

Kingdom United?

Thirteen steps to tackle
social segregation



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The Social Integration Commission was set up to explore key questions about how people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds relate to one another in modern Britain.

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KEY TERMS

Integration The extent to which people interact with others who are different to themselves in relation to age, ethnicity and income background.

Diversity Ways that people are different from each other. Although there are many ways that people are diverse in the UK, in this report we specifically refer to diversity along lines of age, ethnicity and income background.



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Welcome from the Chair

I am delighted to commend the third and final report of the Social Integration Commission.

I would like to thank the members of the Social Integration Commission for their commitment and hard work and the many individuals and organisations who have acted as critical friends and advisors to this project over the last year. I would additionally like to thank the Secretariat at The Challenge, and in particular Jon Yates, Mark Rusling, Rosie Evans, Richard Bell, Afua Kudom, Alexander Woolf and Muna Yusuf.

Over the last year, the Commission has sought to explore fundamental questions about how people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds relate to one another in modern Britain. Previous research had shown us where different groups of people live, but had not examined the degree to which they socially interact with people who are different from them, whether this matters or what could be done to promote social mixing.

Our first report revealed that levels of integration have not kept pace with the growing diversity of the British population. In particular, we highlighted that a lack of integration is an issue for all groups. White people are as likely to have unrepresentative social networks as people belonging to other ethnicities, and Londoners' networks are amongst the furthest away from reflecting the makeup of the communities in which they live. We also found that one of the most significant forms of social segregation is that between people from different income backgrounds.

In October 2014 the Commission issued its second report and a wake-up call to policymakers – providing powerful evidence of the negative consequences and financial cost of poor integration for individuals and society. We outlined how social segregation is curtailing our ability to solve key economic and social challenges in relation to employment, recruitment and career progression, and community health and wellbeing. Using the most robust methodology available, we estimated that a lack of integration costs our economy £6 billion, or approximately 0.5 per cent of GDP, each year.

In this report, the Commission explores what can be done to encourage people from different backgrounds to meet and mix and sets out thirteen principles that we believe should underpin a healthy and well-integrated society. Alongside these, we propose a range of activities which could be undertaken, and policy ideas which could be explored, to ensure these principles are reflected in our society. We focus not just on the role of government but also on what schools, businesses, civil society organisations and individuals could do to build a more socially integrated Britain.

The work the Commission has undertaken over the last year has already started an important debate about the nature of the country we live in. Certainly, at a time of hardening attitudes to both disadvantaged people and immigrants, I hope that our findings have increased people's understanding of the social and economic benefits of integration. I also hope that the ideas outlined in this report will convince policymakers and the public that, through reforming our institutions and practices in small but intelligent ways, we can substantially improve levels of social integration.

We welcome your thoughts, so please do keep in touch with us via Twitter and Facebook, or email us at info@socialintegrationcommission.org.uk



Matthew Taylor,
Chair, Social Integration Commission



Executive Summary

In this report, the Commission explores what can be done to promote social mixing between people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds and sets out **thirteen principles that we believe should underpin a healthy and well-integrated society:**

1. Every school should provide opportunities for their pupils to interact with children belonging to different ethnic groups and income backgrounds.
2. Schools' intakes should reflect the economic and ethnic diversity of their communities.
3. School and college buildings should be places where the community comes together as well as being centres for learning.
4. Business and public sector leaders should recognise the benefits of social mixing and look to recruit from diverse talent pools.
5. Businesses and public sector agencies employing recent migrants should take active steps to enable these workers to meet and mix with different groups of people.
6. Planning authorities should develop and preserve neighbourhoods which are not only diverse, but are organised to enable residents from different backgrounds to mix with one another.
7. People living in diverse areas should be encouraged to get to know their neighbours.
8. Public services should be designed and managed so as to bring together different groups of people.
9. We should draw on the experience of parenthood to build understanding between people from different backgrounds.
10. Publicly-funded moments of celebration should be open to people from all religions and none.
11. Businesses should support their employees to volunteer in and to connect with the communities in which they work.
12. Retired people should be supported to invest their time and the benefits of their life experience in their communities.
13. It should be easy for charities to play their part in bringing together people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds.

Alongside these principles, the Commission outlines a range of activities which could be undertaken, and policy proposals which could be explored, to ensure these principles are reflected in our society. Many of these ideas require further development and study, and this work will be undertaken by the social integration charity The Challenge (which provides the secretariat to this Commission).

Throughout this report, the Commission focuses not just on the role of government but also on what **schools, businesses, civil society organisations and individuals could do to build a more socially integrated society.**

The extent of integration in modern Britain

The first Commission report looked at why it is important to understand social integration and investigated the question, 'How integrated is modern Britain?'

Why is it important to understand the extent of integration?

The UK is becoming more diverse in terms of age, ethnicity and income background:

- In the next 10 to 15 years, the proportion of the UK's population under 18 or over 60 years old is projected to rise from 42 to 47 per cent.¹
- The proportion of British residents who are members of a minority ethnic group is projected to rise to around 38 per cent by 2050 (from 16 per cent in mid-2012).²
- The income gap between the richest and poorest members of society will widen if trends follow the pattern of the last 40 years.³

These changes mean that any existing lack of integration across lines of age, ethnicity or income background will divide increasingly large numbers of people.

Structural and institutional segregation show signs of increasing. In addition to aspects of increased residential segregation by ethnicity, our local neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly age-segregated. The British educational system shows signs of social segregation by income background and ethnicity.

What do we know about the extent of integration?

In order to go some way to understand the extent of social integration in Britain today, the Commission undertook research into the ways in which we interact with other people in our free time. Our research found that:

1. **Highly diverse areas are not necessarily integrated.** For example, whilst London is more diverse than the rest of the country and Londoners are more likely to meet people who are different from them compared to people outside the capital, Londoners' friendship groups are in fact the least likely to properly reflect the age, income and ethnic mix of the community they live in.
2. **Ethnic minorities are not the only groups to experience low integration.** Apart from those from mixed ethnic backgrounds, all ethnic groups have around 40 to 50 per cent fewer social interactions than would occur if there was no social segregation.
3. **Levels of integration are structured around institutions.** Those aged 18-34, where there are high levels of mobility or involvement in further or higher education, are the most ethnically-integrated age group. However, levels of segregation rise from 35 per cent to 56 per cent for those aged 35 to 54 years old, as people become increasingly selective about where they settle.

4. **School-age young people are segregated by ethnicity.** Young people under 17 years old have fewer than 50 per cent of the interactions with other ethnicities than would be expected if there was no social segregation.
5. **There is a social disconnect between employers and those looking for work or seeking to progress in their careers.** Managers and professionals have fewer social interactions with those who are unemployed than would be expected if there was no social segregation. This raises significant questions about how social integration may affect access to work when around 40 per cent of jobs are found through personal contacts.⁵



Why social integration matters

In our second report, the Commission outlined the costs and consequences of this lack of social integration both to society and individuals.

Research shows that trust in society (both between people and between people and leaders) is significantly correlated with national measures of economic and social progress.⁵ The likely explanation for this is that countries with higher degrees of trust find it easier to solve problems. A lack of social integration is reducing our ability to solve key economic and social challenges in relation to number of key areas:

- **Long-term employment:** Someone who is unemployed becomes 13 per cent more likely to find a job and return to work if they gain just one additional employed friend.⁶
- **Recruitment and career progression:** Homogeneous networks make it harder for employers to recruit the right talent, and for people with specific skills to find the right jobs.⁷ One in four CEOs was unable to pursue a market opportunity or have had to cancel or delay a strategic initiative because of an inability to recruit the right talent.⁸
- **Community health and wellbeing:** A lack of integration in communities increases anxiety and ill-health.⁹ The creation of stronger community ties is linked to the prevention of depression, especially amongst children.¹⁰

The cost of a lack of integration

A lack of social integration in the three areas of employment, recruitment and career progression, and community health and wellbeing alone **costs the UK economy approximately £6 billion each year**. This corresponds to around 0.5 per cent of the total GDP in the UK. This is comparable to the reduction in public sector net borrowing achieved by the government in the 2014 fiscal year.¹¹ Specifically, the Commission estimates that approximately **£1.5 billion is attributable to long-term unemployment and £700 million to blocked opportunities in the labour market and underemployment**, caused by a lack of social integration.

In addition, our research indicates that a lack of integration leads to the following costs to the UK economy relating to community health and wellbeing:

- **Health and social care amongst the isolated:** £700 million
- **Cardiovascular diseases:** £1.2 billion
- **Suicide:** £1.7 billion.

The good news: Positive outcomes of integration

When diverse groups in Britain are integrated it is a mostly positive experience for all involved and has clear positive outcomes on levels of trust.¹² More specifically, our work has found that:

- **People in Britain have more positive than negative experiences with people who are different from them:** Across all ethnicities, ages and income backgrounds and in both social and work contexts, our experiences of interacting with those who are different from us are likely to be positive. Our friendships are also more likely to be determined by who we have the opportunity to meet, rather than by a preference to seek out people we perceive as similar to us.
- **When integration of diverse groups happens, it is associated with higher levels of trust:** The positive interactions we have with people from different backgrounds are positively related to how much we trust others.
- **Positive interactions limit the adverse effects that negative interactions have on how far we trust other people:** Negative interactions with those who are different from us are associated with lower levels of trust. However the effects of these negative interactions are greatly reduced if we also have more positive experiences.
- **Positive interactions between Britons who are different make British people more positive and trusting of people who are also different in other ways:** When negative perceptions of one group are challenged through positive interactions, our general attitudes towards other groups are also challenged. For example, our data showed that White respondents who had more positive interactions with Asians are more trusting of those aged 65 and over.

Building a more socially integrated society

In this report, the Commission explores what can be done to promote social mixing between people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds.

Social integration is a complex issue which the Commission has sought to address in a measured and considered manner throughout our research. In keeping with this approach, our final report sets out **thirteen principles that we believe should underpin a healthy and well-integrated society**.

Alongside these, we outline a range of activities which could be undertaken, and policy proposals which could be explored, to ensure these principles are reflected in our society. We focus not just on the role of government but also on what schools, businesses, civil society organisations and individuals could do to build a more socially integrated society.

Calls to action

In certain instances, we have made specific calls to action where we believe issues must be addressed urgently to prevent a rise in social segregation that will undermine the cohesiveness and long-term success of our society.

The Commission has aimed to develop ideas that are practicable, affordable and cost-effective, but many require further development and study. Following the publication of this report, the social integration charity The Challenge – which provides the secretariat to this Commission and possesses both the capacity and expertise to build on its work – will join with experts and leaders across multiple sectors to elaborate on a number of these ideas.

Integration increases trust, and trust increases a society's capacity to solve problems. Through embedding the thirteen principles set out in this report, the Commission believes that we could make major strides towards solving key national challenges including the isolation of the elderly and long-term unemployment. Indeed, many of the calls to action and policy interventions outlined in this report could have a positive impact on economic and social problems which are not typically thought of as integration issues – such as education standards and the cost of public services.

A number of the measures outlined in these pages would, if enacted, impact more directly on levels of diversity than of social integration. In order for people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds to have the chance to meet and mix, however, they must first of all be brought together within diverse institutions. We therefore view these particular proposals as creating the conditions necessary for social mixing to occur.

Reforming institutions

Throughout each of our reports, the Commission has emphasised that levels of integration are structured around institutions. Accordingly, this report explores how we might **draw on and reform peoples' experiences of institutions** – schools and colleges, the workplace,

neighbourhoods, public services and care providers, religion and volunteerism – to make sure that the UK's trajectory towards better integration more closely matches its trajectory towards greater diversity.

It's challenging to get policy right in an area which feels largely to be the domain of people's voluntary, even 'natural', choices. The Commission has focused on policy levers which could be pulled by distinct organisations and individuals. We recognise that this approach does not reflect the full complexity of peoples' day-to-day lives and would hope that future research might explore how institutions within the fields of entertainment, culture and sport could create more opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet and mix.



Schools and colleges

Our school system is segregated: half of all children on free school meals are educated in 20 per cent of UK schools¹³, whilst our research has demonstrated that school age children have fewer than 50 per cent of the interactions with other ethnicities than would be expected if there was no social segregation. This matters. Who young people associate with at school and college is likely to influence the development of their adult social networks, impacting on future life chances. At a time of stagnating social mobility and public anxiety regarding religious extremism in our schools, we must develop new ways for young people from different backgrounds to meet and mix through our schools and colleges. We must make promoting social integration an important element of our approach to education.

Principle 1: Every school should provide opportunities for their pupils to interact with children belonging to different ethnic groups and income backgrounds.

The recent drive to open free schools has led to increased numbers of children being educated in peer groups dominated by a single faith group or community. The small number of Muslim faith schools in the UK are experiencing particular difficulties in ensuring their pupils are able to meet and mix with children from different backgrounds.¹⁴ The Commission calls on **the Department for Education (DfE) only to approve applications for new faith schools when the petitioners have a clear plan for pupils to meet and mix with children from different faith backgrounds and communities.** We believe that the DfE should, furthermore, investigate the potential benefits of requiring all schools to devise a social mixing strategy.

In order to reconcile the rise of free schools with a commitment to social integration, the government should seriously consider emulating the Shared Education programme instituted by the Northern Irish Executive. This might involve **building new facilities for shared use by schools catering to different religious communities,** or even **co-locating these schools within shared campuses.**

The Commission strongly believes that all children should be taught about faiths and cultures other than their own. State-funded faith schools are presently free to teach their pupils about their own religion only, but we recognise that most faith schools do consider it their duty to teach children and teenagers about different religious beliefs and traditions. All schools should seek to **include opportunities within their religious studies programmes for pupils to mix with and study religious practices and ethical questions alongside children of different faiths and backgrounds.** We recognise that this will be much easier for schools with diverse intakes than for those whose pupils largely come from a single community. Faith schools could, however, **partner with a school rooted in a different religious culture to provide interfaith workshops.**

Schools in remote and ethnically or religiously homogenous geographical areas should **make use of the internet to connect with schools with different faith or socio-economic profiles.** The Commission would, additionally, encourage **all schools to hold assemblies marking, and**

teaching pupils about, different religious festivals – including through video conferencing with schools where children celebrate the holiday in question.

‘Character education’ is commonly taken by politicians and media commentators to mean lessons in grit and resilience, but we believe that schools also have a duty to help their pupils to communicate and build relationships with people who are different from themselves. In order to promote community service and understanding between young people from different ethnic groups and income backgrounds, schools could **create opportunities for pupils to participate together in social action in their communities alongside young people who are different from them.** Schools with diverse intakes might partner with a local charity or community group to provide opportunities for their pupils to **volunteer during school hours.**

If a school or college is dominated by a single faith group or community, on the other hand, it could support its pupils to participate in programmes bringing together young people from different schools, such as **the National Citizen Service (NCS).** This voluntary service programme brings together sixteen and seventeen year olds from different backgrounds to participate in outdoor activities, spend a week living away from home and design and deliver campaigns for change in their communities. The largest single provider of the NCS is the social integration charity The Challenge, which provides the secretariat to this Commission.

Principle 2: Schools’ intakes should reflect the economic and ethnic diversity of their communities.

Groups applying to open free schools with a religious character are currently required to **demonstrate a clear plan to encourage applications from pupils of other faiths or none,** but how stringently this rule has been applied is unclear.¹⁵ We would urge the government to strictly enforce this requirement.

Of course, social and ethnic segregation between schools is neither a new phenomenon nor one specific to free schools, and we must take action to boost diversity within all schools. Research by the Sutton Trust indicates that alternative admission systems including random balloting and ability banding can help a wider mix of pupils to access the most academically successful schools.¹⁶ The Commission would, therefore, call on **the DfE to allow schools and admissions authorities to bid for funding to trial innovative admissions practices that might lead to more mixed intakes.**

It is often the poorest pupils who are most severely disadvantaged by segregation between schools. All schools in England were recently given the right to **directly prioritise the admission of children eligible for the pupil premium.** The Commission welcomes this development and urges schools which do not admit children from less affluent backgrounds in numbers reflecting the socio-economic makeup of their community to use this power. We would call on the government to monitor the use of this power and to be willing to take further steps to reduce economic segregation between schools if this is found to be necessary.

Independent schools both reflect and perpetuate divisions within our society, and we believe

that facilitating social integration should be considered even more of an imperative for these institutions than for state schools. The Commission urges **all private schools to take material steps to promote social mixing between children from different income backgrounds** – offering more places to pupils from less affluent backgrounds, sharing resources and facilities to a much greater extent and entering into partnerships including Teaching School alliances (wherein outstanding schools work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff).

Principle 3: School and college buildings should be places where the community comes together as well as being centres for learning.

Head teachers might put this principle into action by **opening their school or college's premises to a trained community organiser** who will organise pupils and parents to address community issues. This model has been trialled in North London by the academy chain Ark and the community organising group Citizens UK. Initial results suggest that this arrangement has the potential to transform the culture of a school or college by building and strengthening bonds of trust both within and beyond the school gate.

School governors should be offered training on the importance of supporting pupils from different ethnic groups and income backgrounds to meet and mix. The Commission calls on The Challenge to produce information and advice materials to enable school governors to investigate levels of integration within their school or college and to foster **discussion between teachers, parents and pupils** on this issue. Indeed, children and teenagers may in many instances possess a far more developed understanding of the barriers to integration and the effects of segregation than those of the adults around them. They should be empowered to take a leading role in bridging divides between pupils from different ethnic groups and income backgrounds in their school and college communities.



The workplace

In our second report, we outlined how a lack of social integration is having a big impact on our economy as well as our society.

In order for businesses and the British public to benefit from the highest possible levels of economic productivity, people with the right skills have to be able to find their way into the right jobs. At present, however, a lack of social integration is making it harder for employers to recruit the right talent.

Around 40 per cent of jobs are found through personal contacts. When it comes to recruiting new staff, informal networks based along the lines of ethnicity, age and income background limit the talent pool available to employers.

On top of this, a particularly pronounced lack of contact with people in employment is precluding those who are out of work from learning about job opportunities which might be right for them – unnecessarily prolonging periods of unemployment at substantial cost to our economy. Based on original work by Optimity Matrix, we estimate the total annual lost economic output resulting from this lack of mixing to be £1.4 billion.

It's clear that the company we keep at work is keeping back our companies. Through opening up their professional networks and recruiting people with different life experiences – including the unemployed – employers could substantially boost the productivity of both their own organisations and the British economy.

Principle 4: Business and public sector leaders should recognise the benefits of social mixing and look to recruit from diverse talent pools.

We recognise that no single recruitment initiative or idea will suit every organisation. Nonetheless, we believe that by recognising the importance of this challenge and coming up with solutions which work for them, British businesses and public sector agencies could make huge strides towards building a more socially integrated society.

Employers should consider constructing **new channels for professional networking directly stimulating social mixing**. Companies might, for instance, **incentivise their employees to sign up to socially mixed professional networking groups which connect jobseekers with people doing the sorts of job they want to do**. The Backr platform, which Participle runs in conjunction with Croydon, Lambeth and Lewisham councils in South London, provides a compelling model for how employers and policymakers can work together to make these services work for everyone. This innovative initiative has been proactively designed to provide training as well as mentoring and networking opportunities for people with jobs in addition to the unemployed and students.

Employers look for jobseekers with the ability to communicate and work with people from different backgrounds, but most don't ask candidates to demonstrate this skill. The Commission

calls on **employers to build the benefits of social mixing into their recruitment criteria and pathways**. They might encourage candidates to **describe volunteering experiences through which they met and worked with people from different backgrounds** (many large companies, such as British Gas, already place a premium on volunteering experience throughout their recruitment processes), or partner with charities to **incentivise potential applicants to have social mixing experiences**. Employers including Starbucks, New Look, Bloomberg and Lloyds Bank guarantee interviews to young people who complete sixteen hours of volunteering in socially mixed settings. This is co-ordinated through the HeadStart programme run by the social integration charity The Challenge, which provides the secretariat to this Commission, and the Greater London Authority. Businesses and government bodies alike should examine the potential benefit of schemes such as this.

Diversity measures

The Commission would, additionally, propose that employers in professional settings in particular should explore a number of measures aimed at boosting workplace diversity. In order for people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds to have the chance to meet and mix, they must first of all be brought together within diverse institutions. We therefore view these proposals as creating the conditions necessary for social mixing to occur.

One modern business practice that clearly adversely affects levels of workplace diversity is the *Recruit a Friend* scheme, whereby businesses offer referral bonuses to employees who recommend their friends for jobs. Research has demonstrated that people who make use of these schemes are most likely to refer connections who look like themselves. As a result, these programmes reinforce the homogenous networks that lead to talent mismatches and perpetuate cycles of segregation. The Commission would urge **businesses which currently operate employee referral schemes to examine the effect of these programmes on levels of diversity in the workplace**, and consider how they might **encourage their employees to make new professional connections**.

In recent years, a number of leading British businesses, including major law firms such as Clifford Chance, have adopted 'CV-blind' recruitment policies. Whilst practices vary from business to business, staff conducting interviews under CV-blind conditions might not be given any information regarding the schools and universities attended by candidates, or may be asked to compile shortlists of applicants without knowledge of their names or addresses. Preliminary research indicates that these policies have led to applicants from a broader range of educational backgrounds getting hired by these firms (whilst further research is required to ascertain the impact of blind recruitment on ethnic diversity in the workplace). The Commission would encourage **employers to consider whether a blind recruitment scheme might help them to tap into new pools of talent**.

Internships and work placements

Many young people seeking to take the first step on a career ladder are particularly disadvantaged by employers recruiting interns and trainees from extended personal networks or unconsciously favouring candidates from particular educational or income backgrounds.

Businesses and public sector agencies that offer summer internships or placement opportunities could take various measures to open up their workplaces to young people with a range of life experiences. Employers might, for instance, enable candidates to apply for these roles through **submitting a short essay or written exercise relevant to the industry in question, rather than a CV** (an idea which has also been successfully trialled by leading law firms). **Organisations situated within or near disadvantaged areas might accept applications for internships from candidates living within local postcodes only.** These positions should, moreover, be **advertised formally and openly and remunerated appropriately.**

Principle 5: Businesses and public sector agencies employing recent migrants should take active steps to enable these workers to meet and mix with different groups of people.

The Commission would urge **businesses and public sector agencies requiring their employees to work in shift patterns to investigate whether these perpetuate patterns of ethnic segregation** – with one ethnic group working the dayshift and another the night – and work with employees to mitigate this effect. We would, in addition, call on **businesses employing large numbers of recent migrants to sponsor workers to attend English as a Second Language classes** as part of their corporate social responsibility and staff development programmes.



Neighbourhoods

Our neighbourhoods and communities shape and are shaped by the ways in which we interact with one another. If we are to build a more socially integrated nation, we must first develop new ways of relating to one another within our local areas.

Principle 6: Planning authorities should develop and preserve neighbourhoods which are not only diverse, but are organised to enable residents from different backgrounds to mix with one another.

At present, many mixed housing developments are designed so as to curtail contact between private and social tenants. Whereas social housing in these complexes is often clustered in separate buildings or out-of-the-way corners, an integration-friendly approach would see social housing slotted in alongside privately rented properties. The Commission views the growing trend in London (and potentially elsewhere) for separate entrances to housing developments for the use of private and social tenants as a particularly disquieting – almost Dickensian – development. ‘Poor doors’, installed to keep social tenants out of sight of their more affluent neighbours, are emblematic not just of a growing divide between the rich and poor but of the way in which that gulf is now being built into our physical environment.

The Commission calls on **all local authorities to ban the installation of ‘poor doors’ and ‘rich gates’ in their areas.** Furthermore, we call on **the Department of Communities and Local Government to introduce a requirement for councils to consider whether proposed major developments would allow people from different backgrounds to meet and mix and to reject planning applications which do not pass this test.**

During a tour of community initiatives in Leeds, the Commission visited a housing development run by Leeds Federated Housing Association. This housing association offers **courses on topics including digital skills and English as a Second Language which are open to both private and social tenants.** We would urge housing associations to explore providing services such as this so as to create opportunities for residents from different backgrounds to meet and mix.

Principle 7: People living in diverse areas should be encouraged to get to know their neighbours.

Research conducted by the Commission has demonstrated that highly diverse areas are not necessarily integrated. For example, whilst London is more diverse than the rest of the country and Londoners are more likely to meet people who are different from them compared to people outside the capital, Londoners’ friendship groups are in fact the least likely to properly reflect the age, income and ethnic mix of the community they live in. We would encourage local authorities to generate new ways and reasons for people living in diverse neighbourhoods to meet and mix.

Pop up public spaces might be produced through Play Street schemes, which enable **groups of neighbours to close their streets to traffic**, providing a safe environment for children to play together and for adults to get to know one another. Typically quiet residential streets could be similarly transformed through programmes **encouraging local people to throw picnics and street parties in their neighbourhoods**. One such initiative, the Eden Project's Big Lunch project, saw 4.83 million people throughout the country take to their streets, gardens and local parks to break bread with their neighbours last June. Councils might, additionally, encourage the growth of **'sharing economy' initiatives which bring people face-to-face with their neighbours whilst driving down participants' living costs**. Examples include community gardens, neighbourhood cooking co-operatives or the website Street Bank, through which users can offer to lend goods or services to their neighbours.



Public services and care providers

Many public services are designed to be used by specific groups such as young families and the elderly. Through organising service provision so as to bring these distinct user groups together, policymakers and social entrepreneurs could create opportunities for some of the most isolated people in our society to connect with new people and to play a more active role in the life of their community.

Principle 8: Public services should be designed and managed so as to bring together different groups of people.

The Commission calls on **the government to explore community centres bringing childcare and youth services, day care and activities for the elderly, family support services and social clubs under the same roof**. Whilst each group or service would be allocated a separate space within the centre, doors would be kept open to create a sense of vibrancy and neighbourliness, and communal areas and cafes would provide safe spaces for people to meet and mix. The co-location of these services would additionally allow older people, having passed the relevant safety checks, to lend a hand with childcare and to build relationships with young families in need of support – thus facilitating intergenerational mixing.

As well as bringing together people from different age groups and income backgrounds, co-locating services in this manner would enable providers to take a joined-up approach to individuals' needs and significantly reduce the overhead costs associated with each service. This model has been rolled out by the German federal government with positive results.¹⁷

Principle 9: We should draw on the experience of parenthood to build understanding between people from different backgrounds.

The birth of a child is one of the most important moments in a person's life – one which brings major life changes irrespective of a person's age, ethnicity or income background.

A charity or business seeking to promote social mixing in their community could **sponsor events and celebrations for children born in the same hospital on the same day**. In so doing, they would give parents (and possibly grandparents) two rare opportunities – to revisit a significant moment in their lives, and to meet and build friendships with people with whom they might not normally socialise. In our second report, the Commission outlined how a lack of integration in our communities increases anxiety and ill-health, and we believe that health care providers including hospitals and the NHS have an important role to play in building a more integrated society.

Organisations such as the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) have found that **peer-to-peer support programmes for pregnant women and new parents** often generate meaningful and long-lasting friendships between people from different backgrounds. The NCT's Birth and

Beyond Community Supporters pilot programme – run in East Lancashire, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, and the West Midlands – focused on engaging and providing antenatal care to women from groups and communities that often experience social exclusion, and saw mothers of different ethnicities and income backgrounds form significant bonds of trust. The Commission urges **the Department for Health and charitable funders to consider the potential integration impact of antenatal care projects when considering funding proposals.**

Religion

Principle 10: Publicly-funded moments of celebration should be open to people from all religions and none.

Research conducted by the Commission indicates that some places of worship are amongst the most socially integrated (in terms of age, income background and – for some faiths – ethnicity) institutions in the UK. We would encourage all local authorities to work with faith groups to increase levels of social mixing in their communities. Religious celebrations in particular can be brilliant opportunities to bring people together, but they can also reinforce barriers between communities and breed resentment. It is not uncommon for people to feel alienated by and unwelcome at nominally-public celebrations rooted in religious and cultural traditions other than their own – even if the party takes place in their neighbourhood or in a communal space. The Commission calls on **councils to push religious groups applying for funding for community events and celebrations to develop a plan to include people from different backgrounds in activities and events.**

Indeed, we would encourage **local authorities to bring together community and faith groups and charities in their areas to co-design local calendars of celebration.** These calendars should draw on the customs of faiths and communities in order to facilitate the inclusive, active and collaborative commemoration of religious holidays and traditions. Participating groups should aim to channel the spirit of the Big Iftar programme, through which Mosques and Islamic centres throughout the country threw open their doors last July and hosted evening meals for local people belonging to all faiths and none.

Volunteering

Many voluntary programmes create opportunities for people to meet and mix with individuals from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds, including service users as well as fellow volunteers.

Principle 11: Businesses should support their employees to volunteer in and to connect with the communities in which they work.

Fewer than one in ten British workers are given paid time off to volunteer by their employers.¹⁸ The business case for employer-supported volunteering is well established, with firms reporting that the practice boosts staff retention rates and morale, enables employees to develop new skillsets, generates new recruitment channels and enhances corporate reputation.¹⁹ Recent research indicates that this practice also enables employees to feel more comfortable in and connected to communities in which they work, and to develop empathy for people who are different from them.²⁰

The Commission urges businesses not just to offer their employees more paid volunteering hours, but to **design employer-supported volunteering programmes so as to maximise opportunities for staff to meet and mix with people from different backgrounds.** One example of a corporate volunteering initiative with a positive integration impact is Age UK's Call in Time telephone befriending scheme, through which employees of businesses including British Gas call a designated older person every week. We call on The Challenge to produce guidance for companies on stimulating social mixing through volunteering programmes and to work with business leaders to develop realistic targets for British businesses in this regard.

Volunteering is also a great way for older people to stay active and to meet and mix with younger people once they've retired. Today's retirees are increasingly eager to continue to make use of skills and knowledge acquired throughout their careers in later life²¹, and there is no shortage of voluntary programmes and causes which could make use of older peoples' expertise. It follows that retired people should be supported to invest their time and life experience in their communities – improving the lives of those around them whilst benefitting from a sense of continued purpose and the chance to mix and build friendships with new people and across generations.

Principle 12: Retired people should be supported to invest their time and the benefits of their life experience in their communities.

The Commission urges the Cabinet Office to launch **a new UK-wide initiative with the aim of connecting retirees to volunteering programmes and social enterprises in their local communities involving people from different generations.** Enabling older and younger people to come together and learn from one another should be a core aim of this national



retirement service. The Commission would also recommend that the public bodies, charities or companies tasked with delivering this programme should seek to tap into the work currently being undertaken by non-profit organisations across the UK to draw older people into their activities. Providers could fulfil a brokering role – working alongside and **building capacity for post-retirement volunteerism within local charities, community groups and schools.**

Businesses might support this drive by **offering employees on the cusp of retirement a certain number of paid hours per week to participate in a volunteering scheme,** and by **sponsoring pathways into volunteering programmes matching those employees' skillsets.** A number of companies already operate schemes with this aim. Barclays is partnering with the 'The Age of No Retirement?' movement to deliver projects celebrating intergenerational working, and has a particularly impressive track record of supporting retired employees to volunteer.²²

Principle 13: It should be easy for charities to play their part in bringing together people from different ethnic and age groups and income backgrounds.

Whilst many voluntary programmes and activities do promote social integration, this is in most cases a by-product of other activity and rarely ranks as a priority in and of itself. Through **establishing funding pots specifically for integration-friendly proposals,** charitable trusts and public bodies (such as the Big Lottery Fund) could encourage charities and social entrepreneurs to capitalise fully on the potential of existing initiatives to stimulate social mixing and kickstart the development of new integration projects.

As part of its programme of research, the Commission reached out to a number of leading civil society groups to determine whether they had an integration policy in place – none did. We call on The Challenge to work with third sector representative bodies (including the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Association of Voluntary Organisations and National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) to **design a toolkit to assist civil society organisations in the development of strategies for the promotion of social mixing,** and to **monitor the take-up of integration policies.** The Commission would hope that **government bodies and charitable trusts and foundations should, in time, come to regard the preparation of an integration policy as a precondition for receiving public funding** – equivalent to an equality and diversity strategy.

Thirteen steps

Social segregation needn't be a fact of life in modern Britain.

Throughout this report, the Commission has highlighted a number of actions which we believe central and local government, schools, businesses, civil society organisations and individuals should take in order to prevent a rise in social segregation that will undermine the cohesiveness and long-term success of our society. Without action to promote greater integration, the danger grows that in the face of the many and complex challenges of the future, instead of asking 'how can we solve this together?', the people of the UK will ask 'who can we blame?'

Through embedding the thirteen principles set out in these pages, however, and reforming our institutions and practices in small but intelligent ways, we could build a more socially integrated and successful UK. Indeed, by taking these thirteen steps we could make major strides towards solving some of the key economic and social challenges facing our country.

The social integration charity The Challenge will work with experts and leaders in the relevant fields to build on the ideas explored, and to promote the calls to action made, in this report.

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References

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