

Anti Rumour and Critical Thinking Strategy

Bradford District



BACKGROUND

Bradford District is vibrant and diverse with a proud history and welcoming community. The district is diverse in landscape as in people with many positives. The Bradford District Anti Rumour and Critical Thinking Strategy sets out a long-term process of social change. It seeks to tackle and prevent discrimination, improve coexistence, and harness the potential of diversity by triggering an openness within individuals and groups in the District to change their perceptions and attitudes, and consequently their behaviours. The audience for this strategy is the general population, working with specific target groups as the process develops. The initial target groups include migrants, faith and religious groups; LGBTQ+ and working class people. In order to reach its goals, the Anti Rumour and Critical Thinking strategy focuses on three specific objectives:

1. **To engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders and citizens** in the District by implementing public policy and building a cooperative multi-level social platform within the framework of a long-term District Strategy. The focus will be inclusion, understanding and respect for all. We will work with all aspects of policy and provision in relation to publicly funded services with the aim of ensuring that the needs of no group is overlooked, including the need to have respect and safety when participating in community activities.
2. **To promote critical thinking and raise awareness of the negative effects of stereotypes, prejudices, and false rumours** by implementing innovative and participative actions to reduce them, and challenging the negative narratives around diversity. We will focus on creating conditions for empathy and understanding as well as creating opportunities for positive social mixing that celebrate our diversity.
3. **To influence the political and social agenda** so that reducing prejudices and preventing discrimination is recognised as a crucial collective goal for society as a whole. This will include exposing the impact of dog whistle politics and increase awareness of our diversity.

SUMMARY

This strategy recognises that we can all learn and promote critical thinking as another option to myth busting or directly tackling what people are saying as wrong. At the heart of this is the kind of phrase *'I know, I see it every day'* which might be 'factually' untrue but it is their truth . The overall aim is to reduce the sharing of stories that aren't entirely accurate, based on what is heard through people's own networks or sources (commonly know as the spreading of rumours) that they assume to be reliable but which are wrong and that promote prejudice and hate and instead create empowered critical thinkers who celebrate diversity.

The key message of the strategy is to think critically and not to spread rumours and to 'make sure it adds up'. This message aims to encourage thinking about what you are hearing and consider and learn from other views. The idea is to not say others are wrong but to encourage everyone to be open critical thinkers who promote the positives of diversity in Bradford District.

The strategy will be set within the following objectives and principles which will be used to set specific actions and targets;

Objectives

- Engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders.
- Promote critical thinking and raise awareness.
- Influence the political and social agenda.

Principles

- Strengthen political commitment.
- Target and attract the ambivalent majority.
- Guarantee the District collective dimension.
- Promote creativity.
- Guarantee rigour and results.

Setting specific targets

- Promote theory about why people are more likely to believe certain information and also why it is hard for people to shift their position.
- Set clear objectives.
- Identify target groups.

- Identify actions, tools, messages and channels to use.
- Identify key actors and partners to involve.
- Link and integrate to existing initiatives.
- Design and implement actions.
- Design workshops entirely about generating ideas.
- Monitor and evaluate.

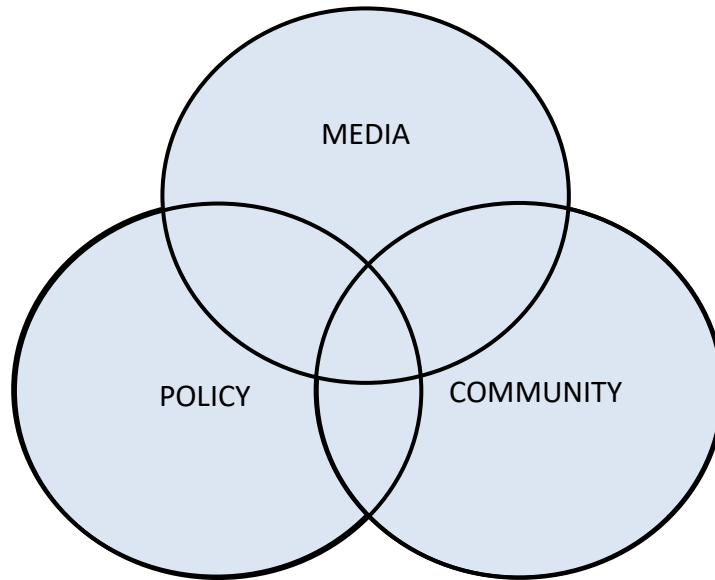
NETWORKS

In Bradford District we will build **Network Partnerships** who understand the key areas and help identify actors who can spread the message of the strategy. Methods will be designed by a **Strategic Working Group** who will develop the on-going strategy. They will identify organisations who can train actors/communities who can tackle rumours and spread the strategy message. The strategy will initially focus on four campaign areas;

- Migrants
- LGBTQ+
- Islamaphobia
- Working Class

STRATEGY DIRECTION

The aim of the strategy is to target the whole District with a focus on the ambivalent majority – those people who are using mainstream opinion and not those on the extremes. The strategy will use methods and actors to spread the message of critical thinking and design opportunities to increase awareness of the positives of diversity and the effects of discrimination. This will be achieved through focused media campaigns and positive narratives, policy changes with political commitment and community based training to increase awareness using a range of approaches. We will work with groups who understand the target areas and who can identify the rumours and understand the client group effected.



Anti rumour and Critical Thinking Strategy areas

This strategy was not conceived in an isolated office, detached from other policies and social dynamics. It was developed within a framework of on-going social and political commitments to an intercultural approach to diversity – an approach described by the Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities programme as follows.

Rather than ignoring diversity, denying diversity or overemphasising diversity and thereby reinforcing walls between culturally distinct groups (as with multiculturalism), interculturalism is about explicitly recognising the value of diversity while doing everything possible to increase interaction, mixing and hybridisation between cultural communities.

This strategy will follow that described in the Anti Rumours Handbook (Barderi, 2018). We will adapt and develop the process described in this handbook for the Bradford District approach.

Launching phase	Preparatory actions	Evaluation
	Antirumours diagnosis	
	Engaging key and motivated actors: the basis of the future antirumours network	
	Training antirumours agents	
Implementation phase: Antirumours actions	Communication strategy and dissemination	
	Attracting new allies: the network growth	
	Knowledge and critical thinking	
	Participative awareness and empowerment actions	
	Promoting positive interaction	
	Confronting prejudices and rumours	
	Antirumours creative labs	
	Spaces free of rumours	
	Reaching new levels of influence	
	Cooperation and exchange with other cities and the global project	
Sustainability		

Anti rumour and Critical Thinking Strategy process

MESSAGE



Make sure it adds up

The key message of the strategy is to develop critical thinking and not repeat rumours as well as promoting the positives of diversity through the wider Intercultural Cities initiative. The tagline and logo above will be used to gather support and commitment and to link the campaigns which will target the initial specific areas. This message was developed based on existing knowledge and work on-going within the Bradford District.

ACTION PLANNING

The delivery of the strategy will require developing and building resources and identifying training opportunities. This will involve training for actors within partner organisations and in the community as well as the gathering of baseline data and agreeing the project evaluation. There will be resources required for spreading the key message through communication including social media, which will be designed by the strategic working group.

Action planning will include;

- ARCT critical thinking training sessions for actors.
- Set up and coordinate network groups to spread message.
- Production of information material and communication tools.
- Implementation of activities and events.

The Action Plan will be used to meet the key objectives and deliver;

- Focused media campaigns and positive narratives – promoting more than one story.
- Implementing Place Based Policy changes with political commitment.
- Community based training for critical thinking and spreading the message.

This plan will link in partnership with other cities with Anti Rumour and Critical Thinking Strategies who are members of Intercultural Cities Network. Learning will be gathered from examples in other areas.

EVALUATION

We will baseline the areas of rumours with the wider community and gather data to check progress. We will develop a six-step theory of change shown below which has been tested by other Intercultural City partners.

1. Identifying long-term goals; and short term goals.
2. “Mapping” local conditions to identify the preconditions necessary for achieving these goals;
3. Identifying basic assumptions about the context;
4. Identifying the actions needed in order to create the necessary preconditions;

5. Developing indicators to assess the performance (accounting for the preconditions);

6. Articulating the theory of change, i.e. summarising various components, principles and “moving parts” of the theory.

Reference;

Barden, 2018, Anti Rumours handbook, Daniel de Torres Barden, Council of EEurope; Intercultural Cities Programme



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