Sticking Together:

Social capital and local government

The results and implications
of the Camden social capital surveys
2002 and 2005

Edited by
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ippr

Camden

ippr and the London Borough of Camden

Since 2003, the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) and the London Borough of Camden, in north London, have worked together in a pioneering research partnership, with the aim of developing forward-thinking public policy to meet people's rising expectations of public services. This partnership has provided an opportunity to pool ippr's proven track record for innovation with Camden Council's wealth of experience in delivering public services.

The partnership aims to improve ippr's understanding of the policy challenges facing local government and to help Camden in its policy thinking. Among recent initiatives, ippr conducted focus groups in Camden exploring attitudes to asylum seekers, which helped to inform the council's policies and ippr's asylum seekers project. ippr has also worked with Camden to explore issues of asset-based welfare, neighbourhood governance and choice in public services. In 2006, ippr is providing a broad range of policy input into Camden's new community strategy, which will map out the strategic direction for the borough over the next five years.

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Foreword

David Miliband MP

Over the past decade, we have come to understand the importance of 'social capital', alongside human, financial and physical capital, in explaining the economic and social progress of societies.

The wealth, health and happiness of society are made up of more than the goods and services we buy and sell. They are linked to something more intangible: the norms that encourage children and parents to aim high at school, the acquaintances that help people get jobs, and the trust that encourages people to collaborate. These emerge through social networks, and through people engaging in shared activities.

The twentieth century saw a decline in some of the traditional solidarities of class, religion and geography that nurtured social capital in the past. Greater freedom came at the price of a more atomised and less trusting society.

Our challenge in the twenty-first century is to develop the new institutions and activities that bring people together and foster trust and co-operation, particularly those that bridge social divisions.

But as the work of the American academic Robert Sampson shows, building trust and social networks is not always enough to tackle problems such as anti-social behaviour. What is needed is for people to feel that their actions will be backed up by others in the neighbourhood – that there is a shared expectation about the circumstances in which citizens will act. Sampson describes this as 'collective efficacy' – the extent to which there is a shared willingness to take action when they see children skipping school, adults dropping litter, or local services facing a budget cut.

The task ahead is to take the concepts of social capital and collective efficacy and apply them in our policies and practices. Local government's role as a 'place maker' is to build not just the physical fabric of communities, but the social fabric. That is why I am so pleased to see this collaboration between ippr and Camden Council. It is one I believe will be instructive to policymakers and practitioners in local authorities and central government.

Introduction

Ben Rogers and Philip Colligan

These days, politicians and commentators from both left and right agree on the importance of promoting 'social capital', by which we mean the social networks, shared norms and co-operative relationships that help us get along together as a society.

This emphasis on social capital is not without good reason. There is a now an impressive body of research that testifies to the importance of active communities and a strong civil society for individual and communal well-being. In particular, it seems clear that social capital has an important contribution to make towards tackling poverty and disadvantage. Communities with strong networks, high levels of trust and well-established habits of co-operation and association are generally much better off than those without these things.

In 2002 and 2005, Camden commissioned two surveys aimed at measuring social capital, as it is broadly understood, in the borough (Office for Public Management 2002 and 2005). This publication is intended to help Camden explore the significance of the survey findings and develop policies in response to them. But we also hope it will help others in local government think about why social capital matters to them and what they can do to promote it.

Social capital and local government

Local government has always sought to develop and maintain civic communities, promote and support voluntary bodies and encourage political participation. It has never altogether succumbed to the view – peddled by some on both the left and right – that it should limit itself to meeting consumer preferences or user needs. Yet it has not always approached the business of building civic life in a very strategic fashion – indeed, sometimes it has shown a scandalous disregard for communities and associations for which it should have been responsible.

There are strong arguments, moreover, for saying that today local government needs to be taking social capital particularly seriously. As people become more individualistic, society becomes more diverse and

political and social deference declines, so government can no longer take community, trust, or its own legitimacy for granted. Instead, it has to take a more active role in promoting civic life and public participation. We hope, therefore, that these considerations make this publication timely and helpful.

The challenge for policymakers

Of course, government cannot simply invent social capital any more than it can invent money or employment. In his book *Making Democracy Work* Robert Putnam (who has done more than anyone to promote awareness of the importance of social capital) found that in Italy, while social capital explained much of the variation in the effectiveness of local government, levels of social capital were themselves shaped by factors going back centuries (Putnam 1993).

But that does not mean that government cannot do anything to strengthen civic culture. On the contrary, as ippr Research Fellow Rick Muir suggests in his chapter, there are a range of steps that a local authority such as Camden can take – for instance, redesigning the public realm to encourage everyday interaction, supporting grassroots community associations, asking people to get involved, and supporting them when they do.

Structure of the publication

The publication opens with an analysis by Rick Muir of the results and policy implications of the social capital surveys. This is followed by a series of response papers, each taking a different perspective on the survey's findings and its implications for the social capital debate.

The former and current leaders of Camden Council, Jane Roberts and Raj Chada, set out why they believe the social capital debate is so relevant to the borough and why they decided to commission the survey in the first place. Jude Cummins of the Office for Public Management, who carried out the survey, discusses the methodological challenges of measuring such a complex concept as social capital in practice. Mai Stafford and Michael Marmot explore the complex relationship between health, social capital and socio-economic factors. Finally, Ted Cantle of the IdeA reflects on where the social capital debate currently stands, questioning some of its key assumptions but setting out why it is so important to questions of diversity and social cohesion.

We would like to thank all of our contributors for taking the time to participate in this debate. We hope that by producing this publication through the Camden/ippr research partnership we will take the debate forward, as local government increasingly becomes aware of its pivotal role in promoting social capital and developing stronger communities.

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Social capital in Camden

Rick Muir

In recent years, a political consensus has emerged that something has gone wrong with the state of Britain's local communities. Politicians of all the main parties are voicing concern about declining levels of civic participation, a loss of trust and co-operation between neighbours, a lack of respect that some people show towards others, and an underlying sense in some neighbourhoods that there is little that local people can do to effect real change in their circumstances, or to tackle long-standing problems.

Most policymakers have come to believe that a lack of 'social capital' is at the heart of the problems that beset so many neighbourhoods in Britain today. A number of studies have found that since the 1960s, traditional forms of community organisation (the political party, the trade union, the church) have all suffered a collapse in membership. Similarly, positive perceptions of neighbours have generally declined, and trust in other people has fallen from 56 per cent in 1959 to less than 30 per cent in 1996. In the case of Britain, this decline in social capital is skewed heavily by social class, with unskilled and semi-skilled workers showing much less interest in politics and lower levels of associational membership than their more affluent compatriots (Halpern 2005: 212-216).

In response, the Government has gradually been moving away from focusing just on public service improvement to the more complex challenge of how to repair the fabric of co-operative relationships on which strong communities are based. This is unfamiliar terrain, posing new questions and dilemmas that have not traditionally been at the centre of public policy debate: how can we establish the conditions on which trusting and co-operative relationships between citizens can develop? How do we nurture a greater sense of neighbourliness? How can we instil a culture of collective efficacy, so that people can come together in their communities to overcome problems such as anti-social behaviour? To what extent should the state intervene in people's everyday lives to bring these changes about?

However, many of these problems are very locally based: for example, low levels of engagement in community affairs, increasing problems with street-level anti-social behaviour and declining levels of trust in one's neighbours. It is increasingly clear that given their distance from people's everyday experience, central government initiatives either will not suffice, or will prove ineffective. Local government is much better placed to respond to the concerns of neighbourhoods on the ground.

It is in this context that the recent work of Camden Council has been so timely. Camden is one of very few local authorities in Britain to have sought to understand the nature and degree of social capital that exists at the neighbourhood level. It has now conducted two comprehensive surveys of social capital (Office for Public Management 2002, 2005), allowing the council to assess how policies and interventions have affected the strength of community ties over time.

The aim of this chapter is, first of all, to help inform the council's own approach to social capital questions by analysing the results of the survey and drawing out their policy implications. However, it also discusses the more general challenges that a focus on social capital can bring to the ways in which local government has traditionally worked.

This chapter is made up of three parts:

- **What is social capital and why should we care about it?** This part sets out what we understand by 'social capital', and why it is so relevant to the work of local government.
- **Social capital in Camden.** This part draws out the key messages from the survey.
- **Where next? The policy implications.** This final part assesses the policy implications of these findings for Camden Council and for local government more generally.

What is social capital and why should we care about it?

In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam defines social capital as:

> *… features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared*

objectives… Social capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust. (Putnam 2000: 664-5)

Social capital is essentially the glue that helps hold individuals together as a community. It is made up of the social networks in which we are embedded: connections made through our workplace, school or place of worship. It is also made up of the norms that encourage co-operative behaviour between us: the duty not to jump the queue or the obligation to give up one's seat for an older person on the bus. Finally, it is made up of the trust we have in other people: our ability to rely on a neighbour to look after our children, or to be confident that our local GP will offer us reasonable and faithful advice. These are the basic building blocks of strong and cohesive communities, in which people look out for each other and possess a sense of obligation towards one another.

It is important, however, to distinguish between different forms of social capital. Here we use the term in its broadest sense, encompassing the horizontal relationships between individuals in the community as well as the vertical relationships between citizens and political institutions. In this chapter, we distinguish between two forms of horizontal social capital – 'bonding' and 'bridging' – and one vertical form – 'linking'.

Social capital is referred to as 'bonding' where it is inward looking and reinforces exclusive identities and homogenous groups. This type of social capital sustains solidarity within the group, which is beneficial in providing support for group members. However, it can also have negative social effects, by insulating groups from 'outsiders' and creating inter-communal tensions. Examples would include the elite gentleman's club or a tightly knit faith-based group that are closed from the rest of society through exclusive membership criteria.

By contrast, 'bridging' social capital refers to those more impersonal and distant sorts of relationships that are outward looking and encompass people from many different social backgrounds. This form of social capital is seen as being more unambiguously desirable in public policy terms, in that it tends to bring people from different social groups together, promoting tolerance and cross-cultural understanding.

A third form of social capital is 'linking' social capital, which addresses the relationships between individuals holding unequal amounts of power. As with bonding social capital, this can sometimes have undesirable social consequences. An example might be the advantageous social networks available to the middle classes that facilitate political or social access denied to poorer groups in society. However, in political terms, one can envisage more positive forms of linking social capital that connect people to power. These would include, for example, shared habits of participation in civic affairs, and open and accountable relationships between citizens and their representatives (Halpern 2005: 19-26).

Three types of social capital

Type of social capital	Type of relationship	Contributes to
Bonding Ties among people who are similar to each other in certain respects (age, sex, ethnicity, social class)	Horizontal	Social support, especially in times of need
Bridging Ties among people who are different from one another	Horizontal	Social cohesion, democratic dialogue, civic identity
Linking Ties with those in authority	Vertical	Democratic life, responsive public services, legitimacy of public institutions

Source: Adapted from Jochum *et al* (2005)

While social scientists have long debated the merits of these different forms of social capital, in general their thinking has not directly informed the work of local government. Why, then, should local government be concerned about it?

First, there is a growing consensus (based on a large body of academic literature) connecting high levels of social capital to a whole range of the desirable social outcomes that are a key concern for local councils. Access to supportive networks in the community is believed to contribute to better physical and mental health. In turn, people who lack trusting relationships and strong community commitments are more likely to get involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Similarly, in the educational sphere, differences in children's immediate social networks are believed to lead to varying levels of educational attainment. At the same time, effective and responsive democratic institutions are thought to be a product of rich patterns of association, trust and co-operation in civil society. So, if councils are to be effective in delivering on these key policy objectives, they need to consider how their policies affect social capital (see Halpern 2005: 41-194 and Putnam 1993: 163-85).

Second, if local government is to fulfil its wider community leadership role, it needs to consider social capital. This means that councils need to move beyond measuring their effectiveness just in terms of narrow service delivery. Emptying the bins on time and keeping the streets clean are, of course, important concerns. Failure to provide these basics affects people's daily lives and leads them to question what they are getting in return for their taxes. On its own, however, excellence in the field of public service delivery will not build strong communities. The Government is now asking councils to broaden their horizons and concern themselves with community well-being in a much more ambitious sense (Miliband 2005).

Third, the relationship between social capital and active citizenship should be a key concern for local government because of its role in strengthening local democracy and civic life. Putnam found that the quality of democratic local government (its openness, legitimacy and responsiveness) was causally connected to the growth of a vibrant associational life in civil society that was able to hold government to account. Being the closest and most locally responsive face of the state, local government has a key role in developing a more open and delib-

erative relationship between the citizen and the state (Putnam 1993).

Finally, the social capital question is also a social justice question. Inequality in income, educational opportunities, housing and other more tangible aspects of people's life chances unquestionably leads to inequalities in access to social capital. Equally, there is evidence of causality running in the opposite direction. The uneven distribution of social capital seriously disadvantages certain groups. This happens through, for example, denying them access to supportive networks at times of need, or through decreasing people's expectations that collective action or civic involvement can overcome social problems that are deeply entrenched.[1]

If this is a question of social justice, it is also now a local government question. Local authorities such as Camden are key players in implementing the Government's neighbourhood renewal agenda, which aims to 'narrow the gap between deprived areas and the rest… by improving people's lives in the most deprived areas… lifting standards of employment, educational attainment, housing, health, and lowering crime rates' (Prime Minister's Office 2000).

Narrowing the gap between different neighbourhoods requires not simply investment in infrastructure, but also attention to empowering local people over decision making, and nurturing the grassroots organisations and co-operative networks that may otherwise develop predominantly in more affluent areas. To 'close the gap', both in terms of wealth and aspirations, local authorities will need to consider social capital as both a cause and consequence of poverty and disadvantage.

For all of these reasons, local government should be interested in the social capital debate. However, local councils are also especially well placed to help nurture social capital – simply because they are the tier of the state closest to people's daily lives. Social capital is very locally rooted. It relates to one's relationships with neighbours, local clubs and societies, and frontline public services. Local authorities are therefore uniquely placed within the public sector to work with local

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1 Between 1981 and 1999, those expressing an interest in politics among the AB professional/managerial group rose from 56 to 66 per cent, while among semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the DE group it fell from 33 to 18 per cent (Halpern 2005: 215-15, 285-86).

communities, to foster the development of social capital.

If the social capital debate is important to local government in general, then it is especially relevant in a rapidly changing inner-London borough such as Camden. Traditional forms of bonding social capital are typically assumed to have been strongest in the less mobile and more culturally homogenous communities of the past. In areas where the same neighbours lived side by side for decades, working in the same factory and socialising in the same club, inwardly orientated social bonds are thought to have been extremely strong.

However, the picture in today's Camden could not be more different: its population is expected to grow by 10 per cent over the next decade and the borough has a very high rate of residential turnover. In contrast to the large family networks of the past, today single people, living alone, occupy 46 per cent of Camden's homes. Also, with more than 114 languages spoken in its schools, Camden faces the challenge of trying to develop good 'bridging' social capital that can bring people from different cultural backgrounds together (Greater London Authority 2004, Office for National Statistics 2005, Camden Education Department 2005). What is more, these trends towards increased mobility and potentially greater atomisation are set to continue and even accelerate.

Camden therefore needs to think not merely about how to meet the current challenge, but also how to meet an even greater challenge in the future. It is in this context that Camden Council decided to commission its first social capital survey, in order to try to measure how the borough's communities are evolving in this context of social change.

Social capital in Camden

Both the 2002 and 2005 Camden social capital surveys consisted of two attitudinal surveys of adult residents in Camden. The first was a borough-wide survey of 1,000 randomly chosen residents, while the second was a survey of 100 residents living in each of Camden's ten neighbourhood renewal areas or NRAs. These are areas that are given additional government funding to try to bring their living standards up to those enjoyed in the rest of the country over the next decade. The map opposite shows the distribution of NRAs in Camden.

The key messages from the 2005 study are discussed below, setting

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) in Camden
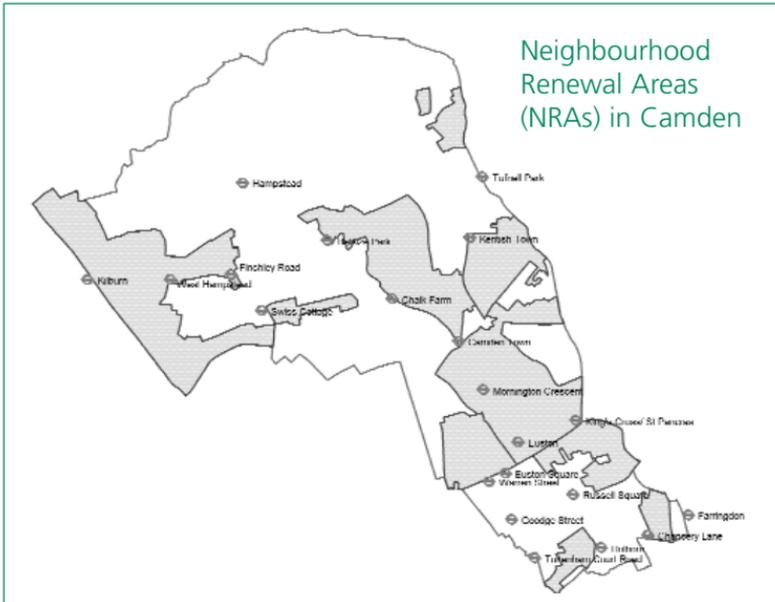
out the areas of change since 2002 and where significant gaps remain in the degree of social capital in different parts of the borough.

The Camden social capital surveys: key findings

- Diversity is valued by the overwhelming majority of Camden residents, regardless of where they live.
- A sense of community is growing across the borough.
- Trust in local institutions – including the council – is growing, although trust in other people varies by neighbourhood.
- People's access to supportive networks varies across the borough according to levels of deprivation.
- People feel more able to influence decisions collectively than individually.
- Most people do not feel involved in local decision making.
- Most people believe their area is improving, but very different problems affect different parts of the borough.
- Satisfaction with local services is high, and community safety and health promotion initiatives appear to be having an effect on the ground.

We now turn to each of these points in detail.

Diversity is valued and a sense of community is growing
The survey sought to establish whether the building blocks of good 'bridging' social capital existed in Camden. More precisely, it examined the degree to which there is a common vision and sense of belonging within Camden's neighbourhoods, and the degree to which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued.

The survey found that cultural diversity is overwhelmingly valued by nine out of every ten Camden residents. This is true for all ethnic groups, and across more and less affluent areas. Community relations are good, and improving, with an increase (from 78 to 85 per cent) in the number of people saying they live in a neighbourhood where people from different cultures and religions can live together without difficulty. The previous gap between NRAs and the rest of the borough on this question has been closed.

Figure 1
Agreement with the statement that people from different cultures and religions live together without difficulty in this area, overall.
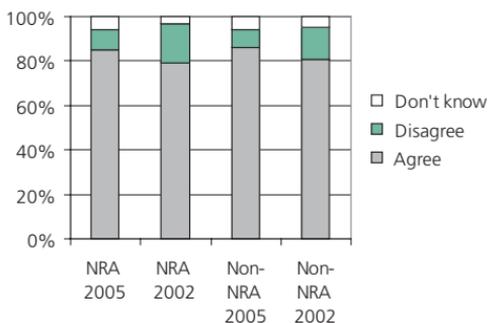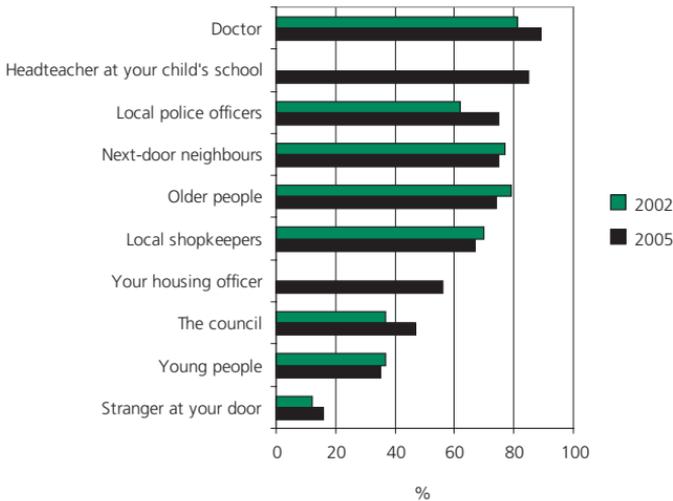
Source: Office for Public Management (2005)

However, although a sense of community is growing across the borough overall, people in NRAs are less likely to perceive there to be a strong sense of community where they live, and remain more likely to feel that nobody cares about their neighbourhood. One in five residents in the borough feels lonely, with NRA and black and minority ethnic residents experiencing higher levels of loneliness than other groups.

Trust in local institutions is growing, although trust in other people varies by neighbourhood

A key component of social capital is the degree of trust people have in others, both generally and within their local neighbourhoods. The survey also sought to measure the level of trust that Camden's residents have in formal institutions – an important indicator of the linking social capital described above.

Figure 2
Hierarchy of trust – trust completely/a lot

Source: Office for Public Management (2005)

Trust in local institutions has increased over the last three years, which shows that the council and its partners have improved their relationship with local residents. The number of people across all areas trusting the council has increased, with almost half of residents now saying they trust the council. This is likely to be related to the fact that satisfaction with services is generally high, and that the number of people saying they know how to contact the council has increased from 70 to 84 per cent. Trust in the police has also risen

and although the lines of causality are difficult to draw, this is likely to be related to the much higher levels of police visibility discussed below.

In terms of trust between people, there is a mixed picture. Levels of neighbourliness were found to be comparatively high in Camden, measured in terms of people doing and receiving favours for each other, and this was true across poor and affluent areas alike. However, people continue to be less trusting of others in NRAs compared to non-NRAs, and young people are much less trusted by NRA residents.

People's access to supportive networks varies across the borough

Social networks are central to the concept of social capital, providing the support on which people rely in their daily lives from family, friends, work colleagues and neighbours.

The survey demonstrates significant and growing inequalities in the level of support that people can expect beyond their family home. People living in less affluent parts of Camden find it more difficult to get practical help with things such as looking after their children at short notice or having someone do their shopping if they are ill. Despite the introduction of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, this gap between deprived and non-deprived has increased since 2002.

The survey found that emotional support networks were generally stronger than practical support networks. For example, more people have someone to rely on when feeling depressed than someone to rely on to help them get a job or to lend them money at short notice. Support networks beyond the family home were also found to be weaker for black and Asian respondents in Camden.

Both 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital can grow through regular interaction with local institutions and organisations. The survey found that the number of people having an interaction within their local community and using local facilities has increased. Forty per cent of respondents had visited a local park and one third a local library in the two weeks prior to being questioned. Positively, there is no difference between neighbourhood renewal areas and elsewhere in terms of involvement in local groups, events or activities. One potential area of work for the council is formal volunteering, which the survey found is lower in Camden than the national average.

In relation to 'virtual networks', the sociologist David Halpern has

argued that:

> *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) appears to have significant potential to strengthen social capital… Where networks of existing neighbours have spontaneously created shared email lists, they have proved powerful forces to strengthen the local community.* (Halpern 2005: 307–09)

However, inequalities in access to the internet mean that such tools are very unevenly accessible. Despite the rollout of UK online centres in Camden's NRAs, residents in these areas are much less likely than others to use the internet. Overall, 40 per cent of respondents across Camden have no access to the internet either at home or at work, and a third never use it. Internet cafes and libraries play a key role in providing access, although non-NRA residents are much more likely than NRA residents to use the library to access the internet.

People feel more able to influence decisions collectively, although most do not feel involved in local decision making

Formal political participation in the UK is generally considered to be in a state of crisis. Low levels of turnout in national and local elections alike, falling membership of political parties and the decline of trust in national political institutions are all seen as endangering the legitimacy of our democratic system. As a result, politicians of all parties have placed renewed emphasis on civic renewal and on encouraging people to participate in the political process. The Government has introduced citizenship classes in schools, new immigrants are asked to undergo citizenship tests and ceremonies, and the Government is now considering ways of devolving power away from town halls, towards local neighbourhoods.

What did the survey discover about the state of the link between citizens and public institutions in Camden? On a positive note, people felt more able to influence decisions collectively than individually, and this feeling has increased over the last three years, suggesting a greater sense of 'collective efficacy' (the belief that organising together as a community pays dividends). In addition, more people know how to contact the council. This is important, given that contacting an organisation such as the council to solve a problem remains people's most

common form of civic engagement. Four in ten have taken an action in the last year to solve a local problem, with women, older people and owner-occupiers being more likely to have done so. However, only 16 per cent of people say they feel involved in local decision making.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from this figure: in 2000/01, the General Household Survey (Coultard *et al* 2002: 11) found that a comparable 18 per cent of people felt 'civically engaged' – that is, they felt informed and that they and others could influence local decisions. A higher 26 per cent felt they could influence decisions in their local area, although this is a different question to the one posed in the Camden surveys: agreeing or disagreeing with the statement 'I am involved in local decision making.' At any rate, it is clear that most people do not feel involved, and if it is desirable that as many people as possible should be, then this poses a policy challenge for the council.

Most people believe their area is improving, but very different problems affect different parts of the borough

Although not strictly a component of social capital as defined here, the survey also sought to explore public attitudes towards their local community and local services. These views are an important indicator of the general quality of life in Camden's neighbourhoods, so they are useful for the council as it assesses the success of its Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and renews its strategic direction over the next five years. These factors were included in the survey to help track how public policy interventions affect social capital levels over time.

The majority of residents believe that their area is improving, with no significant gap between those in neighbourhood renewal areas and the rest of the borough. Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the number of NRA residents who believe that their area is improving – a sign that the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is having an effect on the ground. There were similar findings in the ODPM's household surveys into people's attitudes in New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas. These showed that the percentage of NDC residents who believe that their area had improved increased by 14 per cent between 2002 and 2004 (ODPM 2005: 5).

One cause for concern, however, is that awareness among NRA residents of specific projects designed to improve their areas has fallen, with the proportion of people able to name such a project falling from

a third to a quarter in three years.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a difference between the types of problems, and the perceived significance of problems, affecting NRA residents and those affecting non-NRA residents. People in NRAs are most likely to mention drugs and youths or teenagers as problems, whereas people in non-NRAs are more likely to mention traffic and parking. Furthermore, people in NRAs are more likely to see the difficulties affecting their communities as significant problems.

Figure 3
Biggest problem in local area – spontaneous answer
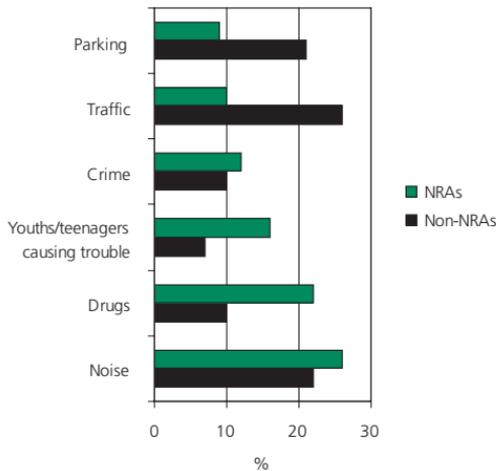
Source: Office for Public Management (2005)

Satisfaction with local services is high and community safety and health promotion initiatives appear to be having an effect on the ground
Good quality service delivery is a more traditional concern for local government, and in this sense there is generally good news from the Camden survey. The level of satisfaction with local services is high, with 78 per cent of residents being satisfied with the standard of services in their area and with no significant difference between more and less affluent areas.

The introduction of neighbourhood policing in Camden appears to have had a dramatic impact on levels of police visibility, with the proportion of people who can identify their community police officer

by name, or by sight, increasing from seven per cent in 2002 to 31 per cent just three years later. This is likely to be the key driver behind the rising level of trust in the local police. Nearly all respondents feel safe walking the streets during the day, and 57 per cent of Camden residents feel safe walking alone after dark, which is higher than the London average of 49 per cent. However, there is a discrepancy on this question between those living in NRAs and non-NRAs, with the former feeling less safe than the latter, and this discrepancy has grown over the past three years.

One of the council's key objectives is to improve public health and narrow health inequalities, and the survey indicates that increased funding and healthy living initiatives may be having an effect on the ground. The self-reported health gap between NRAs and non-NRAs has narrowed, and people's perceptions of their own health have generally improved across the borough.

In particular, the self-reported health of black respondents has shown an improvement, with the proportion saying their health was good or very good increasing from 64 to 71 per cent in three years. Access to GPs is improving, although at a faster rate in non-NRAs, and public health messages are getting across, with more people taking regular exercise and eating healthier food. Anti-smoking messages are the exception, and appear to have had little effect on people's behaviour.

These results are similar to those found in New Deal for Communities areas over a two-year period, with improvements in self-reported health but little change on smoking (ODPM 2005: 27-29).

Summary

Overall, the survey tells an encouraging story: social capital in most of its positive forms has been improving in Camden over the past three years. In terms of the horizontal ties between local residents, the most encouraging results are those concerning 'bridging' social capital. Camden's residents overwhelmingly value living in very mixed multi-cultural neighbourhoods, and the gap that had existed between more and less affluent areas on this question has closed. What is more, across all parts of the borough, the number of people perceiving there to be a strong sense of community in their area has risen.

There has, however, been little overall change in levels of trust in other people, and the gap remains between neighbourhood renewal

areas and the rest of the borough on 'bridging' and 'bonding' indicators, such as trust in local people and access to social networks.

In terms of the linkage between citizens and local institutions, there are generally positive messages. The growing sense of collective efficacy across the borough, backed up by a belief that local neighbourhoods are improving, provides a very encouraging building block from the point of view of civic renewal. Encouraging, too, is the rising level of trust in local public service providers such as the council and the police. This should be qualified by a recognition that most people in Camden do not feel involved in local decision making, although this appears to be in line with national trends.

Where next? The policy implications

While social capital has been on the academic and public policy agenda for much of the past decade, what led Camden Council to commission the 2002 survey was a desire to 'get practical'. If social capital is important, and if local authorities should be helping it to develop, then first of all they need to understand more about it in the neighbourhoods that they serve. The surveys were intended, then, to help Camden take a more rigorous approach to measuring social capital, so that it could see where the greatest challenges lie and what sort of work was needed to overcome them.

Local authorities have always had an effect on social capital – whether positive or negative – although all too often this has been the unintentional by-product of decision making. The slum clearances and tower block developments of the 1950s and 1960s are roundly condemned today – in part because of the negative impact they had on existing social networks. People may have lived in poor quality housing, but they had developed long-standing supportive relationships with one another. Razing all of that to the ground without considering the impact on social capital is exactly the sort of thing we would hope to avoid today.

However, councils can play more than a 'damage limitation' role in relation to social capital. Through their provision of a vast network of local neighbourhood institutions, from health centres to social clubs, local authorities provide a great part of the infrastructure on which social capital is built. They are among the main custodians of the shared social spaces that are so crucial to bringing people together in an

increasingly mobile and privatised society. Through the funding that they provide for a whole swathe of civic and voluntary organisations, councils help to nurture a vibrant civil life. By opening up their own decision-making processes to greater public participation, and by making public services more responsive to the concerns of particular communities, they can help generate more active citizenship.

Of course, measuring social capital – and then doing something about it – is far from straightforward. For a start, many of the things that drive variation in social capital have developed over considerable periods of time. Class structure, social mobility, levels of educational attainment and the degree of civic activism (all correlated with higher levels of social capital) are the products of long-term historical processes. To engender a major shift in these underlying factors is likely to take time (Putnam 1993).

Furthermore, by its very nature, higher levels of social capital and increased participation cannot be dictated from the town hall – nevermind Whitehall. In most of their main functions, local authorities (like national government) do not have a fine-grained control over policy outcomes. Even in the more traditional realm of service delivery, such as collecting the council tax on time or raising recycling rates, local authorities cannot simply dictate the right result from the centre, but to some degree remain dependent on people's choices and behaviour.

If this is the case in more orthodox areas of public service delivery, it is even more so with social capital. For instance, a council cannot create an active residents association on a particular estate of its own accord, or ensure that through the provision of some new sports equipment young people will be diverted from anti-social behaviour. What it can do, however, is to seek to understand, and then nurture, the conditions that will help social capital develop. This is a challenging area of public policy – but a potentially very rewarding one.

So, what general lessons can be learnt from Camden's two surveys – both for the council, and potentially for other local authorities facing similar challenges?

What drives social capital locally: understanding more

First, we need to understand more about the factors driving the social capital outcomes we have measured. While there is a large body of international research into the links between social capital and educa-

tional attainment, health or income, there is a need to do more to understand the effects of local policy interventions on social capital.

One of the challenges in analysing the survey has been in attributing cause and effect – for instance, why have levels of trust in the council and the police risen? We can make educated guesses, and some of the other variables tested can give us a strong indication. For example, increased trust in the police may be related to greater police visibility. Similarly, greater trust in the council could be linked to the fact that more people know how to contact the authority following increased communication efforts since 2002. But more work must be done, possibly of a qualitative nature, to come to firm conclusions about these connections.

Analysis in this area is difficult because we are trying to understand the drivers behind people's perceptions. What makes someone feel lonely, or believe in a growing sense of community, is complex – and it is necessary to get further behind these perceptions to understand their causes.

Establishing the conditions for social capital through service delivery
The second area that the council could consider is how it can help establish better conditions for social capital through the way in which it performs its core service functions. For instance, public space is one area of major importance in helping create stronger social networks. If public space is well designed, with a number of different uses, it can help bring together people who otherwise might not meet.

One existing example in Camden is the Boulevard Project, which aims to replace existing footways, design out anti-social behaviour, improve shop frontages and remove unnecessary obstacles from the street scene, to make the street a more attractive place to spend time. This type of approach could be taken further by incorporating social capital concerns more fully into planning and design policies – for instance, by encouraging communal gardens and wider pavements.

The very way in which the local authority consults its residents can establish connections between people, if it is done imaginatively. One example of this in Camden was a project in which local residents were consulted about new planting in their streets, by taking part in a walkabout with council officers. On these walkabouts, some residents said that this was the first time they had ever met their neighbours. The

challenge for Camden is how to mainstream practice such as this across the organisation.

Camden Council's work with young people is another area that has significant social capital potential. For example, its Families In Focus schemes have brought together teams from across the council to involve local residents in developing community projects. The programmes are designed to bring young people and their parents together to resolve day-to-day problems – particularly on estates where anti-social behaviour has been a concern. Activities have included gardening projects, residential courses for young people to develop confidence and social skills, family trips, and community fun days.

This sort of neighbourhood-focused working helps to deliver on the council's core service agenda (such as facilities for young people and reducing anti-social behaviour) while simultaneously building the kind of bridging networks described above.

Developing the council's role as a community leader

In addition to using its traditional service delivery role in a way that helps social capital flourish, the council could develop its public voice and role as a community leader, to promote stronger bridging and bonding social capital between its citizens. For example, in 2005 Camden launched its Exceptional People in Camden ('EPIC') awards. These awards, modelled on the Oscars, are an official civic 'thank you' to volunteers who have been working hard in the community. By running this scheme, and publicising it widely, the council aims to encourage greater levels of community activism.

In another example, as part of its work on developing cohesion in a very culturally diverse borough, the council provides training for Muslim facilitators to initiate discussions about the impact of the London bombings of 7 July 2005, and broader cross-cultural community relations. It is also considering setting funding criteria that would ensure that cultural events are specifically designed to bring people from different communities together and to promote 'bridging' social capital.

Deepening interactivity and deliberation among citizens

Finally, the survey showed that most respondents did not feel involved in local decision making. Like most local authorities, Camden carries

out regular consultation through focus groups, large surveys, online discussions and in-depth workshops. It has a 2,000-member Citizens' Panel, whose members are regularly involved in consultation and deliberation over council strategies and policies.

In order to encourage both greater linking and bridging social capital, the council could deepen those aspects of this work that raise political participation and promote interactivity and deliberation between citizens. This could entail setting up ways for residents to deliberate on the major challenges faced by a rapidly changing borough such as Camden – for example, the trade-offs between conflicting demands for economic growth, the preservation of local heritage, the need for more affordable housing, and the protection of open space. This could be done by engaging representative groups both from across the borough and at the neighbourhood level and is currently being considered as part of the development of the council's new community strategy.

Conclusions

Too often, the success of local government is seen within the narrow terms of 'service delivery'. While good quality public services are clearly very important, on their own they will not create successful communities. If we are to find practical ways of developing greater social networks, trust and civic engagement, we need to be more rigorous in trying to understand how strong they already are on the ground, and what conditions facilitate their development. This was the primary motivation behind the Camden social capital surveys, and in this sense they represent a significant step forward.

Do the surveys show success? In most areas, the messages are generally positive, although continuing inequalities in levels of social capital across different parts of the borough show that there is still a great deal of work to do. What we cannot say, of course, is what would have happened to the gap between areas of deprivation and those that are less deprived had the council's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy not been in place. This poses the challenge of seeking to measure success in nurturing social capital without comparative yardsticks. To assess how well Camden is doing in closing the gap, one would need to look at how neighbourhood renewal is working from a social capital perspective in other areas that are demographically similar.

If the Camden surveys have provided a model for how local government can get more rigorous and practical about nurturing social capital, then they will have made a helpful contribution to this debate. The prize – if it can be reached – is undoubtedly a great one: that no one is denied the benefits of living in a strong and cohesive community, served by open and accountable democratic institutions.

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What's the big deal about social capital?

Jane Roberts and Raj Chada

If local government is effectively to exercise its long-held responsibility to attend to the well-being of those within its boundaries, then it must be concerned not just with the well-being of individuals, but also with relationships between people and collective well-being.

Why? Because there is a recursive relationship between individuals and the communities in which they live and work. The nature of social relations has a powerful impact on the quality of all our lives. We feel more at ease when we go about our daily lives in areas that are friendly, open and relaxed. What is more, evidence suggests that in areas with comparable levels of socio-economic disadvantage, rates of child abuse, for example, are associated with levels of social coherence and social capital (Garbarino and Kostelny 1992).

So, it seems inconceivable that councils should not be keen to increase the stock of social capital within their communities. Yet, curiously, there has been relatively little exploration of this issue within local government circles in the UK. Local government is, of course, very much embroiled in matters relating to the balance of funding between central and local government and their respective powers – and so it should.

But the stickiness of our social glue is a matter of key importance for local government, and the multi-functional local authority is in a unique position to tackle these complex issues effectively. Local authorities are the only ones, after all, that are based on place and have a remit that covers such a wide range of issues: continual engagement with people, commissioning and direct delivery of services and, most of all, a responsibility to articulate people's concerns and joys.

Why Camden?

For a council such as Camden, and for us as Labour politicians, there is a particular imperative to focus on social capital. The polarisation between Camden's residents across many different parameters is

immense: the life chances and, indeed, the life expectancy of different groups are widely different. These profound inequalities – of income, wealth, health, literacy, social and civic participation – are deeply unjust. This degree of inequality tears apart the social fabric and undermines everyone's quality of life (Wilkinson 2005). Indeed, there is some suggestion that variations in social capital can perpetuate social class and ethnic differences in economic attainment, as social connections play a significant part in gaining access to resources and opportunities. So, how could we not be absolutely committed both to reducing inequality and to increasing social capital?

Tackling this challenge within the context of a borough such as Camden does not make it easy. Camden comprises a densely populated, relatively small geographical area, with high relative mobility and many different neighbourhoods. It has a huge diversity of culture, language and creed, and a plethora of other different communities of interest.

These factors contribute to the vibrancy of the borough, but they create challenges too. Many residents are very articulate and confident about social and civic engagement while others are much more isolated, lacking the confidence – and the resources – to engage with others. Almost half (46 per cent) of the population live in a single-person household, and although a significant number of these are likely to be young professionals, others are elderly or young men with mental health problems, living alone in social housing. One in five describes themselves as feeling lonely, and proportionately more of these are from a black and minority ethnic background.

What can local government do?

In order to raise the quality of public services on which all Camden's residents – but especially the poorest – depend, and to tackle inequality, there is a relatively familiar set of tools available to a local authority. These include maximising income, effective intervention to raise educational attainment among groups of pupils at risk of underachieving, promoting employment opportunities, and so on. What is effective specifically for increasing social capital, however, is less clear.

Initially, the key task is to see all that the council does through the prism of collective well-being, and to assess the impact of everything it does on social connectedness. From then on, the task may involve the council carrying out activities itself, but, just as importantly, it

will need to be sensitive to the more subtle tasks of facilitating and building capacity wherever possible, taking a step back where necessary.

Ties between people

The different aspects of social capital – social trust, collective efficacy, a sense of community and social participation – create both horizontal links, between people living in any one locality, and vertical links, between people and institutions, especially those of governance.

As a local authority, there is much that can be done to facilitate horizontal links. The most obvious (and relatively easy) of these is to ensure high quality design and maintenance of the public realm – our streets, open space and housing estates – as the quality of the physical environment has a direct bearing on the social environment.

In Camden, local residents in one estate where a large Single Regeneration Budget programme had been completed were asked to say what real difference the scheme had made. We were told that, in addition to the improvements to the physical fabric, older people went outside more, and people generally talked to each other more. There was no hard evaluation or measurement, but the results were notable nonetheless.

Another community project, run jointly by the council with local residents, was carried out on an estate behind Euston Station, similar to Sure Start but for older children and their families. For many mothers, being involved in the scheme had a powerful effect on their experience of living in that community. Two of the mothers involved had lived on the estate for about 20 years but had very little interaction with any other residents. After being involved in the scheme they described how other residents now greeted and waved at them as they walked through the estate. One had previously wanted to move to another property, but had changed her mind and decided to stay in what she now described as her 'home'.

These are just two examples of how councils can be sensitised to the subtle but powerful effects that they have on social relationships – and hence, on individuals' quality of life. There is much that can be done to facilitate more of a sense of community and to maximise social networks. What is more, in a borough as diverse as Camden, it

is all the more important that this is done. Many working in the field have long believed this, but for others, the bombings of 7 July 2005 (two of which were in Camden), as well as the attempted bombings two weeks later (also in Camden) and their aftermath, powerfully underlined the importance of strong community networks that reach out and bring people together rather than sow division.

Local authorities need to focus on ways in which people of different backgrounds can have some shared experience. At a minimum, this may simply be the glancing contact with one another in the park, a local shop or in the street. But ideally this should also include having the opportunity for something a little more – say, for example, contact in the local library, outside the primary school gates or in the local nursery. Local comprehensive secondary schools play an immensely important part in facilitating contact between pupils from a wide variety of different backgrounds. In contrast, gated communities (which Camden's Unitary Development Plan opposes) are inimical to the sharing of space.

However, it is difficult to get the balance right between promoting a sense of ownership of public space and the exclusive appropriation of space that drives out others – usually those who are most marginalised – and reduces the possibility of social contact. It is difficult, too, to achieve an appropriate balance between, for example, segregated youth clubs (which Camden Council opposes) and groups that help and support relatively newly arrived refugee communities that need first to build their confidence.

A clear challenge for local authorities such as Camden is that many residents may feel more empathy and understanding within their own socio-economic, racial or religious group. Yet a local authority cannot be satisfied when social capital increases only within these groups (so called 'bonding' social capital). This is exclusive in nature, and can lead the way towards a segregated society, where it becomes too easy to fear what one does not know and to blame those who are 'different'. Camden Council's ambition is unequivocally to support residents' specific needs in embracing and learning from their differences, but to emphasise their commonality and to share that overall sense of community in neighbourhoods that brings dividends to us all, whatever our background.

Ties between citizens and local institutions

With regard to the 'vertical' relationships between people and institutions of governance, there needs to be more emphasis on the relationship between, for example, a local council and its residents than on new, prescribed, 'one-size-fits-all' neighbourhood structures. In Camden, the council is helping build neighbourhood partnerships in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough, but just as importantly, we have put considerable energy into improving the dialogue with all our residents.

Local authorities need to do all they can to consult meaningfully and listen well – especially to those with the quietest voices – to ensure a helpful reciprocity between the town hall, and individuals and groups in the borough. The nature of the conversation is all-important. If it does not have authenticity, cynicism grows and makes all our tasks so much more difficult.

Conclusion

The first Camden social capital survey was initially commissioned because politicians insisted on the need to at least try to capture the state of community relationships in the borough. This would help establish a baseline, so as to evaluate in the later survey what difference the community strategy would make to social networks. Change of this sort is often slow, so the degree of positive change that the surveys picked up in a relatively short space of time was surprising. But the surveys were methodologically sound and demonstrated that, for example, between 2002 and 2005 residents' belief in a good sense of community in their area increased and that trust in the local council went up.

We think we were right to go down this path. It was uncharted territory, certainly, and no doubt there are things we could have done differently. We may not have all the right answers, but we have no doubt that we have been asking the right questions.

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Measuring social capital in Camden

Jude Cummins

While defining social capital is in itself notoriously difficult, measuring it and tracking changes in it is no easier. One of the inherent difficulties is that the phrase 'social capital' has no intrinsic meaning to the vast majority of people. This makes it impossible to question people directly about its presence or absence in their lives. To further complicate matters, social capital is not one concept but a bundle of different attributes that refers to such things as trust, reciprocity and community cohesion. Each of these concepts in turn is very complex, and measuring the degree to which each is present in a community means using several different yardsticks. As a result, there is no single measure of social capital that can be reliably used.

Despite this, many different single-measure approaches to measuring social capital have been tried. These have included dropping stamped, addressed letters in the streets of different neighbourhoods and tracking how many are posted; leaving wallets in local areas and seeing how many arrive at the police station or are returned to their owners; and using proxies such as voter turnout or participation in volunteering. It impossible to find one measure that can capture all the various facets of social capital. What is more, the approaches cited are subject to the obvious criticisms of taking a rather glib approach and relying on chance factors. Additional problems arise from the fact that many social capital indicators, such as volunteering, mean different things to different people and, in particular, are interpreted differently in different cultures.

Developing measures of social capital for Camden

In 2002, Camden decided to measure its social capital, and selected the Office for Public Management (OPM) to help develop the two resulting surveys (Office for Public Management 2002, 2005). By seeking to measure social capital in 2002 Camden was something of a vanguard among local authorities – and, to a large extent, still is.

While the concept of social capital was beginning to appear in some

national surveys, there was no agreed way of measuring it. Consequently, OPM drew on a number of sources, including Health Development Agency-funded action-research work in Salford, the General Household Survey, which used some similar measures, and the work of a number of academics. In particular, in developing suitable indicators, OPM built on Onyx and Bullen's component analysis (Onyx and Bullen 2000), using the four components of participation, reciprocity (or altruism), trust and sociability as a basis for developing indicators.

The approach needed to be a statistically robust one that could track changes over time and provide measures of social capital in individual neighbourhood renewal areas. It also needed to be able to provide comparisons between neighbourhood renewal areas and the more affluent areas of Camden. As such, a quantitative questionnaire -based approach was adopted.

OPM used the component approach to develop a questionnaire that used a range of proxies for different elements of social capital (such as membership of different groups and actions taken to solve local problems during the past year) alongside questions about various aspects of people's lives and feelings (such as favours done for, and by, neighbours; trust in various public institutions; and people's views as to what it is like to live in their local area). In devising the measurements, it was also important to bear in mind what Camden Council and its partners were able to do to influence improvements in the various elements of social capital. Otherwise, there was a danger that this would simply become an interesting and costly exercise in measurement that would be of no practical use.

The 2002 survey was carried out face to face with 1,000 Camden residents, based on quotas relating to gender, age, ethnicity and working status. An additional 100 interviews were carried out in each of Camden's ten neighbourhood renewal areas, to enable comparisons between them and ensure that the local partnerships there had good baseline data to help with priority setting and later evaluation. Some interviews were carried out in Somali and Bengali – the two largest non-English language groups in Camden.

Further developments in 2005
In 2005, OPM repeated the social capital survey for Camden using

the same methodology, in order to be able to track any changes since 2002. However, this time the questionnaire was developed in order to:

● allow for comparisons with national measures
● capture advances in thinking around social capital
● reflect the use to which Camden and its partners had been able to put the results from the 2002 survey
● reflect other new areas of interest to the council and its partners.

During the period between the two Camden surveys, the concept of social capital had gained much greater currency in the UK, and was increasingly being explored through various national surveys. Some of these, such as the Health Survey for England and the Home Office Citizenship Survey included whole units that had been specifically designed to measure social capital. Others, such as the British Crime Survey and the British Household Panel Survey included elements that could also be said to measure social capital.

The Office for National Statistics had analysed 15 government and non-government surveys and mapped the various questions used to measure social capital onto a matrix of different components. This allowed OPM to compare what was being used elsewhere, and to identify where national comparisons with the Camden results might be possible. In some instances where national comparisons were felt to be of particular value, we added new questions into Camden's survey, or reworded existing elements.

Further work by ONS and a cross-departmental working group resulted in the publication of a harmonised set of social capital questions in 2003 (Harper and Kelly 2003). If this set were picked up by national, regional and local agencies, this would result not only in better quality measurements of social capital, but also more avail-ability of comparative data. However, the set does not appear to have been widely adopted, and there needs to be more awareness of work to harmonise measures of social capital.

During the time that elapsed between the two surveys, thinking around social capital moved on, and Camden Council was keen to take some of this on board. The council was particularly interested in the concepts of control, autonomy and choice largely developed by Michael Marmot (Marmot *et al* 1997), and consequently added some

additional measures.

In developing the 2005 survey, it was of paramount importance to be able to track changes since the 2002 survey, so the scope for adding in new questions, or re-wording those where national comparisons were now available, was somewhat limited. Each change had to be carefully considered and its importance traded off against any loss in continuity between the two surveys.

Nevertheless, the length of the questionnaire was already at the limits of what OPM felt that people could reasonably be expected to engage with, so retaining the original questionnaire and adding to it was not an option. In addition, a number of the questions in 2002 had not proved to be of much use so it made sense to remove them. In the event, 80 per cent of the 2005 questionnaire was retained, with the remaining 20 per cent comprising new or revised questions.

Measuring both bonding and bridging social capital

When interpreting the results, it is important to ask critically whether all types of social capital are necessarily a good thing. Many have pointed out that high levels of bonding capital within a given group can exclude those outside that group (although evidence also suggests that strong bonding within groups is often a necessary precursor to the development of bridging social capital that takes place between groups). High levels of bonding social capital may also be unhealthy for society if, for example, they are typified by identification with particular groups, such as those on the far right, or ones that are unwilling to co-operate with the authorities.

In attempting to build social capital, local authorities and their partners need to make sure their research includes questions that enable them to measure bridging as well as bonding social capital. It is important not to rely on one or two measures, which may obscure what Putnam calls the 'dark side of social capital' (Putnam 2000). With this in mind, the Camden surveys included measures such as: 'I feel valued by society' and 'I enjoy living in a neighbourhood with people from different cultures and religions', in an attempt to capture some measures of bridging social capital and community cohesion.

Interpreting the results

As always in this type of survey, it was difficult to assess how much (if

any) of any measured change in people's lives or services was actually down to changes in policies or practices. For this reason, an important consideration, both in designing the questionnaire and in analysing the results, was to ensure opportunities for cross-referencing the results of different questions. This enabled OPM to build up a picture of what may have driven any observed changes, and to interpret the results in the light of changes in policy and practice.

One example of this was the ability to cross-reference the increase in trust in the local police with a corresponding dramatic rise in the proportion of people saying that they knew their local police officer by name or sight. In turn, this could be linked back to the introduction of neighbourhood policing in Camden. Similarly, there was a significant increase in the proportion of people who knew how to contact their council. This could reasonably be said to at least partly explain a corresponding increase in trust in the council. This could be linked to the fact that the council had increased its efforts to communicate with the public since the first survey.

Social capital workshops

In 2002, to help the council interpret the results of its social capital survey, OPM also designed and ran a series of social capital workshops in each of the borough's neighbourhood renewal areas. These events were designed to be carried out by community development staff, alongside groups of local residents.

We devised a model (see page 36) of a strong community that enabled us to explain the concept of social capital – first, by getting participants to map the more easily recognisable physical assets in their community (shown on the left-hand column of the model), and then, by asking them to map the softer aspects relating to social capital. Rather than using specialist terms and jargon, such as 'community cohesion' and 'reciprocity', we used phrases such as 'living together', 'respect' and 'neighbourliness', which were more easily understood and discussed by local residents.

The social capital workshops provided an interesting insight into levels of social capital in individual neighbourhoods, and could be adopted more widely as a complement to quantitative methods. In particular, they were very helpful in understanding weaknesses in social capital and providing insights into what interventions might be most

A strong community

Places to meet and learn to play

Places for advice and information

Services

Transport and housing

Quality of life

Support networks

Trust and neighbour-liness

Being active and having influence

Living together and respect

helpful in building social capital in particular neighbourhoods. Specific suggestions included turning a fenced-off park into a place for young people, and strengthening a local tenants association.

Attending the workshops themselves encouraged people to make a contribution. One group of residents requested a meeting with the police so they could set up their own Neighbourhood Watch group, others volunteered to get involved in an 'adopt-a-neighbour' scheme, and still others asked about how they could get involved in helping out at the community centre where one of the workshops took place. Many participants had specific suggestions as to how the council and its partners could improve communication with them.

Conclusions

The work carried out in Camden has highlighted a number of valuable issues that need to be taken into account when carrying out such

measurement, most notably:
- the importance of breaking down the concept of 'social capital' into issues and language that people can readily understand;
- the difficulties inherent in attributing any changes in social capital to changes in policies, practices or services provided by public sector agencies, and the importance of building in clues during both the design and analysis stages to help with this attribution;
- the importance of measuring both bonding and bridging social capital;
- the availability of national comparators to aid interpretation of local results; and
- the value of carrying out qualitative work both to aid the interpretation and usefulness of the survey data, and as a means in itself of building social capital.

We are still at a relatively early stage in developing ways of measuring the nature of social capital on the ground and these lessons should be borne in mind as Camden and other local authorities take this agenda further forward.

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Social capital and health in Camden

Mai Stafford and Michael Marmot

Camden's location within the heart of London, combined with the diversity and transience of its local population, presents many challenges for the borough's healthcare and welfare providers. Life expectancy in some parts of the borough is 79.6 years while in other parts it drops to just 69.5 – a gap of more than ten years. This disparity in life expectancy is mirrored by wide differences in levels of wealth and poverty within the borough. The diversity is not only in terms of socio-economic characteristics; in addition, black and minority ethnic groups make up over 25 per cent of Camden's population. The population is young, growing and transient, with a high proportion moving address each year.

Against this backdrop, it is important to consider any health determinants that could bring to light new ways of promoting health and well-being for Camden's population, including those that lie outside the usual remit of the NHS. Social capital is one such factor that has been the focus of the two surveys commissioned by Camden Council (Office for Public Management 2002 and 2005). Here, we discuss the findings of these surveys in relation to health, and highlight the intimate relationship between social capital and another important social determinant of health – socio-economic characteristics.

The link between social capital and health

There is evidence that social capital is associated with a number of important health outcomes. The evidence linking three key aspects of social capital to health is set out below, along with the implications for the health of Camden's citizens, on the basis of the borough's 2002 and 2005 social capital surveys.

Social networks and health

People who have someone to rely on for practical support tend to have better mental health (Stansfeld and Sproston 2002). Camden's social capital surveys found that getting practical help was more difficult in neighbourhood renewal areas (NRAs) compared with non-NRAs, and

that this gap has increased since 2002. The growing gap in practical support available to people in deprived areas versus those that were less deprived could contribute to inequalities in health between these areas.

Different types of social contact seem to be related to health in different ways. Contact with a wide and diverse network appears to be beneficial for people's health, whereas contact within the family does not bring the same benefits (Stafford *et al* 2004). Weak ties between acquaintances and less intimate friends may be more beneficial than strong ties between family members in providing access to resources (Granovetter 1973).

The social capital surveys found that black and Asian respondents were less likely to have people outside the household who they could rely on for support. The survey did not capture support within the household, although close family relationships may have both advantages and disadvantages for people's health. The apparent relative weakness of networks beyond the family home can be expected to contribute to continuing health inequalities between members of black and Asian communities and the majority population.

For health improvement, local contact among friends and acquaintances may be the most important form of social network that should be encouraged by government. Local government could provide financial resources and suitable meeting places for groups, as highlighted in Rick Muir's chapter. It could also promote and support local business and retail, which may offer people greater opportunity to mix informally as they go about their daily lives.

Trust and health

Studies in the United States show that states in which a greater proportion of people trust each other have lower all-cause mortality, and perceive their health to be better than states in which residents are less trusting. One US study showed that a 10 per cent increase in the proportion of people agreeing most people can be trusted was associated with an eight per cent reduction in mortality. This demonstrates that trust can have a potentially large effect, although it is important to note that the study did not make allowances for the many other ways in which US states differ from each other (Kawachi *et al* 1997, 1999).

In Camden, levels of trust in general, and specifically trust in neighbours, are reported to be lower than the national figures for England

and lower in NRAs than in other areas within the borough. Levels of trust in Camden were more than 10 per cent below the figure for England as a whole.

Levels of trust tend to be lower in areas of high turnover, and this could be one explanation for the relatively low levels of trust reported by Camden residents. One of the challenges for local government in Camden is to identify ways of improving trust in the face of this high residential turnover.

Tackling the turnover could be one approach. The availability of good schooling and other facilities for children is one major reason why people choose to relocate. The council could seek to entice young families to stay by continuing to improve these facilities and considering additional family-friendly initiatives within the borough. Having said this, the population is a young and transient one, and people often choose to relocate for a range of reasons outside the control of local government.

Trust is positively correlated with participation in clubs and organisations. Of course, some organisations will be better at promoting relationships of trust than others. For example, members of church and religious groups, charitable organisations, education, arts or music groups, evening classes, and social clubs report greater levels of trust. The provision of financial and physical resources to promote local social organisations could have an impact on trust, as well as on local social networks.

Sense of control and health

Having a sense of control is an important determinant of health. People who feel that they have greater control at work, greater control in their family life, or report a greater general sense of control have better health (Marmot *et al* 1997, Chandola *et al* 2004). In this context, it is encouraging that the latest Camden social capital survey shows that residents in the borough now feel more able to influence local decisions collectively.

Adequate provision of high quality local public amenities including transport, schooling, healthcare and leisure facilities is likely to increase people's sense of control. This is especially the case for those with lower personal or household income who are less able to obtain these services privately. The public sector also plays a crucial role in increasing

people's sense of control at work. Local government and the NHS are major employers and can lead the way in improving working conditions for their employees. Job security, autonomy over – and variety in – tasks, and flexibility in working arrangements are important for a sense of control and for health (Ferrie *et al* 1998).

The nature of employment contracts also needs to be considered. When public sector organisations contract out their services, they lose control over employees' working conditions – and the evidence shows that job security and job commitment is often reduced when this happens (Burke and Cooper 2000).

One direct measure of health was included in the Camden social capital surveys, in a question that asked respondents how they rated their own health. Findings suggest that people's perceptions of their own health have improved. Importantly, there has been some narrowing of social inequalities, with the gap between NRA and non-NRA areas and between black and white respondents having narrowed. If levels of trust and social support can be raised, we should expect to see even greater improvements in health in the future.

Social capital and socio-economic characteristics

Of course, initiatives aimed at improving social capital will only raise the standard of the population's health if the relationship between social capital and health is a causal one. Just because A is associated with B does not mean that A has actually caused B. Although numerous studies have demonstrated an association between social capital and health, studies have not yet been able to show causality (Lochner *et al* 2003, De Silva *et al* 2005).

One important outstanding issue is that social capital is highly correlated with socio-economic factors: those with greater financial and material resources are also more trusting, have more extensive social networks, feel in greater control over their lives, participate in a wider variety of organisations, and so on. Socio-economic position (typically captured by education, income or occupation) is a strong, consistent and well-established determinant of health. Could it be that social capital is related to health simply because it is correlated with socio-economic position?

Disentangling these complex relationships is not easy. For instance, there is reason to think that social capital promotes economic

development, as well as vice versa. Putnam describes situations where business is conducted in an atmosphere of trust and informal social control so that legal costs, such as contracting, are reduced (Putnam 2000). Similarly, in industries where social networking is profuse, recruitment may be more efficient.

On the other hand, a person's socio-economic position may affect their social capital, with economic hardship placing limits on their ability to participate in society, limiting social interaction. Greater economic and material deprivation is likely to lead to reduced social networks, less social participation and a lower sense of control. What is more, the link between economic factors and social capital may be self-perpetuating. People higher up the socio-economic scale have wider social networks that are linked to better job opportunities. It is possible, therefore, to see how social capital might reinforce social inequalities.

The challenge for local government is to encourage forms of social capital that act as a bridge between social groups (whether defined by occupation, social class, education, ethnicity or age). As Rick Muir's chapter stresses, social networks are not simply a gift of the state but depend crucially on the preferences and participation of individual citizens.

So, what will motivate people to mix with others from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and different age groups to transcend traditional social barriers? This is an important question for social research. What we do know is that certain organisations and associations are more diverse than others. Membership of some organisations is, by definition, limited to a certain section of the population: pensioner groups and youth groups are obvious examples. Data from the United States shows that political clubs and church groups are representative on many dimensions. Unions are also generally highly diverse in their memberships. However, people from higher educational and occupational backgrounds are over-represented in most types of association.

Given the inequalities in social participation, it would be useful for local government to focus resources on encouraging participation in those sections of its population where participation is currently lowest. However, initiatives to increase levels of social capital are unlikely to be successful if they ignore the economic and material factors that can inhibit people's ability to participate socially.

What next for social capital and health in Camden?

Having completed two social capital surveys, Camden is one of the few places within the UK – and indeed, worldwide – to have detailed, repeated data on social capital. Social capital has been related to a whole range of desirable social outcomes, including a healthier population. The nature of the link between social capital and health is still to be clarified, but it is useful to continue to monitor social capital along with other social determinants of health. Social capital, being intimately connected with socio-economic characteristics, is a useful pointer to what health improvement we might expect, and whether health inequalities are going in the right direction.

So far, trends in some of the key aspects of social capital in Camden are positive. Respondents to the 2005 survey reported greater trust in local service providers and a stronger sense of being able to influence local decisions. On average, they also reported better health than they did in the 2002 survey. These encouraging signs are, however, balanced by levels of general trust, which remain lower than the national average, and a lack of practical support – especially for residents in the most deprived parts of the borough. Of course, initiatives targeted towards these more deprived areas are complex in nature and take time to fully implement and to take effect. It will be interesting to monitor progress as these interventions continue to be rolled out and refined.

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Social capital and community cohesion

Ted Cantle

'Social capital' is not a precise term, but it encompasses a number of ideas that are very relevant to community cohesion. In the sense that social capital is simply about the presence of social networks on which relationships are built and behavioural norms and mutual trust emerge, it is crucial. Without it, there will be no shared experience and no shared society.

Robert Putnam's seminal work, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000), ensured a renewed interest in the concept of social capital. For Putnam, social capital is simply about the connections among individuals – social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. He describes the concept in terms of low-level collaboration between neighbours and local groups of people, sharing tools and working collectively when it is in their interest to do so. This cooperation extends to recreational activities, such as bowling, where groups of people make their own entertainment by developing clubs and societies.

Putnam's conclusion from an earlier study (Putnam 1995) was that the decline in social capital has much to do with the growth in the use of television as home entertainment, and that these 'deep-seated technological trends' are radically 'privatising' or 'individualising' the use of leisure time and thus disrupting many opportunities for developing social capital.

There is, however, a tendency for the debate about social capital to be rather backward looking, focusing on the loss of a 'sense of community', based on an apparent decline in collective action and 'neighbourliness', since the supposed halcyon days of strong communities. These communities were often clustered around single employers. People walked to work, took part in activities organised by the trade association or the local church and sent children to the local school, while their mothers met in the laundry or at the local shops. Many older people can still remember communities in which

the front door was always 'off the latch' in case a neighbour wanted to pop in and borrow a cup of sugar.

In this historic sense, the 'glue' that holds societies together has become unstable, and association within a particular community or place may be more difficult to identify. In some places, such as Camden, high levels of residential turnover and mobility make those old-style community connections difficult to sustain.

Structural change, particularly the demise of working-class communities, has also long been evident – for example, with the emergence of the individual 'affluent worker' in the new manufacturing industries. In the 1960s, a number of sociologists – principally, Goldthorpe and Lockwoood (1968) highlighted the decline of the traditional type of working-class community, or the 'urban village'. Increased residential stability and social homogeneity, and the growth of privatised, home-centred lifestyles, were accompanied by the demise of working-class solidarity and collectivism, they argued.

However, there are serious doubts about whether this form of social cohesion was really any more effective 50, or even 200, years ago. Putnam himself warns against nostalgia, and questions whether life in communities as we enter the twenty-first century is really so different after all from the reality of US communities in the 1950s and 1960s:

> … are club meetings really less crowded than yesterday… do we really know our neighbours less well than our parents did, or is our childhood recollection of neighbourhood barbecues suffused with a golden glow of wishful reminiscence. Are friendly poker games less common now, or is it that we have outgrown poker? (Putnam 2000: 25)

Despite these words of warning, Putnam himself is perhaps guilty of trying to establish and measure associations as they were, and of failing to recognise the more diffuse nature of societal connections. Neighbourhoods were certainly more stable in the past, with many more people living and working in the same area and travelling on a much more limited basis. Car ownership was lower, and other forms of communications much less developed. People's associations were necessarily more limited to particular areas, and are difficult to compare with the way in which people communicate today.

Today, there is far less reason to confine associations to any local area, and it is much easier to communicate across greater distances – and even across national and continental boundaries – than it has been at any time in history. Does this mean that social capital is weaker, or simply that it is less intensely focused in localised areas? Perhaps there are new forms of solidarity, which go along with new forms of individualism, rather than a decline of social capital itself?

Diversity and social cohesion

One particularly worrying aspect of Putnam's work was his finding that in a wide range of cities and towns in the United States, levels of social capital are inversely related to the extent of diversity. If this were true, it would be of particular concern to a place such as Camden, with its high levels of cultural diversity. Putnam's finding has led later commentators to ask 'are we too diverse?', and to suggest that allowing diversity to increase could undermine social solidarity. This was the subject of a controversial article by the editor of *Prospect* in 2004 (Goodhart 2004a), which went on to stimulate a debate about who 'people like us' are (see Goodhart 2004b).

The notion that we identify with, or even prefer, 'people like us' often goes unchallenged – except, perhaps, when couched in overtly racist terms. However, the notion of 'people like us' is often defined by no more than visible similarities, such as skin colour and other outward appearances, and says little about whether we uphold the same principles and share similar values. This has also triggered a discussion about 'Britishness', which according to some sources appears to be defined by a person's knowledge of historic events and being able to identify the origin of a 'Geordie' accent rather than about fundamental values.

So, who really are 'people like us'? Perhaps they are no more than the people we already know and feel comfortable with because of regular contact – our circle of friends, acquaintances and colleagues – in other words, our various 'in-groups'. This would suggest that people 'like us' are defined by social circumstance and familiarity, rather than some idea about common identity. Of course, we will often tend to associate with people with whom we have something in common, such as a religious affiliation or a particular social or cultural activity. In turn, these associations determine the bonding of the group through facilitating repeated contact. However, changing our associations would

appear to change our ideas about who is 'like us'.

The idea of multiple identities is, at least, now taken for granted – it is possible to be, say, white, Muslim, middle class, a Londoner and many other things at the same time. From this range of overlapping identities, it appears to be difficult to say what will constitute 'us' and what will constitute 'them' on anything more than an individual basis. We must not fall into the trap of assuming that ethnic identity will trump the other identities to determine who is really 'like us'. There is a real danger that, having dispensed with the idea that 'race' is primordial and based upon fundamental difference, we replace it with a rigid and deterministic concept of faith or ethnicity.

There is also the question of diaspora communities. The values and principles of the nation state now have to compete with diasporic affinities that can transcend national boundaries much more easily than in the past. International communications in the form of satellite television, international newspapers and other media, the widespread use of the internet, almost universal availability of the telephone, and much cheaper international travel make creating and reinforcing diasporas so much easier than in the past. Newer migrant groups can engage with diasporas in way that their predecessors were unable to do. These transnational contacts are, however, unlikely to be seen as 'social capital', and may even be supposed to challenge it.

The policy challenge

The potential of social capital as a policy instrument is considerable. To realise this potential, we need to be able to map social capital at a local level, as well as nationally. We also need to be able understand its impact on local communities – and especially on the way in which people relate to each other, or fail to do so, and whether these relationships are confined within particular groups or form a bridge between them. In this sense, the Camden social capital surveys are an important step forward.

We also need to recognise – and begin to resolve – some of the real structural barriers, such as the configuration of social housing, which can make it more difficult for disadvantaged communities to form and maintain bridging social capital with other groups. The same will be true of private housing, from the mono-cultural inner-city terraced housing to the new emerging 'gated' communities. More dispersed

housing provision and the Government's aspiration for 'sustainable' mixed communities will certainly be helpful, though it is not yet clear how this will be achieved.

At the very least, we need more mixed schooling as an upshot of integrated residential areas. In recent years, this has been a blind spot for the Government, which is fearful that more integrated schooling may undermine its 'attainment agenda' and its obsession with 'choice'. But mixed schools create many social networks – not just among children, but through many parental, cultural and other exchanges. This has been recognised by many commentators – from Varshney, who identified 'communal segregation in the education system' in one of the riot-prone areas of India as greatly inhibiting inter-communal contact and trust (Varshney 2002) to Ouseley, in his report on Bradford, which criticised the extent of segregated schooling in that city (Ouseley 2001).

Formal community-based institutions, such as school boards, local rotary and inner-wheel organisations, neighbourhood watch groups, sports clubs, and social and cultural groups all play an essential role in the building of social capital, by developing local interactions and support networks. Local councils and other statutory bodies also help to develop such links, and emphasise the connection between policies that promote equal opportunities and those that develop cohesion. After all, interaction depends upon people actually being in either the same public or private spheres in the first instance.

Initiatives fostering 'banal encounters' that bring together individuals and groups are also important, as they are often designed to compensate for the lack of natural interaction – even if they sometimes smack of social engineering. A number of local partnerships have promoted this kind of contact – for example, by twinning different mono-cultural schools, or asking children to engage in culture-swapping programmes.

Youth groups such as 'PeaceMaker', based in Oldham have also been successful in bringing mono-cultural groups together for the first time, all in an attempt to break down the fear and ignorance upon which prejudice – and demonisation – appears to grow. These forms of social, cultural and associational contact can, to some extent at least, make up for the lack of natural interaction that results from physical and spatial separation. However, maintaining these new levels of interaction may require considerable investment over a long period.

Moving on from conventional notions of social capital

From a community cohesion perspective, social capital is vital. Without a strong base from which people can develop relationships – whether through associations or as individuals – barriers are unlikely to be broken down, and tolerance and mutual trust are unlikely to be built. These may not necessarily take traditional forms. What matters is how well they are used by different sections of society. They may be localised, or even regional or global in character, but all are potentially capable of creating links that promote understanding and trust between people of different backgrounds.

However, it seems likely that local forms will allow for collective problems to be resolved more easily – especially those that relate to particular areas and places. Regular contact, incidental meetings and information exchanges will also help to create the social fabric or glue on which trust and reciprocity depend.

For the concept of social capital to be of any value in building community cohesion, it is essential that it is better understood and is not simply seen in conventional terms. Again, Putnam's work was helpful in distinguishing different forms of social capital and, in particular, established bonding social capital (among family members or like ethnic groups) as a separate entity to bridging social capital (across ethnic groups).

The concept of 'bridging' social capital closely coincides with the community cohesion notion of 'cross-cultural contact' and, while Putnam did not advance this as a means of promoting community cohesion as such, the development of understanding, reciprocity and trust are clearly aligned with it. The impacts of different forms of social capital may also be interlinked in that a high level of bonding social capital may inhibit bridging between different groups.

In other words, a strong sense of association within a kinship, ethnic or faith group may create a high level of intra-associational identification, reinforcing the in-group by excluding the out-group – what Rogers (2003) describes as the 'wrong' sort of social capital: 'tight networks of mutual support among the upper middle class or "own group" ethnic solidarity in areas of high ethnic mix'.

Rogers goes on to suggest that highly localised engagement, through the use of volunteering projects, team sports, local church engagement and other face-to-face contact, is not a 'cure for all ills', even if it is easier

for cross-cultural (and intra-cultural) contact to be developed at a local level in some instances. Fukuyama (1999) supports the view that social capital can, in some circumstances, produce 'bad results' where it favours exclusive groups by achieving internal cohesion at the expense of outsiders.

If the science of social capital is as yet underdeveloped, then there is little by way of established practice, nor any clear responsibility for engineering improvement. Some voluntary organisations have begun to dip their toes into the water with elementary pilot schemes, often described in terms of 'capacity building'. However, the capacity of whom, and what the capacity will be used for, are often very uncertain. It may only serve to reinforce separation and fail to build bridges – particularly where funding is provided to single identity groups without any requirements to promote cross-cultural contact.

Few, if any, statutory agencies see it as their role to map and understand the complexities and subtleties involved in social capital, let alone developing 'remedial' programmes. So Camden's contribution through its social capital surveys should be applauded, as it demonstrates a commitment to better understand the nature and role of social capital in a highly diverse inner-city borough.

The challenge now will be for the council to think creatively about ways to promote community cohesion that will take account of the complexity and changing nature of social capital. This will mean developing programmes to facilitate and support collaborative and co-operative communities, which can only be based upon interaction and shared experiences at all levels.

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