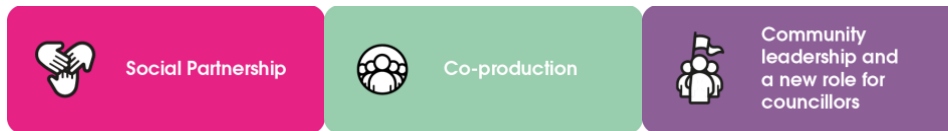


## COMMUNITY



## South Tyneside Council

### South Tyneside Council's Co-Production Approach to Community Cohesion: the 2024 'From Adversity to Diversity' Conference

South Tyneside Council's Community Safety Team and South Tyneside Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children Partnership have organised and hosted an annual multi-agency Hate Crime Conference during Hate Crime Awareness Week for several years, with a focus on raising awareness of hate crime among social workers and other professionals from the Council and regional and local partners.

Co-production with people who have lived experience of hate crime has become a key element of the event, with the 2023 conference featuring powerful insights from local people engaged with disability advocacy organization Your Voice Counts.

The 2024 conference, held on 17th October, focused on community cohesion, and titled 'Breaking Down Barriers: From Adversity to Diversity,' further built on this co-production approach.

This year, the event was co-produced with local Muslim residents from the North East branch of the Dialogue Society, following a successful Town Hall Community Iftar in Spring 2024. The Dialogue Society's branch coordinator was part of the event planning group and helped shape the program. The group also to bring in an academic to speak on migration and Islamophobia, and volunteers from local mosques, who prepared and served a multi-ethnic buffet meal and staged a musical performance.

Other partners, such as those engaged with the borough's Regional Equality Forum, also contributed to the conference planning and itinerary. Local Paralympian gold medallist Josef Craig gave a keynote speech, and local photographer Peter Fryer shared a documentary about the history of South Tyneside's longstanding Yemeni community. An art exhibition on the theme of refuge and asylum was also hosted in the Town Hall.



Attendees at South Tyneside's 'From Adversity to Diversity' Conference

The conference also created networking and dialogue opportunities for the diverse invited audience, including faith and voluntary group representatives, police, health, Council, and other professionals. The itinerary included an interactive workshop on protected characteristics, a session on asylum seeker and refugee support, and a 'market place' with information and leaflets from various partners. The event aimed to recognise and celebrate the contributions of people from diverse backgrounds, including immigrants, religious minorities, and people with disabilities.

The steering group had consciously planned a more celebratory focus for the event than previous years, and this became all the more pertinent following the xenophobic unrest seen nationally over summer 2024. This context left many residents, particularly those from immigrant backgrounds, feeling uncertain about their place in the community, and the Council sought to clearly communicate that South Tyneside is a place where people from all nationalities belong, are celebrated, and are supported.

Ultimately, the event, which saw the Town Hall reception room reach maximum capacity, was extremely well received. It communicated the Council's support for local diverse communities, helped participants forge new and stronger relationships, and has even spurred further collaborations, including planned cultural awareness sessions that will see multi-agency professionals visiting local mosques.

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