from the authorities, and talk to those that were especially worried about what was happening on the ground.” **Interview with a National infrastructure organisation**

Proactive policing in response to the Riots

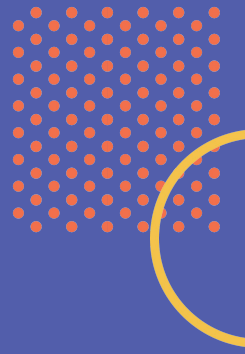
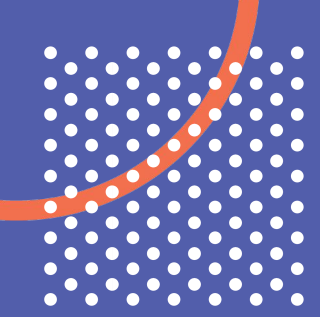
Durham City



The police in Durham implemented proactive measures to address the threat of violence and disruption. They increased their presence in Durham City and recommended the temporary closure of specific buildings that had been identified as potential targets. The police also used preventive measures such as issuing dispersal orders which was communicated via social media, as well as updates on the arrests made. Information regarding potential unrest was consistently shared with the public, allowing the local community to know what was happening in their area.

These regular updates and visible police activity reassured communities and ensured that the residents were informed and prepared. The measures also minimised the risk of widespread disorder and safeguarded communities and businesses.

“Within County Durham a Police led an operation initiated with VCS involvement identifying potential gatherings in Durham City and other market towns across the County.” **Response from the Call for Evidence questionnaire**



Know your places

Community Comes Out in a Counter Protest Despite Misinformation

Brighton



Brighton was identified on a list of possible locations for far-right rioting. As a result, thousands of people turned out in anti-racist demonstrations, the impact of which was significant and wide-reaching. One survey respondent explained that there was a massive response to calls for counter protesting. With so many people turning out in solidarity with refugees and people seeking sanctuary, effective coordination was necessary, with maps and specific locations provided to the counter protesters.

However, only a handful of far-right rioters actually showed at the planned location, being vastly outnumbered by those who had come to denounce the riots. The coordination of location was vital to this response.

“Grass-roots support for the counter protests was incredibly inspiring, with over 2000 turning up at Brighton.” **Response from the Call for Evidence questionnaire**

Using Social Media and Messaging to Communicate with Members of the Community

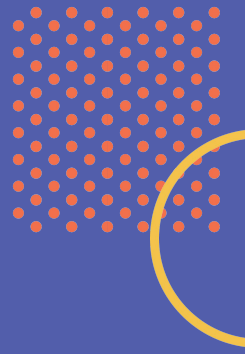
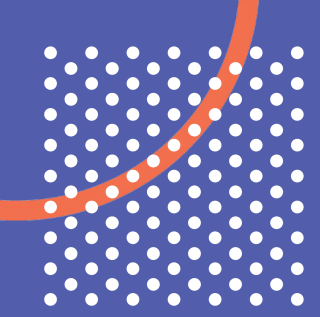
Tamworth



Although a physical space was hard to arrange as a result of the riots, many organisations across the UK utilised the resources of social media and online channels to offer communities the spaces to talk about the ongoing riots, access support, and begin to heal together.

In Tamworth, the council received messages from members of the local community through Whatsapp. This proved to be a way for them to directly speak to them and give them advice, up-to-date and accurate information, and reassurance. This was particularly important for those who were living in the hotel that was attacked during the riots. Having a point of contact within the local authority ensured that even if there physical space was not safe at the time, they had a virtual space to access support.

“During the riots I was getting Whatsapp messages from people in the hotel, and they were using live streams online to show people what was happening.” Interview with Local council



Know your sources of information

Police Acting as Point of Contact and Trusted Information Source for Local Community

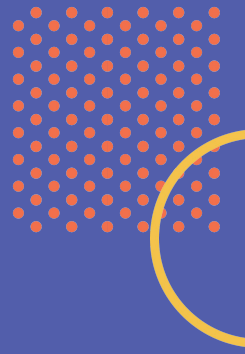
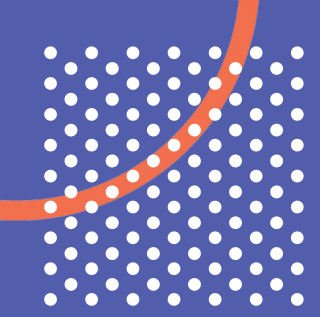
Manchester



As individuals and groups from the local communities came out to stand in solidarity with refugees and people seeking sanctuary, the police presented as the lead of the response and as the main source of trusted and accurate information. They responded well, quickly setting up a clear comms strategy through known channels and actively going out into the community to talk with people across sectors.

This allowed groups to pass on the right information across their own networks, ensuring any mis and disinformation was effectively countered. The police were also well linked across sectors, including with the local authority, so had direct access to what was happening across Manchester.

“The police here led on the comms, communicating that they were out on the streets and checking on places of concern. They worked with elected members to manage a multi-agency response.” **interview with Local authority**



Know your history

Council of Mosques' Outreach to Reassure and Connect with Local Community

Bradford



In Bradford, as in many other locations across the country, the local Council for Mosques reached out to the members in their network to reassure them of what was happening on the ground, ensuring that any mis or disinformation was countered. They have built long-term connections, ones that stem from consistent and proactive work to engage with everyone in their community. They were not created as a result of a singular emergency, but from the sense of shared struggle, including from the racist riots that took place in Bradford in 2001.

These connections had a crucial impact on how the local community responded to the 2024 riots, with the cultural heritage of the place taken into consideration at each stage of response.

"They were proactive and productive in reassuring their 160 members. The collective trauma of the racist riots just a couple of decades ago meant they have open and long-standing connections across the community."

Interview with a National infrastructure organisation

Engaging with Rioters for Long-term Cohesion Building

Liverpool and Oldham



In Oldham, the local council had built relationships with individuals who had participated in the 2001 riots, and during the 2024 riots, asked them to help engage with the local community. This engagement, which saw former rioters talk about the impact that participating had on their lives, and the lives of those close to them, had a huge impact in deterring people from participating. By building these relationships, the council were also able to bring them into their network and expand the reach of the response.

Meanwhile in Liverpool, a local Imam bravely stepped out to talk directly with the rioters who had surrounded his Mosque. Through these open and honest conversations, in which the Imam listened to the concerns and grievances of the rioters, escalation of violence was prevented. By calming tensions, and dispelling mis and disinformation - which had incited many rioters to participate - the Imam was able to encourage some to abandon the riot and go home. This story became headline news across the UK, and is a beautiful example of how listening to others and engaging with people across lines of difference, can help build bridges and local cohesion.

“During the riots, we worked with local informal leaders, people from sports or youth clubs, or faith groups, to engage with the community. We also had people who had gone to prison for rioting in 2001 speak about the consequences of participating, discouraging especially young people.”

Interview with Local council