



House of Commons
Communities and Local
Government Committee

**Preventing Violent
Extremism**

Sixth Report of Session 2009–10

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
written evidence*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 16 March 2010*

Communities and Local Government Committee

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Summary

The Government's *Preventing Violent Extremism* programme is a complex and sensitive agenda which has met with widely varying perceptions as to what the programme stands for and what it aims to deliver on the ground. Our inquiry has shown that the current overall approach to *Prevent* is contentious and unlikely ever to be fully accepted in its existing form by those it is most important to engage.

The current breadth of focus of *Prevent*—from community work to crime prevention—sits uncomfortably within a counter-terrorism strategy. We support the logic behind the 'Four P's' of the CONTEST strategy—*Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare*—and we do not wish to see this approach deconstructed. We also strongly support the need for a clear national strategy which deals with the specific threat from al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism. However, we question the appropriateness of the Department of Communities and Local Government—a Government department which has responsibility for promoting cohesive communities—taking a leading role in counter-terrorism initiatives. We agree with the majority of our witnesses that *Prevent* risks undermining positive cross-cultural work on cohesion and capacity building to combat exclusion and alienation in many communities. We see a very important role for CLG in continuing such work and acknowledge its contribution to the aims of *Prevent*. However, we believe that this work can be successful only if untainted by the negative association with a counter-terrorism agenda.

The single focus on Muslims in *Prevent* has been unhelpful. We conclude that any programme which focuses solely on one section of a community is stigmatising, potentially alienating, and fails to address the fact that no section of a population exists in isolation from others. The need to address extremism of all kinds on a cross-community basis, dependent on assessed local risk, is paramount.

We remain concerned by the number of our witnesses who felt that *Prevent* had been used to 'spy' on Muslim communities. Our evidence suggests that differing interpretations of terminology relating to concepts such as 'intelligence gathering', 'spying' and 'surveillance' are posing major challenges to the *Prevent* agenda. Information collected for the purposes of project monitoring and community mapping—both of which are to be encouraged—are sometimes being confused with the kind of intelligence gathering and surveillance undertaken by the police and security services to combat crime and actively pursue suspects. However, despite rebuttals, the allegations of spying retain widespread credibility within certain sections of the Muslim community. If the Government wants to improve confidence in the *Prevent* programme, it should commission an independent investigation into the allegations made.

Regarding the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism, we conclude that there has been a pre-occupation with the theological basis of radicalisation, when the evidence seems to indicate that politics, policy and socio-economics may be more important factors in the process. Consequently, we suggest that attempts to find solutions and engagement with preventative work should primarily address the political challenges. We therefore recommend that opportunities be provided for greater empowerment and civic engagement with democratic institutions, to

strengthen the interaction and engagement with society not only of Muslims, but of other excluded groups.

Our witnesses demonstrated widely ranging views as to how Government and local authorities should fund, seek advice from, and engage with organisations in the development and execution of the *Prevent* programme. There is a sense that Government has sought to engineer a 'moderate' form of Islam, promoting and funding only those groups which conform to this model. We do not think it is the job of Government to intervene in theological matters, but we are also concerned that local authorities have been left with too much responsibility for deciding how engagement and project funding should be managed. We make a range of recommendations on this topic and conclude that this is an area requiring immediate attention by Government.

1 Introduction

1. *Prevent* is a cross-cutting policy led across Government by the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) in the Home Office and delivered by a number of departments and agencies which all have specific policy interests in the *Prevent* strategy. Its aim is to stop radicalisation, reduce support for terrorism and violent extremism and discourage people from becoming terrorists.¹ CLG contributes to the delivery of all elements of the strategy and leads the community-based response to violent extremism.²

2. Since 2000, the UK has enacted five main pieces of legislation to deal with terrorism.³ However, the Government also recognised that in the years following the events of 11 September 2001, legislation and security measures were not sufficient to deal with all of the consequential issues raised by terrorism. These issues included:

- Finding practical ways to foil an attack rather than securing a conviction after the event when fatalities have occurred⁴
- Understanding why people become involved in terrorism⁵
- Working out how the UK can best protect its infrastructure⁶
- Understanding how the Government can assist the general public and the business community in being more resilient to the threat of terrorism⁷.

3. *Prevent* is aimed at the group of people who are vulnerable to persuasion to provide tacit or silent support to terrorists in certain circumstances and possibly “reject and undermine our shared values and jeopardise community cohesion”.⁸ However, they are not necessarily breaking the law and to this extent, legislation can be ineffective.

4. In 2003, the government launched CONTEST as its new multidimensional counter-terrorism strategy. It contained four priorities: *Pursue, Prevent, Protect* and *Prepare*. In March 2009 the Government launched a revised strategy, popularly known as ‘CONTEST II’ “to take account of the evolution of the threat and of our understanding of the factors which are driving it”.⁹ In particular, the Government acknowledged that in 2003, *Prevent* was the least developed strand of CONTEST as the previous focus had been on protecting

1 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, p 14.

2 *Ibid.*, p 15.

3 The Terrorism Act 2000; Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001; Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005; The Terrorism Act 2006; The Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.

4 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, p 62.

5 *Ibid.*, p 82.

6 *Ibid.*, p 104.

7 *Ibid.*, p 118.

8 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, p 15.

9 *Ibid.*, p 8.

the public from the “immediate threat to life [...] rather than understand[ing] the factors driving radicalisation”.¹⁰ Under CONTEST II, *Prevent* is at the forefront of counter-terrorism work. The aim of CONTEST II is “to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence”.¹¹

5. The current objectives of *Prevent* are:

- To challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices
- To disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support people living in the communities where they may operate
- To support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists
- To increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism
- To address grievances which ideologues are exploiting
- To develop supporting intelligence, analysis and information
- To improve strategic communications.¹²

6. In the UK, there has been an increasing emphasis on involving people and grassroots organisations in political decisions and in managing local environments. This is reflected within Government policy and governance. Formal responsibilities for policy implementation and service delivery are being shared across statutory agencies and community groups in the form of partnership work. In line with this shift of emphasis, in 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) took responsibility for the *Preventing Extremism* campaign (re-named *Preventing Violent Extremism* (PVE) in 2007), under the *Prevent* strand of CONTEST. New guidance on *Prevent* (including revisions) was released in 2007,¹³ 2008¹⁴ and 2009.¹⁵ Prior to this and following the terror attacks in July 2005, the Preventing Extremism Together workgroups were convened by the Home Office, with significant community engagement. The PET workgroups published their report in October 2005¹⁶ and when CLG was created following cabinet reshuffle in 2006, this agenda was passed from the Home Office to the Department.

7. CLG’s contribution to *Prevent* is measured against Public Service Agreement (PSA) 26: “Reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism”. At a

10 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, p 82

11 *Ibid.*, p 8.

12 *Ibid.*, p 14.

13 Communities and Local Government, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds*, April 2007.

14 Communities and Local Government, *Preventing Violent Extremism, Next Steps for Communities*, July 2008.

15 Communities and Local Government, *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for Local Partners*, August 2009.

16 Preventing Extremism Together, Working Group Report, August–October 2005, available at www.communities.gov.uk.

local authority level, one of the key performance indicators for *Prevent* is National Indicator 35—“Building Communities Resilient to Violent Extremism”, which emphasises:

- Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities
- Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the *Prevent* objectives
- Development of a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the *Prevent* objectives
- Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions

8. Our inquiry set out to consider the effectiveness of the *Prevent* programme to date and its likely effectiveness in the future. Our terms of reference covered a wide range of issues including the Government’s current analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism, the appropriateness and effectiveness of community engagement within the programme, and specific issues for local authorities in delivering *Prevent* locally. We also looked at the interface between *Prevent* and other related policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration.

9. Our call for evidence received a good response, with over seventy memoranda submitted. In addition to written evidence, we held five oral evidence sessions and also paid a visit to Birmingham to meet local front-line *Prevent* workers, academics and religious leaders. Our thanks go to all our witnesses and particularly to Yusuf Desai of Forward Thinking who organised a most worthwhile visit to the Amana Centre in Birmingham.

10. Finally, we would like to thank our two specialist advisers, Alveena Malik and Dilwar Hussain, whose insights throughout our inquiry have been invaluable.¹⁷

17 Both specialist advisers were appointed on 20 July 2009. **Alveena Malik** declared the following interests: a freelance consultant working on cohesion, equality and human rights issues; contracted to work 2 days a week with the Institute for Community Cohesion (iCoCo) as Principal Associate with lead responsibility for Education and Cohesion; contracted to work one day a week for the Young Foundation as adviser on the Maslaha Project (start up Muslim web based organisation) providing strategic advice on business planning, fundraising and stakeholder engagement; and from time to time undertakes short pieces of work for other organisations and might be undertaking research work on Visual Arts and Cohesion commissioned by the Arts Council in the autumn. On 18 January 2010, Ms Malik submitted a further declaration of interests: a Ministerial appointment to the CLG Faith expert panel, chaired by the Secretary of State John Denham. The Faith panel may cover issues related to the *Prevent* agenda and in the event that this occurs Ms Malik has agreed to withdraw from the discussion to avoid any conflict of interest with the role of Special Advisor to the *Prevent* Inquiry.

Dilwar Hussain declared the following interests: Head of Policy Research Centre; Advisor to Weidenfeld Institute for Strategic Dialogue on their Islam in Europe programme of research; advising on a short-term *Prevent* related research project run by the Royal United Services Institute; on a review panel for HM Prison Service looking at literature in prisons; occasionally undertakes research and training projects related to identity, cohesion and preventing extremism for a variety of sources (including the Association of Local Government, the Communities and Local Government Department of HMG, the Change Institute, St Philips Centre in Leicester and the Apex Partnership).

2 Prevent and CONTEST

11. In the introduction to our report, the Government’s rationale for including a *Prevent* strand in CONTEST is explained. However, the Institute for Community Cohesion (iCoCo) sums up the view of the majority of our witnesses in stating that

The real problem with the *Prevent* agenda is simply that it is presently situated within a counter-terrorism strategy and implemented by a team dedicated to counter-terrorism and is therefore viewed through this lens with suspicion and apprehension; there is a strong belief that the community will be spied upon, wrongly accused and treated unfairly; or simply that the community is made guilty by association with terrorism.¹⁸

12. This has led to accusations of *Prevent* being “*Pursue* in sheeps’ clothing”,¹⁹ implying that *Prevent* provides a cover for the active pursuit of suspected terrorists. The upshot of such perceptions is that many witnesses believe *Prevent* “has not minimised extremism but has instead proved to be counter-productive”,²⁰ with “key community members whose engagement is vital to the success of PVE [being] reluctant to be associated with such policies”.²¹ As the Somali Family Support Group’s²² evidence claims

Positioning a programme that denotes to fight violent extremism and help, support and capacity build Muslim communities in one sentence spelt disaster from day one.²³

13. In other evidence, witnesses claim that *Prevent*’s focus on Muslims as possible targets for radicalisers not only “serves to legitimise and validate the views of the Far Right and other Islamophobes”,²⁴ but also “alienat[es] the very community that it seeks to engage and influence positively, unwittingly heightening potential vulnerabilities to radicalisation by terrorist propaganda”.²⁵ Oldham-based Asian charity PeaceMaker supports this view and speaks on behalf of many witnesses in saying that

Fundamental to success in our opinion, is the need to engage in these communities with a positive focus, rather than the current emphasis where the rationale appears to be ‘we are here to stop you from becoming bad’.²⁶

18 Ev 119

19 Ev 172

20 Ev 153

21 Ev 179

22 The Somali Family Support Group is a national organisation, with local branches throughout the UK. The organisation originally focused on the Somali community, but now works with people from all communities and faiths to promote community cohesion and provide education programmes.

23 Ev 141

24 Ev 91

25 Ev 111

26 Ev 135

14. The Islamic Society of Britain contends that terminology has played a major role in creating the stigma associated with *Prevent*:

Terminology was a challenge in itself, and the outcome was to name the programme by its very aim. It [sought] to prevent ideas (leading to violent action), and so it was named: *Prevent*. By its full title, ‘Preventing Extremism’ and then a little later ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’, it also sought to focus on the criminal act of violence and distance itself from the problem being a religious problem *per se*. Whilst we believe this direction was the right approach, it is questionable whether the term ‘Prevent’ itself achieves that. The term ‘Prevent’ lends itself to the idea that there lies a dormant terrorist within Muslims; that somewhere, entwined in their instincts and licensed by their religious beliefs, there is the possibility that some, albeit very rarely, will turn to terrorism against the state. And so we must do everything to ‘prevent’ that from happening.²⁷

15. The Government recognised that terminology had been an issue and, as a result, made revisions to *Prevent* guidance in late 2009, encouraging local authorities to drop the *Prevent* title in their local programmes. Prior to this, some local authorities negotiated the ‘branding’ of their local *Prevent* programmes on a case-by-case basis. Leicester City Council, for example, opted for the title ‘Mainstreaming Moderation’ as the authority found that *Prevent* “created a number of issues in terms of creating a barrier that [it] felt was unnecessary”.²⁸ Despite Government action however, many witnesses believe it came too late to have positive impact, as LB Barking and Dagenham describes:

Recent efforts by the Government to re-present and re-focus the *Prevent* agenda are unlikely to overcome negative impressions about the programme already implanted in both Muslim and indigenous communities.²⁹

Focus on Muslims

16. In common with a great many witnesses, evidence from London-based research organisation the Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRD) highlights the risk that *Prevent* “criminalises” Muslims by labelling them all as being at risk from violent extremism. The IPRD adds:

The scope of risk-assessment is rendered potentially unlimited by the assumption, recently espoused by the MI5 Behavioural Science Unit for instance, that there is no “typical pathway to violent extremism” for British Muslim terrorists who fit “no single demographic profile”—all genders, classes, ages and localities of British Muslims may therefore potentially be “at-risk”.³⁰

The Government has been at pains to stress that any such perceptions of *Prevent* are based on a total misconception of the programme, as CLG explained in its evidence:

27 Ev 194

28 Q 185 [Sheila Lock]

29 Ev 105

30 Ev 125

the Government does not want terrorism to define, or be perceived as defining, the relationship between Government and Muslim communities. As with all communities, the Government has contact with Muslim communities across the full range of public activities and policies. We are clear that the vast majority in our Muslim communities are against violent extremism and want to work with the Government to tackle the terrorist groups who target the vulnerable.³¹

17. However, the submissions we have received suggest that the Government has not been successful in countering the perception that preventing terrorism defines its relationship with Muslim communities, despite warnings from the start of the programme of that risk. The Preventing Extremism Together Working Group on Supporting Regional and Local Initiatives³² warned in its 2005 report that “Targeting only Muslim communities would result in further stigmatising them as being the ‘problem’, which could potentially lead to increased alienation whilst society at large plays little or no role in the two-way integration process”.³³

18. Sir Norman Bettison of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) agreed that the targeting of Muslims as a single group had not necessarily been very constructive.³⁴ However, Charles Farr, Director-General of the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism, asserted that

It is a simple statement of fact that al-Qaeda tends to focus for its recruitment operations on people in Muslim communities of a variety of different kinds and, of course, not just in this country but in every other country in Europe and across the world. Inevitably, if you start with al-Qaeda you tend to begin to look at the constituencies that they focus on, and that means Muslim communities. One has to qualify that immediately by saying that it does not imply that Muslim communities are somehow universally vulnerable to al-Qaeda because clearly they are not. The Muslim community, like any other community in this country, is clearly and explicitly opposed to al-Qaeda and what it stands for.³⁵

19. We accept this justification and do not question the security services’ analysis of the nature of the current terrorist threat to the UK. However, we also have sympathy with Oxfam’s view that “Muslim communities feel that both the problem of extremism and its solutions are laid at their door”.³⁶ Suleman Nagdi of the Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicestershire further illustrated this point to us, asking

31 Ev 201

32 Following the events of 7th and 21st July, the Government appointed a diverse range of people with different skills and knowledge in mid August 2005 to join seven Working Groups that it had resolved to set up, the objective being Working Together to Prevent Extremism. The findings of the Working Groups were published in a report in November 2005.

33 Preventing Extremism Together, Working Group Report, August–October 2005, available at www.communities.gov.uk, p 48.

34 Q 236

35 Q 355

36 Ev 106

if we take the money, [is there] an expectation that if, God forbid, this whole strategy fails, [we will] then be held accountable?³⁷

20. Government has acknowledged such concerns and recognises that “good *Prevent* delivery programmes can be wholly undermined by poor communications”.³⁸ Government has therefore employed media such as RICU (the Home Office Research, Information and Communications Unit), to ensure that counter-terrorism messaging has a positive impact in communities. However, as the Association of Police Authorities points out, although “central government has made repeated efforts to communicate the objectives, and this is supported on a day to day basis by RICU”,

ultimately, many Muslim communities will not agree with the *Prevent* agenda and feel that they are being targeted. Ultimately communications efforts aimed at these sections of communities may not be successful.³⁹

21. The fact that *Prevent* forms part of the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy has not been welcomed in many quarters. Despite significant efforts by Government to clarify that *Prevent* focuses on al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism (as opposed to Muslims *per se*), Muslim communities have felt unfairly targeted and branded as potential terrorists. The strategy has contributed to a sense of frustration and alienation amongst Muslims which may increase the risk of making some individuals more vulnerable to radicalisation. *Prevent*’s focus on Muslim communities has not, therefore, been constructive. We return to the question of whether *Prevent* should continue to form part of the national CONTEST strategy later in our report.⁴⁰

Allegations of spying and surveillance

22. During the early stages of our inquiry, the *Guardian* published an article claiming that *Prevent* was being used as a cover to “spy” on Muslims:

The government programme aimed at preventing Muslims from being lured into violent extremism is being used to gather intelligence about innocent people who are not suspected of involvement in terrorism [...] The information the authorities are trying to find out includes political and religious views, information on mental health, sexual activity and associates, and other sensitive information, according to documents seen by the *Guardian*. [...] Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, branded it the biggest spying programme in Britain in modern times and an affront to civil liberties.⁴¹

37 Q 92

38 HM Government, *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for local partners*, August 2009, para 2.25.

39 Ev 144

40 See para 53

41 “Government anti-terrorism strategy ‘spies’ on innocent”, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2009.

Around the same time, the Institute of Race Relations published its report *Spooked*, which claimed that a range of *Prevent*-funded projects were being used by statutory agencies to “trawl for intelligence”.⁴²

In another case, *Prevent* funding was approved for a youth centre aimed at Muslims in a northern town. The centre was to provide sports, keep fit, recreational facilities and careers advice, as well as religious guidance that aimed at providing a counter-extremism narrative. The bid also recommended the inclusion of free IT facilities as it was ‘good for monitoring which websites people were visiting’ and ‘intelligence gathering’ was stated as one of the rationales for the centre.⁴³

23. In evidence to our inquiry, the Institute of Race Relations added that the “embedding” of counter-terrorism police in local services was a major cause for concern in Muslim communities, suggesting that

There is strong evidence that *Prevent*-funded services are being used for information gathering by the police [...] In practice, a major part of the *Prevent* programme is the embedding of counter-terrorism police officers within the delivery of other local services.[...] The extent to which counter-terrorism police officers are now embedded in local government is illustrated by the fact that a West Midlands Police counter-terrorism officer has been permanently seconded to the equalities department of Birmingham City Council to manage its *Prevent* work. [...] Muslims may want to avoid participating in the government's *Prevent* programme for a number of reasons which have nothing to do with support for extremism—for example, concerns about surveillance, transparency, accountability or local democracy.⁴⁴

In response to this particular claim, Birmingham City Council rejects any notion of secrecy in its approach and openly describes the partnership that exists between the local authority and the police in the area:

West Midlands Police Security & Partnership Officers work within communities, as part of the Counter-Terrorism Unit, to assist in delivering the *Prevent* agenda. Their role is to provide an overt, visible and accessible link between the covert counter-terrorism function, the Police, communities and partners.⁴⁵

24. We questioned Arun Kundnani, author of *Spooked*, about the allegations in his report, particularly in view of the fact that the report was based on the experiences of a small sample of stakeholders.⁴⁶ Mr. Kundnani stood by the allegations and further asserted that “From all the conversations I have had since we published our research and with other youth workers who have come forward, [this impression of *Prevent*] does seem to be fairly

42 Arun Kundnani, *Spooked: How not to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Institute of Race Relations, October 2009, p 28.

43 *Ibid.*, p 29.

44 Ev 102

45 Ev 139

46 Q 292: Mr Kundnani told us that “I interviewed around 32 people for this research who were involved in Prevent work and I had a focus group with around 24 people”.

common. The police are putting pressure on people who are involved in working with young Muslims to pass this kind of information to them”.⁴⁷

25. The perception that *Prevent* funding is targeted at projects which ‘spy’ on Muslims was shared by a large number of our witnesses and is seen to be a major failing of the programme. This perception has been exploited by groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir who are in any case opposed to Muslims engaging in any way with government. In its 2009 publication, *Stronger Together*, The New Local Government Network pointed out that “In several local authorities some Muslim communities have refused to engage with programmes or seek funding under the *Prevent* banner. In one area, the money has even been described as ‘blood money’”.⁴⁸ Other witnesses, such as the Network of Sikh Organisations feel that *Prevent* has created a “sense of alienation, however misplaced, [which] plays into the hands of those in the Muslim community with an extremist agenda”.⁴⁹ Despite advice from Government that local authorities could drop the title *Prevent* from their funding streams so as not to stigmatise local projects bidding for funding, Reading Council for Racial Equality suggests that the damage has already been done, meaning that an altogether different strategy—clearly distinct from the counter-terrorism agenda—would be preferable:

The national strategy has harmed our local work and provided groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir with a cause. Currently such organisations are getting a good foothold in the community with scare-stories about ‘stigmatising’, ‘spying’ etc. A wider community cohesion approach would enable communities to come together more easily.⁵⁰

26. We raised the issue of ‘spying’ with Charles Farr of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism. He told us with great conviction that

The allegations about spying [...] are completely unfounded and we have looked at them in some detail. I am happy to share a report with you which explains exactly what conclusions we have reached about those allegations. In fact, the truth is almost entirely the opposite. The direction of the information, intelligence if you will, regarding the *Prevent* programme is from the police and from the security agencies into local authorities. That is how we have configured it and that is how it must be.⁵¹

Mr Farr also concurred with Reading Council for Racial Equality’s stance in saying that “a mythical construct of *Prevent* which does not exist and is not part of the strategy” and which is “rooted in the misrepresentations which *Prevent* suffered from notably in the articles that the Guardian ran to some degree on the IRR report by [Arun] Kundnani”,⁵² has encouraged the disengagement of many local community organisations from the programme.

47 Q 292

48 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 12.

49 Ev 89

50 Ev 230

51 Q 368

52 Q 369

27. Following the claims made in the Guardian, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government asked OSCT to conduct an urgent investigation into the substance of the allegations. OSCT's investigation found the claims to be unsubstantiated and RICU issued a factsheet on 27 October 2009 setting out the Government's response to the allegations. In a similar way, the claims made in the *Spooked* report were also investigated and a detailed response provided which not only expressed concern at the methodology behind the report (including the small sample of witnesses interviewed), but also made clear that the Home Office disagreed with the majority of its findings.

The Channel Project

28. During our evidence gathering, it became clear that much of the anxiety about 'spying' and 'intelligence gathering' under *Prevent* was connected to a particular programme, delivered under the auspices of the Home Office. Whilst the remit of our Committee is the work of the Department of Communities and Local Government, the delivery of *Prevent* at local level does not necessarily make clear the separation of responsibilities of central government departments. Some consideration of the *Channel* programme therefore seems appropriate at this point, in order to address the concerns of our witnesses.

29. *Channel* is an intervention which for some witnesses has met with success and, for others, courted much controversy. The *Channel* process identifies an individual's risk of vulnerability to becoming violently extreme and their influence on others. These individuals may not have committed any criminal offence but information is received, sometimes from community members, about their activities. This might include accessing terrorist websites, frequently talking about taking violent action or other negative behaviours. If the risk assessment suggests that interventions are required, then a partnership of police, statutory partners, councillors and appropriate local community leaders will consider what community interventions are available and appropriate in each case. Unlike *Prevent*, *Channel* focuses on all types of extremism, not just that inspired by al-Qaeda.

30. Although the aim of *Channel* is in principle simply to provide a mechanism, within a strictly defined process, for individuals or groups to be supported and diverted from violent extremism, it has been described as a "high risk strategy" with "the potential to result in mistrust and suspicion"⁵³ in some places. Arun Kundnani explained to us why he saw it this way:

I think it is a serious human rights issue that people are being identified to the police simply on the basis of expressing opinions that some of us are uncomfortable with, but which are legal opinions to hold. I think for that reason the *Channel* Project in particular is deeply flawed and should not be in existence in the way it is at the moment.⁵⁴

31. Charles Farr of OSCT responded to the concerns about *Channel*:

53 HMIC and Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise*, October 2008, para 151.

54 Q 290

The *Channel* programme is clearly inherently sensitive [...] You are asking statutory partners to look at vulnerable individuals, named individuals at a certain point of the process, to consider what are at some point intensely personal details about those individuals and to consider whether support should be provided to them. We take our responsibilities for the protection of personal data which is exchanged in that process incredibly seriously. We are governed by the Data Protection Act and we are governed by information sharing protocols that apply to other areas of crime prevention in local authorities and policing and we have built upon those protocols. I am completely sure in my own mind that the law prevents us doing what some organisations think we are doing. *Channel* is not a mechanism for spying. We do not need a mechanism for spying of that kind, and it is the last thing the security or police services would want to do.⁵⁵ [...] For the avoidance of doubt, surveillance is not part of the *Prevent* programme and intelligence gathering is not a feature of the *Prevent* programme. It does not say so in the strategy and does not say so in our guidance documents. What we have said is what you get.⁵⁶

32. As our evidence gathering progressed, we became conscious of the fact that differing interpretations of terminology relating to concepts such as ‘intelligence gathering’, ‘spying’ and ‘surveillance’ were posing major challenges in themselves with respect to the *Prevent* agenda. As Birmingham Activist Citizens Group described, “Some community groups equate project monitoring with intelligence gathering by the authorities as the role of the police is visible both in terms of their presence on key strategic bodies as well as visibility of uniform”.⁵⁷ Some witnesses also took exception to the requirement in the *Prevent* strategy for local authorities to have a “sophisticated understanding of local Muslim communities including strong knowledge and their make-up including different ethnic groups, denominations, social and economic status, elected representatives, community leaders, knowledge of location and denomination of mosques, awareness of community groups”.⁵⁸ As the Muslim Women’s Network UK stated, “This part of the strategy highlights the amount of scrutiny that Muslim communities are under”.⁵⁹

33. These views suggest that some stakeholders may have confused the need for local authorities to understand the background and social patterns of communities they serve, and the beliefs, attitudes, habits and values of the people with whom they engage, with the kind of ‘intelligence’ required by the police and security services to combat crime and undertake surveillance. As Charles Farr said, “the direction of [...] information, intelligence if you will, regarding the *Prevent* programme is from the police and from the security agencies into local authorities”.⁶⁰ The purpose of information-gathering in this context, then, is not to put communities under scrutiny, but to enable local public services—police and local authorities—to serve them better.

55 Q 368

56 Q 371

57 Ev 218

58 Ev 129

59 *Ibid.*

60 Q 368

34. It should also be acknowledged that the sharing of personal information in the interests of crime prevention, or to protect vulnerable people, is sometimes necessary. CLG's August 2009 publication *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for Local Partners* provides clear guidance on policy, procedures and legislation relevant to the sharing of personal information and intelligence between *Prevent* partners. The document stresses the key principles of information sharing, stating that "Partners may consider sharing personal information with each other for *Prevent* purposes, subject to a case by case assessment which considers whether the informed consent of the individual can be obtained and the proposed sharing being necessary, proportionate and lawful".⁶¹

35. We therefore felt it important to clarify the terminology around 'intelligence gathering', 'surveillance' and 'spying' with OSCT. Charles Farr told us:

Clearly if someone is involved in activity which suggests they are being drawn into the world of violent extremism, such as the Chairman's point about browsing a chat room or operating in a chat room, which is clearly one of those which encourages violent extremism, if that activity stops short of something which is illegal under the Terrorism Acts, notably TACT 2006, that is the sort of person we would expect to get referred to *Channel*, not to criminalise them but precisely to avoid them criminalising themselves. That process by any reasonable definition of the term "spying" and certainly by the definition in UK law does not amount to spying. Spying defined by the Security Service Act makes it absolutely clear who does covert operations. *Channel* enables the referral by people for the purposes of crime prevention to a group comprising of local authority and police members. That person is not then, as it were, subject to surveillance, they are provided with support which is precisely intended—I repeat—to stop them being, as it were, drawn into violent extremism and thence into the criminal justice system.⁶²

36. To clarify the boundary between *Channel* and surveillance undertaken by the security services operates, we probed further, asking whether it was possible for an individual to be subject to *Prevent* interventions and, at the same time, be under surveillance by the security services. Charles Farr answered:

No. We would never get ourselves into a situation—let me be completely clear about this—where someone was put forward and agreed and nominated on to a *Prevent* programme whilst they were being subject to surveillance by the security authorities. To do so would be completely improper, precisely not what we want to achieve with *Prevent*. We need, and this happens at the *Channel* referral process, to understand the individuals being referred. If it is clear that they are engaged in activity which is right on the edge of legality, i.e. are associated with people who may be engaged in terrorist activity, then it would be wrong to put them on any sort of *Prevent* programme.⁶³

61 HM Government, *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for local partners*, August 2009, p 28.

62 Q 374

63 Q 381

37. The Secretary of State, John Denham, also defended *Channel* and drew comparisons with approaches to preventing other types of crime. He also pointed out that the sharing of information between local partners in a bid to protect vulnerable people and prevent crime pre-dated the *Prevent* programme and was a normal part of the work of local crime and disorder reduction partnerships:

There is a legitimate aim, which I would say would be recognised in all sorts of crime prevention areas, of trying to identify particularly young people who may be in danger of being drawn into more serious crime. It is something that would be absolutely taken for granted if we were looking at gun and knife crime or other areas of crime. The attempt to identify those who are vulnerable and steer them in one way or another is a legitimate aim. [...] It is the case in most—I am not sure I could say all—crime reduction partnerships at local level that there are information sharing protocols between different organisations about people who might be vulnerable or be drawn into crime. What were sometimes presented as things specific to the *Prevent* programme were simply information sharing protocols which had been in place, in most cases, for many years before the *Prevent* programme had been established.⁶⁴

38. In oral evidence, Sir Norman Bettison of ACPO provided a significant example of the importance of targeted multi-agency interventions in preventing events such as that experienced by Londoners on 7 July 2005. This underlines the potential for catastrophe when early warning signs are not acted upon:

Hasib Hussain was a young man, a third generation Leeds-born individual. [...] He was a model student at Matthew Murray School in East Leeds. He went on at the age of 18 to strap a rucksack to his back and blew up the number 30 bus that we have all seen in the scenes that followed the 07/07 bombings. We started to unpick what was known about Hasib Hussain. He had never come to the notice of the police at any stage in his young life and therefore in terms of opportunities for the police to intervene to prevent what went on to occur, there were just no hooks there. However, what we did discover is that as a model student whilst at Matthew Murray School his exercise books were littered with references to al-Qaeda, and the comments could not have been taken as other than supportive comments about al-Qaeda. To write in one's exercise book is not criminal and would not come on the radar of the police, but the whole ethos, the heart of *Prevent* is the question for me of whether someone in society might have thought it appropriate to intervene. What do I mean by intervention? I do not mean kicking his door down at 6 o'clock in the morning and hauling him before the magistrates. I mean should someone have challenged that? They are the sorts of cases that get referred through the *Channel* scheme.⁶⁵

39. Allegations of 'spying', 'intelligence gathering' and 'surveillance' under the *Prevent* programme are widespread. These allegations are not only alienating individuals but also deterring organisations from becoming involved to do good work in the communities they

64 Q 313

65 Q 231

serve. CLG and the Home Office have made good attempts to try to dispel fears of ‘spying’, but these messages are clearly not being understood or accepted. **We believe that the misuse of terms such as ‘spying’ and ‘intelligence gathering’ amongst *Prevent* partners has exacerbated this problem. We recommend that the Government take urgent steps to clarify how information required under *Prevent* does not constitute ‘intelligence gathering’ of the type undertaken by the police or security services. We also recommend that clear definitions of these terms be provided in all public guidance inviting bids for *Prevent* funds.**

40. We welcome the Government’s investigations into allegations of spying and intelligence gathering under the *Prevent* programme, but we cannot ignore the volume of evidence we have seen and heard which demonstrates a continuing lack of trust of the programme amongst those delivering and receiving services. Based on the evidence we have received, it is not possible for us to take a view. If the Government wants to improve confidence in the *Prevent* programme, it should commission an independent investigation into the allegations made.

The unintended consequences of Prevent

41. Whilst many in Muslim communities feel that *Prevent* has thrust them into an uncomfortable limelight, the strategy has also had repercussions in other parts of the community. The Network of Sikh Organisations pointed out that

The government’s engagement with religious communities is badly skewed by over-focussing on Islamic extremism. This has produced a sense of unfair targeting within the Muslim community, and a corresponding sense of marginalisation among those of other faiths. Sikhs are particularly conscious of the negative rebound of Islamic extremism on many turban wearing Sikhs and our places of worship.⁶⁶

Dr. Paul Thomas at the University of Huddersfield highlighted the “backlash”⁶⁷ *Prevent* has provoked amongst other communities which feel that Muslims are being given preferential treatment, or even—as Dr. Indarjit Singh of the Network of Sikh Organisations told us—“a sort of favoured status as a result of radicalisation”.⁶⁸

42. Dr Singh also commented on a growing “sadness”—as opposed to jealousy or resentment—in faith communities to see interfaith dialogue being “skewed” by an agenda which should be “purely to do with the evils of crime and crime prevention”.⁶⁹ Dr Singh added that “the involvement of religion in a nebulous way [...] suggests religion is a problem [whereas] interfaith dialogue [had been] moving towards getting communities together, tackling real differences and impediments to understanding the bigotry of belief and things like that. [Those things] have been pushed to one side”.⁷⁰

66 Ev 89

67 Ev 108

68 Q 75

69 Q 66

70 Q 66

43. The Muslim Council of Britain reflected the concern of many witnesses when they commented that Muslim organisations have been encouraged to depend on *Prevent* funding for projects which would previously have been funded through other, more ‘mainstream’, channels:

Since the *Prevent* policy was instituted, the opportunity to access mainstream funding has diminished with those affiliated to MCB reporting that they are being directed to funding emanating from the *Prevent* strand rather than through previous sources of funding.⁷¹

Conversely, *Prevent* has also opened doors for opportunists in a less than desirable way, as Oldham-based Asian charity PeaceMaker describes:

Traditional South Asian organisations are successfully accessing *Prevent* funding through emphasising the Muslim aspect of their identity. This funding is being used to replace historical race equality funding that has seen severe cutbacks with the emergence of the cohesion agenda. Indeed, *Prevent* funding is being used to deliver activities that are anti-cohesion, and this is taking us back at least 5 years in the way in which we engage and support community groups.⁷²

The Islamic Society of Britain believes that there are many instances in which ‘square pegs’ are being made to fit ‘round holes’ to a certain extent, so as to benefit from *Prevent* funding—a practice which it calls “be[ing] *Prevent* enough”:

local delivery plans and subsequent programmes built on those plans seem to be eager to accentuate a *Prevent* dimension in order to ‘be *Prevent* enough’. This stretching of project designs in order to make them worthy of *Prevent* consideration can lead to hit and miss results for the central aims of *Prevent*. Moreover other project proposals that can achieve the very forms of indirect inoculation from hate messages that *Prevent* is seeking to achieve, do not receive due attention because they may not ‘be *Prevent* enough’.⁷³

44. These comments hint at problems with the way in which *Prevent* funding is currently being targeted—something which we will discuss at greater length later in this report. However, it is interesting to note at this point the Quilliam Foundation’s view that funding is currently being aimed “carelessly”, rather than where need is greatest:

Prevent is a very important and delicate programme which necessitates a focus on the most vulnerable people in society and on establishments where radicalisation is occurring, not aimed carelessly at areas which simply have many Muslims resident in them. This strategy risks alienating British Muslims by playing into the hands of groups which claim that *Prevent* is aimed against all Muslims, not just extremists.⁷⁴

71 Ev 154

72 Ev 136

73 Ev 195

74 Ev 122

Other forms of extremism and Prevent

45. The vast majority of our witnesses concurred that *Prevent* has too strong a focus on Muslims and insufficient regard to other forms of extremism, such as that stemming from Far Right politics. As West Yorkshire-based think tank JUST argues:

The evidence of the bias and disproportionality in relation to the application of the PVE programme is particularly evident when comparing the government's response to Irish terrorism and far-right extremism. Neither threats were accompanied by the overwhelming securitisation of public services, the burgeoning of the state security apparatus, the doubling in the number of intelligence officers and the attribution for the blame for extremism—presumed to be the penultimate step in the journey towards active terrorism—on all Irish or all White people in the way that Muslim communities have been maligned.⁷⁵

46. In common with a great many witnesses, the New Local Government Network recommended that “there should be a clear, proportionate and consistent approach which targets all violent extremist ideologies within our local communities, not just Islamist ideology [...]”.⁷⁶ However, the CONTEST strategy makes clear the reasons for its single focus on al-Qaeda inspired terrorism, showing why a dedicated focus on tackling this issue is required:

The current international terrorist threat is quite different from the terrorist threats we faced in the past. Contemporary terrorist groups claim a religious justification for their actions and have a wide-ranging religious and political agenda; they are no longer concerned with a single issue. Many seek mass civilian casualties and are prepared to use unconventional techniques (including chemical or radiological weapons); they conduct attacks without warning; they actively seek to recruit new members in the UK and elsewhere around the world.⁷⁷

47. In his speech to front-line *Prevent* workers at the National *Prevent* Conference in December 2009, John Denham addressed the concerns of many of our witnesses regarding the focus of *Prevent*, saying:

It is important that local Muslim communities do not feel they are being singled out if other forms of extremism are a threat in the area. [...] The threat from Al-Qaeda inspired terrorism remains the greatest threat—in terms of number of plots and the ambitions for death and destruction that are expressed. But Government and our whole society must oppose extremism wherever it exists. [...] We are already working across Government to tackle hate crime, including that from far-right extremism. We are supporting areas where we know far-right organisations are mobilising. Through the Home Office led *Channel* programme and the new *Connecting*

75 Ev 183

76 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 13.

77 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, para 0.12.

Communities programme, we are tackling head on the issues—real and perceived—which if left neglected can prove fertile territory for extremism and those who would divide our communities.[...] So I want to make it clear today: any area facing far right or racist extremist problems which divide communities should have a strategy for addressing those problems. And those areas should be resourced for that work.⁷⁸

48. Whilst this announcement was welcomed by many of our witnesses, it was not a commitment to broaden the focus of *Prevent* to other forms of extremism, as some witnesses interpreted it. Instead, work on preventing extremism such as that from the Far Right, will be carried out under separate programmes, such as *Connecting Communities*. Although the majority of our witnesses preferred a widening of *Prevent*, there are supporters of the Government’s approach. Organisations such as Quilliam believe that any broadening of *Prevent*’s focus would contribute to further misunderstandings and further alienate the communities on which *Prevent* depends for cooperation:

[...] are we not moving in the wrong direction now by saying, “Actually, we will include all types of extremism” when in reality the focus is still on Islamic terrorism, so we are getting vaguer in our targeting, for what reason I do not understand other than political correctness possibly; and yet we are sending out completely the wrong messages, both to the Muslim community who may think they are being tarred with a particular brush and to perhaps the wider community who are puzzled about what this programme is actually about.⁷⁹

What it is to be ‘Muslim’

49. Earlier in this chapter of our report, we clarified the point made to us by Charles Farr that *Prevent* does not focus on Muslims *per se*, but on Al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism, which tends to focus its recruitment on Muslim communities. This goes some way to explain the need for a targeted programme which prevents the likelihood of a Muslim being affected by this type of risk. However, it is widely criticised as a crude blanket approach to the problem as it fails to recognise the diversity within Muslim communities, as Ted Cattle of the Institute of Community Cohesion explained to us:

the irony is that the *Prevent* agenda reinforces the Muslim identity because it only approaches Muslims through their faith rather than recognising that everyone, all communities, all people, has lots of different identities and multiple identities. *Prevent* does not engage with them as parents, as employees, as members of any other type of activity at all. It makes the community more inward. It creates the impression that the only thing that the government is interested in is their Muslimness. That is exactly the opposite of the approach that we should be taking, which is to try and recognise that members of the Muslim community, like all other communities, have multiple interests and have the ability to engage at a lot of different levels.⁸⁰

78 The Rt Hon John Denham MP, Speech at the National Prevent Conference, Birmingham, 8 December 2009.

79 Q 4

80 Q 3

50. The Institute of Community Cohesion further states that “Muslim identity, paradoxically, has also been narrowed and reduced to a simple faith persona, rather than building upon and providing wider experiences for people of Muslim heritage”.⁸¹ Naz Koser of Birmingham group Ulfah Arts highlighted the potential problems of engaging Muslims on a faith-related basis, telling us that “When you break it down there are 73, if not more, different sects of Islam and we all practise differently, we are all from different cultural backgrounds”.⁸² Ms Koser went on to tell us that, because of the programme being targeted on faith-related grounds, confusion and resentment had started to surface in the community:

whoever gets funded everybody else is thinking, “they have been funded because of this, that or the other” and there is this conversation around Muslim women who are supported are women who wear hijab, not the women who do not wear hijab. All of these rumours are escalating at local level.⁸³

51. Some local authorities have already recognised the drawbacks of prioritising faith criteria when deciding how engagement and project funding should be managed within *Prevent*. Lambeth, for example, has a specific programme called *Together As One*, which aims to look at the way broader issues are affecting Muslim communities, such as employment, health, access to services and civic engagement.⁸⁴

52. However, the perceived conflation of the Islamic faith with terrorism has been a source of much contention with regards to *Prevent*. At no point does CONTEST suggest that religion leads to terrorism; only that contemporary terrorist groups may use *religious justification* for their actions. The question of how great a role religion plays in influencing an individual to turn to violent extremism or terrorism was one of the most hotly disputed issues of our inquiry, and one which we consider in more detail in the next section of our report. Meanwhile, we draw the following conclusions about the effects of the way in which *Prevent* has been implemented up until now.

The way forward

53. The fact that *Prevent* only focuses on al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism has both added to feelings of alienation and stigma in Muslim communities and brought about deep resentment in non-Muslim communities on the basis that funding is being given to Muslims and not other communities in need. *Prevent* has failed to harness the potential of interfaith dialogue to contribute to increased resilience to violent extremism through increased community cohesion. Useful community-based work previously funded through other channels is being directed towards *Prevent* funding streams and a counter-productive association with an anti-terrorism agenda, while new projects have sprung up to tap this new funding stream which address neither community cohesion, tackling

81 Ev 116

82 Q 41

83 *Ibid.*

84 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 14.

exclusion, nor counter-terrorist objectives in any effective way. All of these outcomes suggest that *Prevent* has not been properly thought through, in terms of the negative impact it has on the whole community—not just Muslim communities.

54. However, we remain convinced that a targeted *Prevent* strategy at national level is required. The nature of the contemporary terrorist threat is specific and, as our inquiry has shown, extremely complicated to comprehend and tackle. Broadening *Prevent* could add further complication and confusion to an already complicated arena. Other forms of extremism are being addressed in programmes such as *Connecting Communities*, which we very much welcome. The risk-based approach of *Connecting Communities* offers a potential solution to the problems which we have identified in this section of our report. We will return to this point later, but first need to consider the question: what are the risk factors for violent extremism?

3 Risk factors for radicalisation

55. The CONTEST strategy defines radicalisation as follows:

Radicalisation—the process by which people come to support violent extremism and, in some cases, join terrorist groups. Radicalisation has a range of causes (including perceptions of our foreign policy), varying from one country and one organisation to another.⁸⁵

Whilst acknowledging that there is no single cause which puts an individual on the pathway to radicalisation and violent extremism, CONTEST provides the following summary of the factors which may contribute:

Grievances do not always or often lead to radicalisation and to violent extremism. But they can make people more open to the ideology associated with Al Qa'ida, support for which may then lead to acts of terrorism. It appears to be the intensity of political and economic grievances that often motivates and characterises members of terrorist networks; people who believe that the aim of western foreign policies is to weaken and divide the Islamic world are more likely to approve of terrorist attacks against civilians. In some fragile and failing states or areas and for some terrorist organisations, the experience of poverty and exclusion can create specific grievances which may then lead to radicalisation. In the FATA,⁸⁶ recent research suggests that poverty and illiteracy as well as the conflict in Afghanistan are key factors leading to religious extremism.⁸⁷

[...] A range of social and psychological factors are also important. Radicalisation seems to be related directly to a crisis in identity and, specifically, to a feeling of not being accepted or not belonging. This is itself the result of a range of factors, which may include the experience of discrimination and inequalities, racism, recent migration and more generally a lack of affinity with and disconnect from family, community and state.⁸⁸

56. In recent guidance to local authorities and their partners, the Government also makes clear that its views on the process of radicalisation

are continually being updated by new research, although it is evident that there is no single pathway to radicalisation, just as there is no single profile of a person who is vulnerable to radicalisation. New insights will be circulated to local partners.⁸⁹

57. However, many of our witnesses felt that the Government has ignored much academic research on the subject. The LGA stated:

85 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, para 0.13.

86 Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan

87 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, para 5.23.

88 *Ibid.*, para 5.24.

89 HM Government, *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for local partners*, August 2009, para 1.9.

Think Tanks have produced a huge range of research on the issue of *Prevent*, for example the NLGN report on broadening the focus or the Policy Research Centre's recent report on the views of young British Muslims. We would like to see Government taking a more active role in reviewing and debating the findings of these reports, rather than generally dismissing them.⁹⁰

Moreover, we sensed frustration from the Convenors and Deputy Convenors of the Preventing Extremism Together Working Groups who felt that many of the findings of their 2005 report were dismissed. ACPO makes a similar point, recommending

The need for greater coordination of research relating to *Prevent* [...] The need for a process to ensure that research routinely assists in the development of policy [...] The need for a central depository for *Prevent* learning and emerging practice.⁹¹

58. It is impossible to define a single pathway to radicalisation or to predict which specific individuals will progress to overt extremist violence. We are encouraged that the Government has committed to keeping its analyses of risk factors up-to-date. However, our evidence suggests that the Government has taken insufficient account of recent research and intelligence on this subject. We therefore recommend that the Government update CONTEST, and the guidance which accompanies it, in the light of analysis of the most recent research on risk factors for radicalisation, and commit itself to regular future updating in the light of further such research.

Risk factors for radicalisation

59. We heard much debate from our witnesses about what are the 'drivers for radicalisation'. The majority agreed that the full range of these 'drivers' were not being addressed by *Prevent*. ISCRI summed up the majority view:

The causal link between recruitment and underlying socio-economic conditions leading to vulnerability seem to have been included but not emphasised adequately by government in its approach, preferring to focus on security and religion. Problems of discrimination, hate crime, deprivation, identity and the impact of an unpopular foreign policy need greater emphasis. All these factors make the vulnerable more susceptible to ideologies of violence and add to feelings of disconnection from the state and a government failing to meet needs.⁹²

Consideration of the full range of arguments about the risk factors for radicalisation is not possible within this report. But there are several themes arising from the evidence which merit a specific focus.

Identity

60. The first of these is the issue of 'identity'. Several witnesses, including the Quilliam Foundation, attribute radicalisation to a failure to "address the complex identity issues

90 Ev 151

91 Ev 185

92 Ev 114

stemming from a failure to access a shared British identity, a failure which leaves some people vulnerable to radicalisation”.⁹³ Quilliam adds:

In the video he recorded before carrying out the 7/7 suicide bomb attacks, Leeds-born Mohammad Sidique Khan addressed the British public saying: “Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight.” The fact that Sidique Khan felt no loyalty or connection to other British citizens, identifying only with Muslims, was crucial in allowing him to murder innocents.⁹⁴

61. As background to this discussion, it is interesting to note the results of the Home Office Citizenship Survey (April—June 2007) which showed that feelings of belonging to the UK (answering ‘very strongly’ and ‘fairly strongly’) were high across ethnic minorities, suggesting that the vast majority of members of these communities do identify themselves as British:

- Bangladeshi (91%)
- Indian (89%)
- Pakistani (87%)
- Black Caribbean (85%)
- Black African (84%)
- White (84%)
- Chinese / other (72%)

62. Evidence from the Institute for Policy Research and Development shows that the perceptions of non-Muslim British people are at odds with the reality felt by Muslims themselves:

Trends are less heartening regarding non-Muslim perspectives of Muslims in Britain, which are increasingly negative. A YouGov survey found that the number of non-Muslim Britons who believe that “a large proportion of British Muslims feel no sense of loyalty to this country and are prepared to condone or even carry out acts of terrorism” had nearly doubled from 10 per cent after 7/7 to 18 per cent a year later. The number of non-Muslims who believe that “practically all British Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens who deplore terrorist acts as much as anyone else” fell from 23 per cent to 16 per cent in the same period. Further, 53 per cent of non-Muslims said they felt threatened by Islam (as distinct from fundamentalist Islamism)—up from 32 per cent in 2001. Overall, only 36 per cent of the general population believes that Muslims are loyal to Britain.⁹⁵

93 Ev 120

94 Ev 121

95 Ev 126

These findings were echoed by Suleman Nagdi of the Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicestershire, who told us:

At what stage do we feel that we are British? At what stage do others look at you as being British? [...] I have sat as a magistrate, serving on the Leicester bench for many years; three members of my immediate family are police officers serving within the county; and I still ask the question: how much more do I have to go before I am accepted? As work is being done in telling the Muslim population, “You need to better integrate yourself” I think the indigenous population also has to be told that it is slightly unfair.⁹⁶

63. We believe that support for individuals in helping them reconcile ‘multiple identities’ is key. Dr Indarjit Singh of the Network of Sikh Organisations remarked

Obviously anyone belonging to [a] particular community, when they see that fellow members of their community in another part of the world are in their view suffering, being ill treated or badly treated, [they] will feel an impact.⁹⁷

Only if such concerns are not addressed properly, or ignored, will they develop into a sense of alienation from British society. As Massoud Shadjareh of the Islamic Human Rights Commission explained to us, it is perfectly legitimate and normal to have grievances:

People in the real world do have grievances. Even if the grievances are not appropriate, still they have the right of having those grievances. What we could ask as a society is to make sure that those grievances are going to be addressed within the means of civil society and democracy rather than anything else.⁹⁸

64. Suleman Nagdi of the Federation of Muslim Organisations gave us a clear example of how grievances can be tackled objectively through peaceful means, without ignoring the reality of the problems Muslims face globally:

I have travelled to the Holy Land and spent over a week and seen some of the refugee camps with 65,000 refugees with one tap for 20 families, open sewers, et cetera. It affected me as an adult. I came back—how did I react to it? I reacted by joining with a human rights agency, writing articles, doing talks at universities. This is my way of clearing my conscience of working with the situation. The question I pose is what happens to the young mind, the 14/15/18-year old who sees these graphic images on the TV and sees his fellow Muslims.⁹⁹

And Dr Indarjit Singh concluded that, if there is no opportunity for grievances to be addressed through peaceful social and democratic means, as the previous two examples demonstrate, then “It is the extremists within the community who will manipulate that

96 Q 103

97 Q 81

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99 Q 97

sense of concern to more extremist activity”.¹⁰⁰ We raised this issue with Charles Farr of OSCT, who agreed that alienation was a key factor to be addressed in *Prevent* work:

Definitely alienation. [...] I think that *Prevent* projects which deal with exclusion and alienation, which can happen after all for reasons other than socioeconomics, are very, very important.¹⁰¹

Foreign policy

65. Closely linked to the question of identity is that of the impact of the UK’s foreign policy. Recent examples of British foreign policy (for example the Government’s perceived hesitation in responding to the most recent Israeli bombardment of Gaza) are cited by many witnesses as a reason for some Muslims rejecting a ‘British’ identity, and a potential catalyst for radicalisation. Quilliam believes that this argument is flawed:

The argument that radicalisation is driven by grievances, in particular about foreign policy and the idea of a “War on Islam”, is a popular one but one that is undermined by a comparison between Britain and America. If British foreign policy feeds into a narrative of a “War on Islam” then America’s foreign policy must also equally or more so. Yet, despite American Muslims sharing British Muslims’ concerns about a “War on Islam”, America has seen nothing like the home-grown 7/7 attacks.¹⁰²

This comment is undermined, however, by the shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, on 5 November 2009. Nidal Malik Hasan, an American-born Muslim serving in the United States’ army, killed thirteen people and injured thirty others on the Fort Hood military base. There is no clear evidence to prove that the shootings were related to US foreign policy, but the incident represents a “home-grown” attack nonetheless.

66. Our specialist adviser Dilwar Hussain has suggested in a recent publication that the issue of foreign policy grievances is more complex and that civil society could take a stronger leadership role in helping Muslims—particularly younger Muslims—deal with seeming conflicts between a British identity and Muslim religion:

Much could be said about Britain’s foreign policy mistakes in stoking injustice, leading to anger and frustration. But to blame only such foreign affairs for terrorism is not nearly enough. Muslims did not challenge strongly enough the preachers of hate and the peddlers of simplistic, yet nihilistic, solutions that were able to tap into that anger and frustration. Nor did they create adequate religious institutions or leadership that could connect with young people and educate them in an idiom they would understand.¹⁰³

100 Q 81

101 Qq 396–97

102 Ev 121

103 *Faith in the Nation: Religion, identity and the public realm in Britain today*, Institute for Public Policy Research, 2008, p 41.

This view was supported in evidence from Mr Brij-Mohan Gupta of the Hindu Council UK, who—addressing a different issue of concern to Muslim and other communities in Britain, that of relations between India and Pakistan—told us that

They say that whenever it snows back home we start sneezing here. Whatever happens politically between India and Pakistan, we here are affected by those happenings but as my colleagues have very rightly said, because of the interfaith dialogue, because we have the sorts of facilities whereby we can sit down and sort it out, things have been avoided. Now you can see not a single untoward incident has happened in that part of London. Whatever happens between India and Pakistan, we are not affected. We are living here and we have to solve our problems in this country. Let them solve their own problems.¹⁰⁴

67. We are therefore pleased to note positive acknowledgement of the work being undertaken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the *Prevent* banner:

Government has shown a willingness to shift policy in response to dialogue with local delivery partners. The FCO's decision to explicitly acknowledge the impact of foreign policy and international events on local grievance was a good example. Supporting this with visits to local communities was also appreciated.¹⁰⁵

68. Tackling 'alienation'—whatever its causes—is an important defence against the insidious approaches of radicalisers. Alienation can stem from a sense of unreconciled identity, or from a range of grievances, including those relating to UK foreign policy. Whilst we are persuaded that foreign policy in itself is unlikely to be the primary driver for an individual turning to violent extremism, we recognise it as a contributory factor to a sense of 'alienation' which may then make someone more vulnerable to extremist narratives. It is therefore critical that opportunities are provided for grievances to be aired, along with greater empowerment of individuals to utilise democratic mechanisms for peaceful debate and protest, without it being taken as a lack of loyalty to Britain. The Government should ensure that such opportunities are widely available. There is also a role for non-Muslim communities in acknowledging that the vast majority of Muslims feel loyal to this country. It is therefore important that greater opportunities to improve understanding between people of different cultures and religious groupings are created. We return to this point later in our report.

69. We recommend that the Government make available a proportion of the funding currently available to communities through *Prevent* specifically to projects aimed at encouraging participation in democratic means of debate. We further recommend that the Government more explicitly acknowledge, in the CONTEST strategy, in guidance to local authorities, and in project funding criteria, the contribution to counter-terrorism objectives of work to improve understanding between people of different cultures and religious groupings.

104 Q 69

105 Ev 149

Socio-economic factors

70. Although foreign policy and identity were discussed at length in our evidence, the majority of our witnesses felt that socio-economic factors and deprivation were currently the factors most overlooked by Government. The Institute for Community Cohesion argued:

[Government needs to do more] to tackle the underlying causes of hatred and intolerance and that means doing more to tackle the poverty and deprivation within Muslim and other disadvantaged communities to ensure that they have better educational outcomes and employment opportunities and that they can more fully integrate and engage in a wider range of social and economic activities.¹⁰⁶

71. Muslims feature heavily amongst some of the more deprived communities in the UK, as Iqbal Wahhab¹⁰⁷ pointed out to us:

From my experience with the DWP, we can clearly see that British Muslims are amongst the most significant economically disenfranchised communities in the UK. Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of society, two thirds of Muslim children in Tower Hamlets live in poverty. These are undoubtedly contributing factors in the alarming statistic that 11% of all inmates in British prisons are of declared Muslim faith.¹⁰⁸

It is interesting to note, therefore, that the US government has emphasised the need to address socio-economic factors in its revised approach to combating violent extremism:

Recent announcements from the United States government (e.g. Assistant to President Obama for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism) point also to a revised policy for combating violent extremism which emphasises the importance of addressing socio-economic issues: "addressing...upstream factors [economic, social, political] is ultimately not a military operation but a political, economic and social campaign to meet basic needs and legitimate grievances of ordinary people".¹⁰⁹

72. We asked the Secretary of State and Charles Farr of OSCT why a more pronounced focus on tackling socio-economic factors and deprivation had not been included in CONTEST. Charles Farr told us that

The direct correlation between people in prison for [Terrorism Act] offences in this country [...] and deprivation is not strong. [...] However, I think the situation is a little bit more complicated than that. Deprivation can be a driver for radicalisation amongst those who are not themselves deprived. In other words, people do tend to look around the world and can get motivated towards radicalisation by a perception

106 Ev 117

107 Iqbal Wahhab is a restaurateur in London who also chairs the DWP's Ethnic Minority Advisory Group and sits on the board of The Prince of Wales's charity Mosaic which focuses on British Muslims. For Mosaic he leads a project on Muslim prisoners.

108 Ev 90

109 Ev 113

of the treatment that Muslim communities are receiving. It is a rather more complex nuanced interpretation of socioeconomics as a driver.¹¹⁰

73. As we were reminded by Ed Husain of Quilliam, Osama Bin Laden did not come from a deprived background. Nevertheless, socio-economic deprivation can be a concern for “upwardly mobile groups, such as university students, who retain a consciousness of Muslim socio-economic disenfranchisement in Britain which is buttressed by perceptions and experiences of a discriminatory system which they feel prevents the realization of their full potential”.¹¹¹ Again, this takes us back to issues of ‘identity’, whereby even the most privileged may identify—perhaps culturally or religiously—with the more deprived, and empathise with their plight.

74. Tackling socio-economic deprivation is important in its own right to achieve a more equal and cohesive society but it also has a key role in diluting the impact of the call to violence on vulnerable individuals. Tackling socio-economic factors will not necessarily directly reduce the incidence of violent extremism, but we recommend the Government continue to prioritise investment in this area in recognition of the positive contribution it makes to achieving the aims of the *Prevent* agenda.

75. We were concerned, therefore, by evidence suggesting that insufficient work was being undertaken on university campuses within the *Prevent* programme. Not only universities, but also prisons, are settings where individuals are very vulnerable to radicalisation. The Network of Sikh Organisations stated that

The evidence to date is that little has been done on university campuses to combat increasing radicalisation and extremism and, despite a vast increase in funding, it is the view of the Prison Chaplaincy, including the Muslim Adviser, the situation in prisons has become worse.¹¹²

76. This is further evidence that *Prevent* has not been targeted at areas of greatest risk, and gives greater weight to our call for *Prevent* interventions to be targeted where need is greatest. **We recommend that Government take urgent steps to ensure that work in universities and prisons is better co-ordinated with the overall *Prevent* programme. We also recommend that, where appropriate, universities and prisons are included within local risk assessments.**

Religion and radicalisation

77. Many of our witnesses believed that the Government has overplayed the role of religion in *CONTEST* and *Prevent* and that much greater precedence should be given to those other factors discussed so far in this chapter. However, Quilliam—amongst others—told us that “the government should recognise that violent extremism is always preceded by political and religious extremism”¹¹³ and that all *Prevent* work should be targeted

110 Q 396

111 Ev 125

112 Ev 89

113 Ev 120

accordingly. The Board of Deputies of British Jews sets religious factors within the context of other influences:

Radicalisation is promoted by a whole range of things [...] Certainly a distorted view of religion is one of them, but there are many other things. It may be that there have been some traumatic episodes in a person's life that have turned them away from society. It may be a reaction to things going on in society. Religion really is only one thing, but what happens of course is that people who are the radicalisers use their distorted view of religion to radicalise people.¹¹⁴

78. The Network of Sikh Organisations also gives weight to consideration of religious factors as a risk to radicalisation and suggests that religious leaders need to take more responsibility for countering radical religious narratives:

To combat radicalisation, one needs to look at the causes of radicalisation. [...] It does not have to be religion, but most religious texts have ambiguities within them and they can be interpreted in different ways. Someone who feels deprived can latch on to the wrong teachings. Someone with an affluent upbringing can latch on to the wrong teachings. It is those teachings that we need to get addressed and that is where interfaith dialogue was beginning to go. It stalled badly.¹¹⁵

A true 'Prevent Agenda' should tackle such distortions with the active involvement of religious leaders. The experience to date is that most Muslim leaders, other than providing occasional lip service, have done little in this direction. They, and their counterparts in other faiths, should actively condemn attempts by zealots to push their views onto others.¹¹⁶

79. We acknowledge that CLG has invested a great deal in supporting improved standards in mosques through the work of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board and the Charity Commission's Faith and Social Cohesion Unit, and we fully support this work. There are also positive examples of mosques and religious community leaders taking on this role on their own initiative. During our visit to Birmingham, we met Tassadaq Hussain of Green Lane Mosque, who told us that the mosque had not taken *Prevent* money as it believed that educating its community about the threat of terrorism was one of the mosque's regular responsibilities. Work of this kind was being done at Green Lanes Mosque long before the *Prevent* programme. Mr Hussain felt that it was important that the community "owned" the fight against terrorism and, where possible, contributed towards the costs of carrying out this important task.

80. In discussing the role of religion in the radicalisation process, we need to examine in greater depth a point we touched on earlier in this report: the difference between extremism and violent extremism. As Arun Kundnani of the IRR explained, it is important to differentiate between people who express "opinions that some of us are uncomfortable

114 Q 64

115 Q 80

116 Ev 89

with, but which are legal opinions to hold”,¹¹⁷ with those who take part in, or incite,¹¹⁸ violent extremism—both of which constitute a criminal offence.

81. A particular worry for many witnesses in this context is having religious orthodoxy mistaken for extremism. Concern was expressed back in 2005 by the Preventing Extremism Together working group on Community Security that, with the then focus on extremism (as opposed to violent extremism) outward signs of traditional religious practice such as “wearing the hijab or growing a beard”¹¹⁹ could be associated with terrorism. More careful use of language –Preventing *Violent* Extremism—has helped to clarify this to a certain extent, as the Islamic Society of Britain points out, but other issues still present:

The term ‘Violent Extremism’ was [...] useful in drawing a clear line to separate general extremism from violent, criminal, terrorist acts—we believe this is a crucial distinction to be made across all levels of communication. However, the term did not always succeed in separating general extremist ideas from violent acts, and this is partly the impact of the action word ‘prevent’. It resulted in a flawed logic that asked, ‘how do you prevent violent extremism?’ and answered, ‘you go further back and stop extremism, because one (extremism) will lead to the other (violent extremism)’. This is not only flawed logic, it is a dangerous logic in the hands of opportunists.¹²⁰

82. The problem, as many of our witnesses see it, is the lack of definition of these terms. Even though we believe that the CONTEST and *Prevent* documents demonstrate a good attempt to clarify the issues, our witnesses told us that they still lack adequate definition:

[...] the *Prevent* strategy documents fail to define emotive and loaded terms such as “violent extremism”, “extremism”, and “radicalisation”. Such failures when coupled with intensive pressure on local authorities to produce results of projects designed to have tackled these concepts, have resulted in these concepts being defined at the whim of individuals within councils, with their biases, prejudices and lack of understanding.¹²¹

83. We support CLG’s work on improving standards in mosques and believe that religious institutions have a very important role in educating communities about the threat of terrorism. However, we believe there has been an excessive concentration on the theological basis of radicalisation in the *Prevent* programme. Engagement with preventative work should also focus on political and socio-economic challenges. We therefore reiterate our calls for opportunities for greater empowerment and civic engagement with democratic institutions which strengthen Muslims’ participation in communities and society as a whole.

117 Q 290

118 The Terrorism Act 2006 makes it a criminal offence to encourage terrorism by directly or indirectly inciting or encouraging others to commit acts of terrorism. This includes an offence of “glorification” of terror—people who “praise or celebrate” terrorism in a way that may encourage others to commit a terrorist act. The maximum penalty is seven years’ imprisonment.

119 Preventing Extremism Together, Working Group Report, August–October 2005, available at www.communities.gov.uk, p 83.

120 Ev 195

121 Ev 91

84. The role of religion as a risk factor in the radicalisation process needs to be handled with care, acknowledging that religious extremism and violent extremism may not always be linked. **We recommend that the Government take steps to clarify its understanding of the terms ‘violent extremism’, ‘extremism’, and ‘radicalisation’. Holding extreme views is not illegal and *Prevent* should clearly focus on violent extremism. Extending *Prevent* interventions to those holding extreme views should only take place where there is a risk that an individual’s adherence to an extremist ideology may predispose them to violence. The Government should ensure that this understanding is shared widely across the range of its partners in delivering *Prevent*-related projects.**

Theological matters: who should be engaged; who should advise; who should intervene?

85. John Denham’s December 2009 speech to *Prevent* front-line workers outlined the Government’s rather inconclusive stance towards engagement with Muslim groups:

Prevent must only involve those who are unambiguously opposed to violent extremism against Britain and British people and who uphold British laws. We clearly need to understand the threat from organisations which do not explicitly promote violent extremism in the UK but who, by their use of language and ideology, provide space for such violence. There are organisations which meet the test of opposing violent extremism which, nonetheless, hold views on other social or religious issues, or on international issues, which are controversial within and outside the Muslim communities of this country. There are widely differing views on whether or how to engage with them. These are difficult judgements. I acknowledge that. Ones which need to be considered carefully at local and national level.¹²²

86. The majority of our witnesses saw any attempt by Government to advise on ‘wrong’ or ‘right’ interpretations of Islam as unwarranted interference, or even “a cynical experiment in social engineering”.¹²³ The Network of Sikh Organisations reflected the majority view in saying

Government and local government are not experts on religion and should avoid the temptation to lead and direct the faith agenda. This leading is currently being done by the deployment of government and local government funding to favoured projects and groups on the basis of questionable criteria. The role of both government and local government should be confined to ensuring all communities are given equitable treatment on the provision of goods and services and that all people of different faiths and cultures respect the norms of civilised society.¹²⁴

The Institute of Race Relations adds that such ‘interference’ has led to an unhealthy closing of the gap between church and state:

An additional problem arises from the perception that the government is sponsoring Muslim organisations on the basis of theological criteria—for example, holding Sufis

122 The Rt Hon John Denham MP, Speech at the National Prevent Conference, Birmingham, 8 December 2009.

123 Ev 91

124 Ev 89

to be intrinsically more moderate than Salafis. Such an approach violates the secular separation of ‘church’ and state, even though such a separation is itself upheld by the government as a marker of ‘moderation’ which Muslims should aspire to. The use of government funding to promote a ‘correct interpretation’ of religious texts is fraught with dangers, irrespective of the theological merits of any such interpretation.¹²⁵

87. Much of the evidence agrees that Government has particularly “sought to marginalise those Muslims who are vociferous in their political beliefs and instead embarked on a mission to create, promote and fund groups whose version of Islam is more in tune with the Government’s own beliefs”.¹²⁶ The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation argues that

Promoting ‘good Islam’ means that the ‘other Islam’ (or ‘bad Islam’) is what the West fears most, and it therefore unwittingly promotes al-Qaeda’s claim to be the only alternative to Western globalization. The consequent de-legitimization of pro-Western Islamic thinkers has made ‘bad Islam’ the supposedly authentic one.¹²⁷

88. The non-denominational charity Forward Thinking advised us that “Some communities have become afraid of talking about any issue relating to theology, foreign policy and politics for fear of being accused of promoting the ‘wrong ideology’”. They add that “This has the knock on effect of driving those who wish to recruit and incite violence to do so underground”.¹²⁸ It also opens up opportunities for organisations which are willing to ‘play along’ in order to benefit from *Prevent* funding:

For Muslim organisations that are able to present themselves as ‘moderate’, significant financial and symbolic resources are being offered by central and local government. The danger is that the distinction between ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’ is flexible enough to be exploited, either by government, to castigate anyone who is critical of its policies, or by voluntary sector organisations, to access resources.¹²⁹

89. The construction of an ‘Islamic experts industry’—groups which are “artificially created, often in collaboration [with Government] to promote favoured ideologies”¹³⁰—is a matter of wide concern. Witnesses identify this ‘industry’ as a barrier to sound community engagement. Quilliam points out that “Choosing partners on the basis of their claim to represent all members of one group tends to empower only politically active, male, middle-aged members of a diverse population. It also undermines Parliament as a body which represents us all as equal citizens”.¹³¹ ISCRI remarks that genuine and trusted local community groups, who can reach and influence those most at risk and the young and vulnerable, are rarely engaged. They argue that

125 Ev 102

126 Ev 94

127 *Perspectives on radicalisation and Political Violence: Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence*, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2008, p 13.

128 Ev 180

129 Ev 102

130 Ev 168 [National Muslim Women’s Advisory Group]

131 Ev 121

the strategy appears to communicate through a ‘values based’ approach with the whole Muslim populace as an undifferentiated and stigmatised social grouping (causing resentment); or, it establishes, or is guided by, ‘arms length’ entities the government itself has created but which in the main have poor local credibility and lack genuine community understanding and relevance.¹³²

90. The UK Youth Parliament told us that

overwhelmingly, young people have said that they do not approve of tokenistic youth organisations, especially because they have acknowledged themselves that it does affect young people through their different communities. Why is there a Young Muslim Advisory Group but not a Young Christian Advisory Group? Why is there not a Young Hindu Advisory Group? It seems to me that it is all tied to the one community when the problem is not exactly with that community.¹³³

This view was reinforced by PeaceMaker:

There is a clear discrepancy between organisations and communities that are engaging in the *Prevent* agenda and those that are at-risk. The re-emergence of faith leaders as community representatives will have far-reaching, long-term consequences on disaffected young people who have never nor will ever consider these faith leaders to represent their experiences or interests. As in many other communities, there is a growing gulf in inter-generational relationships within these communities, and the engagement of older traditional faith leaders as representatives of their communities creates a vacuum of representation that makes it easier for extremists to exploit vulnerable young people.¹³⁴

91. The Youth Parliament witnesses criticised the lack of opportunities for truly ‘democratic’ engagement for young people:

I see that as a criticism of you guys [MPs] because there are not any opportunities for young people from those backgrounds to get involved in events like [...] Project Safe Space.¹³⁵ We did one conference in Slough and the opinions we got there from the young people were very different from the opinions we got in the north east and the north west of England. They are not given the same opportunities as us because we are going into those communities but we are not getting the funding to continue doing that work, giving those young people youth leadership opportunities and stuff like that.¹³⁶

132 Ev 114

133 Q 264

134 Ev 136

135 Project Safe Space is a national initiative implemented and delivered by young people from the UK Youth Parliament in partnership with other regional and local youth organisations. As a part of Project Safe Space, nine regional youth-led conferences on terrorism and violent extremism and its effect on young people were held between 2007–9. These conferences—or ‘safe spaces’—were open to any young person from any community to discuss concerns and views about terrorism, violent extremism, youth leadership and working with the police. Adults supported the delivery of the conferences but all formats, presentations, podcasts, drama and facilitation of workshops was designed, agreed and delivered by young people. A national report on the findings from the project was published by young people in July 2009.

136 Q 276

Arun Kundnani of the Institute of Race Relations backed up this view and stressed that

there does seem to be a strong view amongst a lot of people I have spoken to that a key part of it is a sense of political disempowerment and a sense that the British political system is pointless and does not listen to them. Therefore, violent alternatives become plausible. If that is even a part of the truth, then what youth work used to be more about, which is about empowering young people—particularly people on the margins of society—and giving them a sense of genuine engagement in our society’s institutions is going to be incredibly useful as one part of preventing violent extremism. Unfortunately, too much of the way *Prevent* is thought about now is not about empowerment but about behaviour modification.¹³⁷

92. Dr Paul Thomas added that “I would argue for a broader community cohesion programme, to engage young people in much more democratic debates across ethnic backgrounds. We have got some examples of that, for instance the British Youth Parliament initiative around the Safe Space project and what local and national youth parliament processes are doing where young people from different backgrounds are engaging in very robust debates about foreign policy and national policy, but that is within a multi-ethnic and democratic background”.¹³⁸ Our witnesses strongly supported recommendations in the UK Youth Parliament Project Safe Space report to “develop a range of new media options that support the Government and police *Prevent* strategies [along with] a national youth led new media communications strategy”.¹³⁹ Through this recommendation, the *Safe Space* delegates felt that Government communication with young people could be improved through more intelligent use of new media such as the internet, online social networking sites and mobile telephones.

93. The evidence therefore starts to suggest that, particularly with regard to young people, a approach to preventing violent extremism which seeks to promote ‘legitimate’ interpretations of Islam and decry others, may not be the most effective. The need to debate ideas from a range of perspectives, and not drive the more ‘radical’ voices underground, was a concern in much of the evidence we received.

94. Government interference in theological matters must be avoided. The Government’s current approach to engagement with Muslim organisations has given the impression that there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forms of Islam—some endorsed by the Government, others not. The construction of an “Islamic experts industry”, funded and sanctioned by Government, has caused a variety of problems, including a failure to represent the views of the whole Muslim community. The issue of representation is a particular concern for young people. Empowering young people from a variety of backgrounds to take part in open and honest discussion and debate—and facilitating their influence and access to democratic institutions—is key. Initiatives such as Project Safe Space must be pursued, and backed with appropriate funding. Support and funding should also be made available to initiatives which improve communications between young people and Government.

137 Q 306

138 Q 118

139 Project Safe Space National Report, UK Youth Parliament, July 2009, p 37.

95. The Secretary of State made very clear the Government’s position about engagement with organisations which actively promote the use of terrorist violence, as he explained to us in oral evidence:

Unambiguous opposition to the use of terrorist violence and the breaking of British laws has to be an absolute on the *Prevent* programme. Beyond that, there will be people who take very different views, say, to the British Government on international affairs or people who would be labelled as socially conservative that people may have other disagreements with, but the test is are they very unambiguous on their opposition to al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism. That cannot be negotiable, in our view, for the *Prevent* programme. Beyond that though there would be a wide range of opinion with which you would expect people to engage locally because there will be people who might disagree with some aspect of British foreign policy but who in terms of their own young people and their own community will be absolutely unambiguously opposed to violence and are therefore allies in the key aim which is of preventing crime. [...] There is, though, still a crucial issue about funding of organisations that would be beyond the pale as far as we are concerned and we are absolutely clear that cannot be one of the things that is funded by *Prevent*.¹⁴⁰

96. Despite this approach, many of our witnesses support the LGA Group’s view that there is still a “need for more confidence in engaging with controversial voices at a national level. Government needs to be more confident in its dealings with those with whom it does not agree, especially when they have broad support from within communities or in academic circles”.¹⁴¹ Birmingham City Council adds that

Advice needs to be credible and moderate, though pushing at the boundaries of moderate. Young people listen to those groups/individuals who have been ‘over the edge’ and come back. The Government has to differentiate about what is the ‘credible’ element appropriate to—the Government or the audience—and recognise that it should always be the audience.¹⁴²

However, Birmingham also recognises a paradox for central and local government in this respect in that organisations which engage with authorities may lose their credibility in the communities they claim to represent:

The Government should be careful as to whom it openly endorses and engages, as this makes the endorsed group not credible within the community.¹⁴³

97. Evidence from the Arts and Humanities Research Council¹⁴⁴ considers the issue of who is best placed to challenge the ideology of radical groups, and concludes that it may be

140 Qq 343, 345

141 Ev 149

142 Ev 140

143 *Ibid.*

144 The AHRC supports research in areas including traditional humanities subjects, such as religion, history, modern languages and English literature, to the creative and performing arts. The AHRC funds research and postgraduate study within the UK’s higher education institutions.

those who can identify and understand their point of view and retain an element of “street credibility” as described above:

Identifying which community groups are best placed to challenge the behaviours and attitudes of individuals deemed at risk of violent extremism is a key issue. It may be that in some instances, it is important for groups to have knowledge about, and shared experience, backgrounds and credibility of the people vulnerable to or already engaged in violent discourse and action. Such a ‘street’ approach is invaluable to this form of countering terrorism. Indeed, the street credibility of a community member or group, and their in-depth knowledge of Islamic texts and jurisprudence can be crucial in fighting violent extremism on ideological grounds. Groups who have less credentials, less knowledge or who are not trusted by others of the same faith will be easily defeated in the ideological debate and will be unable to sustain the position of a convincing alternative to extremism.¹⁴⁵

98. In the 2008 report, *Faith in the Nation*, the Committee’s specialist adviser Dilwar Hussain contended that “[...] if channelled properly and maturely, an aggressive, even radical, form of citizenship is no bad thing for democracy [...] it is vital to harness people’s energies rather than try to pacify them”.¹⁴⁶ Guy Wilkinson of the Church of England also felt it important “that we engage more with [all] those who demonstrate they are looking for integrative and cohesive action”,¹⁴⁷ rather than “putting them through an ideological filter”.¹⁴⁸ We consider, then, that wide engagement with credible—but non-violent—voices is desirable. **The Government has made clear its position on non-engagement with groups which support, or actively promote, the al-Qaeda ideology. However, there is widespread criticism of the Government’s failure to engage with more ‘radical’ voices which do not promote violent extremism. The Government should engage with those who demonstrate a desire to promote greater understanding, cohesion and integration. No organisation—unless proscribed—should be excluded from debate and discussions.**

99. The question remains, however, of how—and which—organisations should be more actively encouraged (and possibly funded) to carry out the task of challenging the ideologies of those who either themselves seek to do harm, or risk inspiring others to do so.

100. Along with many other witnesses, the National Association of Muslim Police suggested that

There needs to be less reliance on individuals advising at a national level and closer working directly with local authorities. Each area across the UK is very different in its makeup, structures and relationships and will therefore require localised solutions. We would like the Government to be much more open to varying approaches—and this includes the allocation of resources.¹⁴⁹

145 Ev 134

146 *Faith in the Nation: Religion, identity and the public realm in Britain today*, Institute for Public Policy Research, 2008, p 42–3.

147 Q 87

148 *Ibid.*

149 Ev 146

101. The need for locally tailored *Prevent* programmes has been strongly encouraged by Government and this is something that we support. However, many witnesses felt that it was difficult for local authorities and their partners to be responsible for deeming organisations ‘appropriate’ to challenge extremist or terrorist ideology—a difficulty confirmed by the LGA witnesses’ responses to questions on this point in oral evidence.¹⁵⁰ Reflecting the views of many witnesses, the Quilliam Foundation observed that

Many civil servants working both in national and local government lack the necessary advice and expertise to properly understand the complex ideological and theological issues surrounding extremism and therefore to properly support the *Prevent* programme. Assessing whether a group or speaker propagates dangerous ideas should be carried out centrally by people with experience, expertise and the executive power to transparently and accountably disrupt extremist groups’ gatherings.¹⁵¹

102. In response to these difficulties, JUST recommends a much greater role for Third Sector organisations in facilitating the interface between government and communities:

It is not the business of government to speak to the right people—it is the business of government to develop equitable, fair and anti-discriminatory policies and practice. The interface between communities and government should be facilitated by the statutory and Third sector. The loss of race equality officers within local authorities and the lack of sustained funding to grassroots and BME Third sector organisations have effectively stripped away a critical layer of communications between government and communities.¹⁵²

The Mayor of London suggests that a central body of expertise is required, to assist local authorities’ understanding of the nature and aims of various groups:

This is one area where there needs to be greater centralisation, with the creation of a due diligence unit at the heart of government which is able to advise and inform local authorities about how best to proceed with difficult issues. The reason for this is that it can be a daunting task to build the requisite knowledge and expertise to understand the ever changing carousel of radical leaders and their front groups.¹⁵³

103. Charles Farr of OSCT explained that

What this Government has tried to do is to accept that challenging the ideology needs to happen, but to encourage other organisations to be doing that challenging for themselves and sometimes, but not always, providing them with the funding to enable them to better do so. That is where I think the solution to this lies. I would only add that [...]this is not a UK issue, it is an international issue [...] and therefore,

150 Q167

151 Ev 120

152 Ev 184

153 Ev 200

this has to be an international effort with other governments and international organisations and international community organisations.¹⁵⁴

104. The recent findings of the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence held by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation echo Charles Farr in suggesting that the following approach is required:

The international community—NGOs, governments and regional entities such as the EU—should assist capacity-building in strategic and tactical performance by indigenous actors in nonviolent struggles for rights, democracy, and freedom from domination. These nonviolent action-takers should be told: We will give you the knowledge and the tools you need, but we will not interfere in your choice of ideology or political goals. This effort should include the establishment of a new international funding source for the support of nonviolent resistance, free of the taint or suspicion of any government’s interests or politics.¹⁵⁵

The report adds

Media and educational institutions should be enjoined to raise the visibility and teach the ‘counter narrative’ of effective nonviolent struggle everywhere. Widely held misconceptions—that nonviolent action is about making peace rather than defeating oppressors, or that resistance is always quelled with repression—have to be reversed. Young people must be shown that the pay-offs for involvement in violent groups—belonging to an urgent cause, becoming a warrior—are also provided by civil resistance. The stunning record of nonviolent movements on every continent in winning rights and liberating peoples must become common knowledge.¹⁵⁶

This acknowledgment of the role of the media echoes Charles Farr’s observation that

It is really important that violent extremist networks are not unchallenged on the net itself. It is sometimes easy to get the impression they are the only thing that is out there and we need to correct that impression. We want to do that by encouraging other organisations to operate on the net too. I hope that is partly what organisations might use government funding to do.¹⁵⁷

105. Government has already made attempts to facilitate theological debate at arm’s length from Government through, for example, CLG funding organisations such as the Radical Middle Way, which describes itself as “a revolutionary grassroots initiative aimed at articulating a relevant mainstream understanding of Islam that is dynamic, proactive and relevant to young British Muslims.” CLG has also led on effective capacity building work to improve standards in mosques, thus improving their capacity and status as community leaders—work which we fully support. RICU has also held an important role in delivering strategic communications to help build communities’ resilience, empowering them to

154 Q 391

155 *Perspectives on radicalisation and Political Violence: Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence*, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2008, p 36.

156 *Ibid.*

157 Q 405

stand up to and reject extremism; exposing the weaknesses of violent extremist ideologies and brands; and supporting credible alternatives to violent extremism using communications. Witnesses suggested that all three of these initiatives have been successful, but needed to be built upon.

106. CLG-funded work undertaken by Cambridge University’s Centre of Islamic Studies in 2009 provides a model for the way forward.¹⁵⁸ This study was undertaken by 26 Muslim scholars, academics and activists representing a diverse spectrum of views from Muslim communities in the UK. Although the project was supported by funding from CLG, the final selection of participants and the identification of items for discussion were the sole responsibility of the University of Cambridge, the Project Steering Group and the participants themselves. Over a nine month period, the participants took part in discussions about what it means to live as a Muslim in modern Britain. The report covers a wide range of issues including secularism, democracy, Shariah law, human rights and citizenship. The resulting report presents the group’s conclusions and aims to act as the basis for a wider discussion with other Muslim leaders and communities around the UK. In time, it is hoped that the process will lead to the development of a virtual “House of Wisdom”,¹⁵⁹ providing space for discussion among both Muslims and non-Muslims on how Islam should function in modern Britain and contribute to wider society. This is precisely the kind of exercise—self-managed and independent of Government—which will retain credibility in the Muslim community.

107. However, these initiatives do not necessarily help with the day-to-day challenges facing local authorities and their partners in deciding who to commission to undertake counter-narrative style work and how to tackle the myths and misperceptions propagated by extremists of all kinds. Nahid Majid and our specialist adviser Alveena Malik, Convenor and Deputy Convenor respectively of the 2005 Preventing Extremism Together Working Group on supporting regional and local initiatives and community actions, therefore strongly urged the Government and the Committee to “revisit the recommendation [in *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2006] for a central Rebuttal Unit [...] being established to tackle extremist myths effectively and with facts”.¹⁶⁰

108. In terms of Government and local authorities partnering and funding organisations to undertake *Prevent* work aimed at resisting the ideology of violent extremism, more subtle criteria need to be applied than those applied to engagement. Many local authorities lack the skills and expertise to identify those organisations which are best placed to challenge the al-Qaeda narrative. This problem is exacerbated by the possible risk that any organisation endorsed by Government or local authorities—however ‘radical’—stands to lose its credibility once ‘approved’ by the authorities. Notwithstanding the excellent practice in some local authority areas, it should not be left to local authorities to decide which local organisations should or should not be engaged with—or funded—through *Prevent* for counter-narrative work. The Government should investigate how more independent and academic initiatives that support public and community bodies to resist the ideology and politics of violent

¹⁵⁸ *Contextualising Islam in Britain: Exploratory Perspectives*, Cambridge University, October 2009.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p 20.

¹⁶⁰ Ev 212

extremists and terrorists can be developed. Part of the work of such initiatives should be the challenging of violent extremist networks on the internet, which featured powerfully in the evidence submitted to us.

109. We recommend that the Government fund more initiatives along the lines of the recent study hosted by the University of Cambridge. Such self-managing and independent initiatives provide space for thorough debate—and possibly criticism—of Government policy and practice, making them credible to the widest possible audience.

110. We also recommend that the Government revisit the recommendation in *Our Shared Future*, (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2006) for a central Rebuttal Unit which can assist local authorities on a day to day basis in tackling all extremist myths (not just those relating to Muslim communities), effectively and with facts. This would be in addition to, or an extension of, the work currently undertaken by RICU. Whereas RICU's focus is predominantly national, this unit would work closely with local authorities and focus on local issues. We recommend that such a unit be led by an agency external to Government.

4 Central and local control of *Prevent*

The role of CLG

111. The lack of a conclusive ‘risk profile’ which may indicate an individual’s vulnerability to violent extremism means that the targeting of the *Prevent* programme poses a challenge in many ways. As our inquiry progressed, it became clear that a lack of agreement amongst partners as to what was to be achieved through *Prevent* was a barrier to progress.

112. A major area of concern is the apparent lack of agreement between central government departments charged with the delivery of *Prevent*. The UK Youth Parliament, for example, told us that

The work we have been delivering has involved DCLG, DCSF, the Home Office and ACPO. However, rather than that working as a strength, it’s been our experience that the inter-departmental arrangements are actually a major weakness. [...] the muddled way of working between departments is perhaps one of the major barriers to operational success. It was simply never clear who was in control, who could make decisions, and what the key drivers were.¹⁶¹

The West Midlands Police Authority adds weight to this view, saying that “*Prevent* policy and funding is shared between two Government departments, DCLG and the Home Office—and there is a real risk that these Departments do not communicate as effectively as they might”.¹⁶²

113. Links between CLG and other Government departments are key to the successful delivery of *Prevent*. As with many of the issues into which we have inquired, CLG’s leadership capability is crucial in ensuring that robust relationships are in place with its fellow departments.

Local authorities’ capacity to deliver

114. The Government has been actively promoting the need for greater local control in the design and delivery of *Prevent*. The majority of our witnesses support a local approach, of the kind which the New Local Government Network describes:

[...] it is right that we have a national and international approach to counter-terrorism, security and preventing violent extremism. Terrorism does not operate within local, regional, or indeed national boundaries, so it is important that our response is multi-layered and flexible, with the right partners involved, and the right information shared at the most appropriate spatial level. However, it is at the local level that radicalisation can take root and it is in the social fabric of our local

161 Ev 99

162 Ev 155

communities and neighbourhoods that the strength and resilience to reject and condemn violent extremist ideologies can be found.¹⁶³

115. However, a great number of witnesses question whether local authorities are best placed to take on such important and sensitive work. The Board of Deputies of British Jews states for example that

Local authorities seldom have sufficient expertise to determine who is extremist and who is not. [...] there is evidence that while they may know what is going on in their local areas, they may not have the expertise to determine the religio-political ideology of applicants for funding, and thereby assess whether they are capable of helping combat violent extremism, or assist in building community cohesion.¹⁶⁴

Charles Farr of OSCT seemed to share this concern, that local authorities had neither the skills nor the confidence to accurately identify individuals who may be a cause for concern.¹⁶⁵

116. Moreover, front line workers such as teachers and youth workers, on whom *Prevent* depends for their cooperation, feel unable or reluctant to carry out some of the aims of the programme. Dr Paul Thomas described how his research in 2008

found that practitioners and managers feel unskilled and unprepared to engage with young people around such controversial and emotive subjects [as local or international political issues, or of religious interpretation] as well as feeling that they have not been authorised to engage with young people and communities on such subjects.¹⁶⁶

Speaking about the challenges facing youth workers when deciding whether or not to refer a young person for *Prevent* interventions, the Secretary of State told us

What I would hope [...]—and this is a challenge for us—is that [a] youth worker first and foremost would have received some proper training in the dangers that are there [...] and how to respond appropriately.¹⁶⁷

Evidence from the UK Youth Parliament suggests that this has not been the case:

Spurred on by the sessions we delivered with youth workers in every Government Office region, we pushed for many months for an extension of youth worker guidance, built on the firm foundation of the evidence we had gathered and the specific appeals from youth workers for more information. We tried to push this idea forward with DCSF officials for many months, but in the end were told that there was no resource in place to make this happen. We have written separately to John

163 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 7.

164 Ev 85, 87.

165 Q 377

166 Ev 108

167 Q 323

Denham highlighting our keenness to engage on this issue. However, it is another example of a lack of clarity on issues shared across departments.¹⁶⁸

117. During our visit to Birmingham we met Jahan Mahmood, a visiting lecturer at the University of Birmingham with a special interest in Muslim soldiery in Britain during the two World Wars. Besides academic interests, Mr Mahmood is actively involved in community-related work and has dedicated much time to mentoring young disengaged Muslim men in and around the inner city regions of Birmingham. Mr Mahmood arranged for us to meet a young man who had been strongly influenced by al-Qaeda inspired narratives, particularly those found on the internet. We were interested to learn how Mr Mahmood's inspirational accounts of Muslim soldiers' contribution to British military successes had helped to give some young Muslims a greater sense of pride and identity, whilst simultaneously highlighting flaws in the radicalisers' message. His ability to contextualise Muslim history and politics in British society is a method which seems to strike a chord with disaffected young people.

118. Jahan Mahmood has a particular knowledge and skill set which cannot easily be replicated across all individuals working at the front line with young people. Faith Associates suggests that

what may be achievable is training and supporting those who are responsible for the care of those in their community, from parents to faith leaders, teachers to youth workers, in identifying those who may be or are becoming vulnerable to violent extremism. Key is addressing early signs of vulnerability by supporting the development of the skills and confidence of those working with young people and the wider community and ensuring they have access to professional and culturally sensitive advice and support.¹⁶⁹

119. The lack of such knowledge in some areas has led to widespread accusations in the evidence of local authorities funding inappropriate or irrelevant projects, or even funding 'extremist' organisations which seek to undermine the *Prevent* message. It is maybe for this reason that Government has, so far, been reluctant fully to loosen the reins and allow local authorities to deliver *Prevent* autonomously. The evidence certainly demonstrates a high level of frustration amongst local authorities and community groups at the lack of real 'letting go' from the centre:

It is right that local authorities are at the heart of building safe, secure and cohesive communities. They have responsibilities as community representatives and as local leaders to help ensure public safety, to help people feel confident and get along well together, to protect the vulnerable and to limit harmful behaviours. Yet at the moment their ability to perform these roles are being hampered by an approach under the *Prevent* banner that is proscriptive from the centre, does not always support broader community cohesion objectives and which lacks sufficient integration with police and security services at local and national levels.¹⁷⁰

168 Ev 100

169 Ev 176

170 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 5.

120. CLG appears to have acknowledged the need to support greater subsidiarity and emphasises the work it has undertaken to strengthen the role of local authorities in delivering *Prevent*:

Tackling violent extremism is a national priority but the nature of the challenge can vary greatly from place to place. That is why working with local authorities and partners is critical. We have strengthened the dialogue between national and local Government through the creation of a Local Delivery Advisory Group (LDAG). This group meets regularly to advise the Communities and Home Secretaries on the development of the *Prevent* agenda at a local level. We are working closely with local authorities and with groups like the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA).¹⁷¹

121. The LGA Group is supportive of CLG's work through Government Offices which, it says, have made "considerable and noticeable improvements in their key role as a conduit for information exchange between national and local government".¹⁷² The training and development consultancy Faith Associates also commends the recently updated guidance from CLG which assists local partners in delivering *Prevent* effectively.¹⁷³

122. However, despite welcome new guidance, many witnesses raise the need for advice which recognises differing local circumstances and, more importantly, is focused on risk:

Over the last 18 months this provision has developed, but it is still limited, and is not always relevant to local circumstances, since most advice is forthcoming from areas which have experienced significant PVE challenges. The development of a proportionate, risk-based approach therefore remains a challenge.¹⁷⁴

Lack of risk-based assessment

123. *Prevent*'s focus on Muslim communities has met with resentment and suspicion. Ed Husain of Quilliam provided a pragmatic explanation for the current 'unfocused' approach: a lack of understanding of actual risk.

[*Prevent*] should target those communities in which there is a serious terrorism problem. My hunch is at times it is not targeting those communities in particular and hence this broad brush approach. That comes about as a result of not understanding where the problem lies.¹⁷⁵

124. Government guidance for local partners states that *Prevent* "needs to be delivered through a wide ranging local partnership and should be informed by an understanding of the local context".¹⁷⁶ The understanding of local context and risk is critical to the successful

171 Ev 202

172 Ev 148

173 Ev 175

174 Ev 104

175 Q 3

176 HM Government, *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated guide for local partners*, August 2009, p 5.

delivery of any *Prevent* programme, as our local authority witnesses acknowledged. Heather Wills of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham explained:

it is very important for us to each understand the local context and develop our own action plans, albeit informed and supported by the learning that our colleagues elsewhere in the country are doing.¹⁷⁷

125. In addressing this point, 'local narratives' which "tell the story of the place, describing the risks and priorities to be addressed through local *Prevent* strategies", are seen by several witnesses to be "the first step to success"¹⁷⁸ in any local *Prevent* programme. Leicester City Council, whose approach to the issue of tackling extremism has been widely acknowledged as one of the most effective, told us

the main elements of our approach have been firstly to understand our communities better. That is because the nature of the way *Prevent* funding has come to us has made assumptions, I think, that the Muslim community is a homogenous group and our own experience has been that that is not the case, and therefore we have had an element which has been about social research, working with our local universities to understand our communities better and to understand our Muslim communities better.¹⁷⁹

126. However, as Anna Turley of the New Local Government Network described, the tools and information required to undertake robust assessments of risk are not always being made available to local authorities and their partners:

I know it is early days in all of our understanding of these issues but certainly local authorities I think are struggling. They are responsible for targets about reducing vulnerability of a local area to extremism, but they actually do not themselves necessarily have the toolkit and the understanding of what these risk factors are and how to handle them. Often there is a failure to share evidence, information and intelligence with police and counterterrorism organisations to really enable them to make the decisions they need and to allow them to follow a risk based approach. I think local authorities feel they do not necessarily have the toolkits they need to understand some of these pathways towards extremism.¹⁸⁰

This was a point raised in the 2008 *Learning and Development Exercise on Prevent* from HMIC and the Audit Commission which found that "There are significant opportunities to improve information sharing locally, regionally and nationally", and concluded that "Chief Executives, basic command unit (BCU) commanders and other partners are not being briefed effectively. They do not receive the information necessary to support effective decision making. This inhibits understanding of local vulnerability, making it difficult to determine the effectiveness of *Prevent* strategies and delivery of the local approach".¹⁸¹

177 Q 181

178 HMIC and Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise*, October 2008, p 4.

179 Q 184

180 Q 7

181 HMIC and Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise*, October 2008, p 5.

127. Information sharing in the context of a counter-terrorism initiative clearly poses some dilemmas. If police and the security services share an honest risk assessment with local authorities, it may have negative impacts for the locality. Conversely, if a candid assessment is not provided, then local authorities may fail to see the need for *Prevent* interventions to be put in place. Charles Farr told us that these were the reasons

why we introduced the Counter-Terrorism Local Profile system and why every chief executive in areas receiving significant *Prevent* funding has already got one. The CTLP will not yet be in its final form but the intelligence product—it is not just intelligence, some of it is just overt information—will improve over the next year. I absolutely agree, and so do ministers clearly, that chief executives and elected councillors, wherever possible, need to have that information otherwise when we show up saying, “We would like you to do the following *Prevent* type work”, they will turn round to us and say, “Why?”¹⁸²

Mr Farr mentioned that “feedback I have from local authority colleagues in many areas—Luton is the one that springs to mind—is that they have already transformed the way they are doing *Prevent*”.¹⁸³ Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles¹⁸⁴ are still in early stages of development. However, we see them as being vital to effective local delivery of *Prevent* programme.

128. Local authorities and their partners appear to lack clarity as to what *Prevent* aims to achieve. Witnesses suggested that CLG and the Home Office were not providing consistent advice to local authorities and this is a barrier to effective local implementation. The Government should ensure that its departments are delivering joined-up and consistent messages on this delicate agenda.

129. The Government is encouraging greater local control of the *Prevent* agenda. Local authorities support this in principle as they are best-placed to understand the local context within which they operate. However, there is criticism that the Government has not ‘let go’ sufficiently and that *Prevent* is still heavily controlled from the centre. This may be due to a lack of confidence in the ability of all local authorities to tackle this agenda effectively. The importance of prioritising the development of a risk-based approach to *Prevent* is therefore ever more critical. **We recommend that the Government prioritise work on facilitating the development of ‘local narratives’ and improving information sharing between local partners—including a more rapid roll-out of Counter Terrorism Local Profiles—to provide local authorities with the vital information they need to undertake their roles effectively. Alongside this, much greater training and support for front-line workers such as council staff, police, teachers and youth workers should be provided.**

182 Q 387

183 Q367

184 ACPO’s National Prevent Delivery Unit leads the development and introduction of new Counter Terrorism Local Profiles (CTLPs). The purpose of a CTLP is to identify where violent extremist activity is or has the greatest potential of occurring and provide suggested recommendations to address any risk.

The Prevent funding formula

130. In no other way is a risk-based approach to the design and delivery of *Prevent* more needed than in the distribution of the programme's funds. As the Secretary of State himself admitted:

an ideal situation [...] would be something that was more clearly risk-based and something that was able to take a coherent view at a local level on the relative needs of cohesion funding and *Prevent* funding, which, as you know, currently go out separately. That would be the ideal. There are two real obstacles to that at the moment, but I do not think they are absolute and forever. One is that risk-based funding clearly has a problem in that you are indicating somebody's assessment of risk and that has both a presentational and practical problem.¹⁸⁵

131. The current system allocates funds to localities with a Muslim population exceeding 2,000. This approach has been criticised across the board, as the Institute of Race Relations describes:

rather than targeting *Prevent* funding on areas according to identifiable risks, it has simply been imposed in direct proportion to the numbers of Muslims in an area. Moreover, it implies that the allocation of *Prevent* funding has not been driven by a local decision-making process in which local agencies identify their own needs and access central government funds accordingly. This blanket approach to funding creates an impression that the Muslim population as a whole needs to be the focus of work to prevent violent extremism, rather than specific groups or localities, and irrespective of the views of local stakeholders.¹⁸⁶

Quilliam points to further drawbacks of the current approach:

In terms of gaining access to and influencing those people who are most at risk of radicalisation, *Prevent* has seen little success. For example, three groups which are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation (students, prisoners and Somali youths) have seen little benefit from *Prevent* spending, partly as a result of unfocused approaches to identifying priority areas for activity. For example, when deciding which universities should be prioritised for attention as part of the *Prevent* strategy, the decision is made purely according to the size of the establishment's local Muslim community. [...] Durham is an example of a university with few Muslim students and few local Muslims yet Hizb ut-Tahrir is very active on campus there.¹⁸⁷

132. We acknowledge the challenges of allocating *Prevent* funds on a risk basis. However, we noted a recent answer to a parliamentary question regarding the criteria CLG had used to determine the allocation of *Connecting Communities*¹⁸⁸ funds to neighbourhoods. It

185 Q 332

186 Ev 101

187 Ev 122

188 In October 2009, Communities Secretary John Denham outlined the £12m Connecting Communities plan. This programme was designed to "reinvigorate and connect with those communities that are feeling the pressure from recession most acutely and ensure they are well placed to share fully in future prosperity and emerge stronger and more cohesive".

suggests that a more intelligent and risk-based approach to identifying need is achievable in similar programmes:

Connecting Communities neighbourhoods have been identified by examining a range of hard and soft data around cohesion, deprivation and crime, perceived unfairness in the allocation of resources and feedback from people working locally. The funding allocated to each neighbourhood is based on the individual plans that they have drawn up which focus on giving people a bigger say in local issues, addressing specific local concerns and increasing access to local services and opportunities.¹⁸⁹

133. The current system for allocating *Prevent* funds is not based on risk and work on addressing this should be a priority. We recommend that the Government apply the approach being adopted for the *Connecting Communities* programme, which demonstrates that risk-based approaches to identifying need in similar programmes is achievable.

Monitoring and evaluation

134. In May 2008 BMG Research was commissioned by Communities and Local Government to conduct a mapping exercise of the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund (PVEPF). This mapping exercise involved collating descriptive data on all of the pathfinder projects funded in 2007–8. A database, initially developed by CLG and subsequently expanded by the research team, was distributed to all local authorities for completion. The database contains information about the range of projects funded, project partners, project beneficiaries and the contribution that the projects are making to the PVEPF priorities and the wider *Prevent* strategy to counter-terrorism.

135. Birmingham City Council’s evidence highlights some good practice stemming from CLG in terms of monitoring and evaluating *Prevent* projects:

Guidance from CLG has been helpful in producing Birmingham’s [*Prevent*] Delivery Plan and providing resources to use in order to evaluate projects and the whole delivery plan. [...] Guidance issued around National Indicator 35¹⁹⁰ has proved invaluable as it has provided the ability to effectively measure performance against the criteria and recognise gaps in delivery, which will enable performance to improve.¹⁹¹

136. However, the majority of witnesses feel that current approaches to monitoring and evaluation are “under-developed”,¹⁹² with common criticisms being that they lack a focus on outcomes and fail to provide a clear picture at national level of how *Prevent* money is being spent and whether it is providing value for money. NI35 is seen to be an ‘output’ measure, rather than a way of measuring the effectiveness and value for money of interventions. NI35 has the added disadvantage of being subject to a certain stigma, as the Islamic Human Rights Commission describes:

189 HC Deb, 2 Feb 2010, col 247W.

190 NI35: Building Resilience to Violent Extremism.

191 Ev 140

192 HMIC and Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise*, October 2008, p 6.

Some local authorities have resented this reporting requirement, because it makes them an arm of the police or of the security [services].¹⁹³

137. We believe that the lack of clarity in this area has occurred as a result of confusion over the aims and objectives of *Prevent* nationally and locally. With a programme like *Prevent*, there will always be a sense that it is impossible to measure what *does not* happen as a result of interventions. All preventative programmes share this problem. However, we were interested to note Leicester City Council's suggestions for an alternative way to measure the impact of local *Prevent* programmes:

one of the indicators that is much more helpful in measuring impact at a local level is [...] NI2 which is the one around sense of belonging locally because I think that gives you an indicator set that can give some very tangible outcomes and outputs that you expect and that you can then monitor the way in which funding is used as a contributory factor to that outcome set.¹⁹⁴

138. Monitoring and evaluation of *Prevent* interventions has not been a strength. Weak monitoring and evaluation is inevitable when aims and objectives are not clear in the first place. The development of a proportionate and risk-based approach to delivering *Prevent*, along with greater clarity as to what the programme aims to achieve, are needed before any useful performance measures can be agreed at national and local level.

The overlap between Prevent and Pursue

139. We also heard evidence of confusion over the interplay of the *Prevent* and *Pursue* strands of CONTEST. Many witnesses believe that the blurring of the boundaries between the two has given the impression that all community work with Muslim populations is linked to the counter-terrorism agenda:

the link with what the Police are doing with their PVE work has been unhelpful. Whilst only a few challenge the role of the police in PVE work, no one is happy to see community projects linked to the work of the police. The creation of *Prevent* Officers working in the police service does nothing but confuse our work. Some (deliberately) see no distinction between the Police PVE work and community work. This leads to community projects being accused of being police spies. Some in Reading have promoted the idea that *Prevent* is actually *Pursue*.¹⁹⁵

140. This was substantiated by the UK Youth Parliament, who told us that "In the UKYP survey we did online, 60 per cent of 1,000 people said they would not attend the conference if the police were there".¹⁹⁶ However, when we put this point of view to Sir Norman Bettison of ACPO, he told us:

193 Ev 93

194 Q 200

195 Ev 228

196 Q 277

I am very clear that if *Prevent* were left to the police it would fail [...] because the police have got to undertake the full gamut of the four Ps—*Protect*, *Prepare* and *Pursue* as well as *Prevent*. There is always the potential for those different responsibilities to be confused and misunderstood. The police have a reach into a community at a particular level. Wherever you get good neighbourhood policing that reach is greater. Wherever you get safer schools partnerships the reach is greater still but the reach can only go so far. At a local authority level through schools, through youth outreach, through community health, there is the opportunity for a much greater reach into the wider realms of the community.¹⁹⁷

141. As we discussed earlier in our report, under-developed information sharing practices between the police and local authorities have exacerbated perceptions of *Prevent* being police-controlled. The police continue to have a relatively high profile in *Prevent* partnerships as they have a much clearer view of the risks in a local area thanks to the information they hold. In many localities, it is currently difficult for local authorities to take a more leading role as they lack the information required to adopt a proportionate approach based on assessed risk.

142. However, a large number of our witnesses felt deeply uncomfortable with the notion of counter-terrorist police work getting too close to public services in any way. One group concluded that

efforts to combat terrorism should be kept within the strict purview of the security and intelligence agencies. Recent attempts to conflate the *Prevent* element within the CONTEST 2 Strategy, alongside the *Protect*, *Pursue* and *Prepare* strands is counter-productive. It has resulted in the securitisation of public services and community and voluntary organisations and undermined civil society, civil liberties and human rights.¹⁹⁸

143. The Secretary of State was reluctant to accept that a straightforward separation of *Prevent* and *Pursue* could take place, telling us that

You could always talk about where the boundaries lie. [...] I think it would be a mistake to remove those key areas of the *Prevent* programme and say we will just call that “community cohesion” and not necessarily address those issues or we will just have *Pursue* and *Channel*. That strategy would be leaving a big gap in the work of *Prevent* at the moment.¹⁹⁹

The Association of Police Authorities added:

From the perspective of policing the perception of a ‘security versus community’ approach to *Prevent* is erroneous. *Prevent* policing extends from work embedded in neighbourhood policing, including community engagement, gathering community intelligence and working with the most vulnerable groups in communities, through

197 Qq 228–29

198 Ev 182

199 Q 320

to Special Branch and Counter-Terrorism Units and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Units, and necessarily covers all of the ‘*Prevent* spectrum’.²⁰⁰

144. Sir Norman Bettison stressed that the police have experience in supporting vulnerable people in many walks of life:

For me the parallel, and it has all sorts of echoes with the early days which I sadly remember of dealing with other risks and harms such as drugs, what there was always when the police were first engaged on drugs enforcement was the tension between wanting to protect the vulnerable young people from the menace of addictive drugs and asking people within the community to, in a sense, report those who were experimenting or becoming seduced by drugs. The maturity of the relationship that we have with other partners now is such that actually the police are involved with treatment and education just as much as we are involved with enforcement, and it is because people have been able to see over the years that information or concern expressed to a third party can often be of benefit to young people in protecting them from a menace such as drug or other risks that particularly befall young people. This is a pretty new agenda but I am very optimistic that as long as we are sensitive, as long as it is not just a police initiative but one shared by other agencies within the community, I genuinely believe that it will become more and more trusted.²⁰¹

145. Many approaches to crime prevention, such as those described by Sir Norman Bettison, have been subsumed into mainstream service delivery in the interests of supporting people with a range of vulnerabilities. Recently, Government has encouraged local authorities and their partners to mainstream *Prevent* and embed *Prevent* delivery with other core mainstream services. This approach has its supporters, as a recommendation of the Preventing Extremism Together Working Group on Supporting Regional and Local Initiatives and Community Actions suggests:

The Working Group concluded that an approach that works within the framework of existing government strategies was seen as a sensible starting point, as it enhances the potential for recommendations that respond to the particular needs of the Muslim faith communities being more readily incorporated. What was important was having a stronger delivery framework in operation ensuring better representation and accountability of diverse groups, and a positive framework allowing for differing views.²⁰²

However, it also has opponents, with the Muslim Women’s Network UK, for example, saying that “the government has not shown that it has considered the impact this part of the strategy will have on how Muslims are viewed and treated by service providers. There is a fear that *Prevent* will exacerbate the problem of discrimination already faced by Muslims when accessing services”.²⁰³ NLGN provides a pragmatic response to these fears, saying

200 Ev 143

201 Q 243

202 Ev 213

203 Ev 128–29

The perception around ‘mainstreaming *Prevent*’ is seen more as extending the security and surveillance aspects into wider council roles. This debate is not currently being held, and the argument needs to be made that this is not about front-line workers ‘spying’ but taking the same precautions and vigilance that all of us citizens undertake [...] If a member of staff did not act on intelligence that subsequently could have saved lives, this would be severe negligence.²⁰⁴

146. We questioned whether targeted *Prevent* interventions such as the *Channel* project would benefit from being mainstreamed, so as to remove the stigma currently attached to them. Throughout our inquiry, it became clear that the *Channel* project epitomised many witnesses’ concerns of ‘spying’ about the involvement of the police in the delivery of public services. Sir Norman Bettison suggested that the time had come to reposition *Channel* within the broader field of addressing vulnerability:

If we are moving off *Channel*, because I think this is the sort of Committee that ought to hear me say this, I think it is time now for *Channel* to be mainstreamed [into the vulnerability and safeguarding agendas] and not be a separate project. [...] *Channel* pre-dated the ACPO *Prevent* strategy. It was a Government scheme not long after the 2005 bombings, the realisation that there was not a conduit for information or for identifying vulnerability. Actually the *Prevent* strategy and *Prevent* implementation plan and all the other joint governmental and partnership work now means that there is a vocabulary and that there are connections that we can use without having to badge something separately as *Channel*.²⁰⁵

147. This could constitute a logical shift, as the referral process for *Channel* involves many of the same players—and very similar mechanisms—as those in existence for child protection or safeguarding referrals. It is not, as Charles Farr reminded us, a process controlled by the Home Office.²⁰⁶ Rather it is a local partnership of statutory partners and non-governmental organisations who decide together who may be suitable for referral to *Channel* and who then identify the nature of support that might be required to assist a vulnerable person to stop them being drawn into violent extremism.

148. The overlap between the *Prevent* and *Pursue* strands of CONTEST has given the impression in some quarters that all community work with Muslims is counter-terrorism work. However, the police have an important role not just in solving but in preventing crime in all its forms, terrorism included. This work involves important relationship-building across communities. We do not, therefore, argue for the police to be excluded from preventative work on this agenda. Many of the concerns about the *Channel* project may be based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the referral process, which is very much a partnership—not a police-controlled affair. It should be made clear that *Channel* does not focus exclusively on al-Qaeda-inspired extremism, but on all forms of extremism. We therefore recommend that *Channel* be removed from the CONTEST strategy and placed within the context of other crime prevention initiatives.

204 Anna Turley, *Stronger Together: A new approach to preventing violent extremism*, New Local Government Network, August 2009, p 15.

205 Qq 254, 255

206 Q 361

5 Prevent and Cohesion

149. The Government's view is that *Prevent* and community cohesion are separate but linked:

Experience has shown that violent extremism can emerge from even the most cohesive communities, but extremist messages are less likely to find support, and are more easily isolated, in a cohesive environment.²⁰⁷

150. The evidence presents very mixed views on this point. On one hand, there is support for greater differentiation between *Prevent* and community cohesion policies, as described by the Board of Deputies of British Jews:

The primary purpose of *Prevent* is to confront violent extremism. It does not necessarily follow that integration and a propensity for violent extremism are inversely proportional.²⁰⁸

However, other witnesses would like to see certain aspects of *Prevent* more closely aligned and integrated with cohesion policies:

We are concerned that the *Prevent* agenda has been run as part of a counter-terrorism national programme. This appears to be because of a lack of trust in the mainly local authority community cohesion programmes which are seen by some Government departments as 'soft and fluffy'. We reject this view—as do most local authorities and other agencies—and would point out that changing attitudes and values is generally much harder than controlling behaviour.²⁰⁹

151. The Audit Commission and HMIC's 2008 report on *Preventing Violent Extremism* suggests that, if delivered with a focus on cohesion, *Prevent* projects may be helping to build resilience in communities, but do not necessarily tackle violent extremism head-on:

Most councils position the *Prevent* approach within their cohesion strategy. This tends to focus on building resilience within communities rather than explicitly addressing the vulnerability of those who may become engaged in violent extremism.²¹⁰

152. In his speech to front-line *Prevent* workers on 9 December 2009, the Secretary of State reinforced the crime prevention role of *Prevent*, clearly distinguishing it from cohesion work:

Prevent is what it says. About preventing violent extremism. It is a crime prevention programme—aiming to ensure that our fellow citizens do not commit act of violence

207 HM Government, *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, para 9.13.

208 Ev 88

209 Ev 119

210 HMIC and Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise*, October 2008, p 4.

against Britain or British people overseas and that people abide by British law. And that is all.²¹¹

Although Denham also sees a separate role for community cohesion activities within the *Prevent* spectrum:

So we made it clear that cross-community activities could form a legitimate part of *Prevent* activities. We invested a further £7.5m to help construct some of these broader programmes.²¹²

153. The LGA acknowledged that early work on *Prevent* was

felt by many to undermine cohesion work. Many local authorities felt that Government lacked consideration for the difficulties they faced in initiating a meaningful dialogue with partners and local communities to get understanding and buy-in to *Prevent* at a local level. And there was a genuine sense that Government was unclear about the precise nature of the role that local authorities should play—as opposed to the police.²¹³

154. However, the LGA believed that the situation had much improved and that the LGA and local authorities are “in a better place now in understanding some of the grievances, concerns and vulnerabilities we need to address within our communities”.²¹⁴ The Association does, however, point to continued tensions between the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism and CLG in terms of how *Prevent* should be delivered:

Tension between OSCT and CLG on the nature of the focus of *Prevent*, and the activity which should flow from that, can be a problem at times. We in local government support John Denham MP’s view of *Prevent* as distinct but necessarily situated within the broader context of community cohesion and equalities. We do not believe that this in any way dilutes *Prevent*, it simply sits it in the appropriate context.²¹⁵

155. The International School for Communities Rights and Inclusion highlights this distinction between the cohesion and crime-prevention aspects of *Prevent* and suggests that the crime-prevention aspects of *Prevent* may sit more comfortably under the *Pursue* pillar of CONTEST:

Some aspects of *Prevent*, especially the identification of individuals at risk, would be more helpfully articulated as *Pursue* objectives. This would mean the police moving away from *Prevent* work where their roles are viewed suspiciously by communities, seen as seeking to recruit informants and gather intelligence and, hence, counter-

211 The Rt Hon John Denham MP, Speech at the National Prevent Conference, Birmingham, 8 December 2009.

212 *Ibid.*

213 Ev 148

214 *Ibid.*

215 Ev 149

productive in alienating the very community whose support the *Prevent* strategy seeks to achieve.²¹⁶

156. It is clear from our evidence that there is much disagreement and confusion as to the respective roles of *Prevent* work and community cohesion. The Secretary of State told us that the Government had “tried to go some way” to help people “be clear about what they are funding and why”.²¹⁷ But it seems that people are not clear on this front. Guy Wilkinson of the Church of England explained that the situation

has not been clear and can never be clear. I notice that in the first part of the Secretary of State’s important speech the other day he said that this is a crime prevention programme, and I understand that that is the intention; but the reality is that it certainly is not just that; it is a much more extensive programme around how communities live together and engage with these issues of radicalisation and violence. Once one accepts that reality, then one has to address some of the problems that the *Prevent* Programme has given rise to.²¹⁸

One of these problems was described to us by Sheila Lock of Leicester City Council, who told us that

[*Prevent*] has been unhelpful and at times even detrimental to the strong levels of community cohesion the city has worked so hard to achieve.²¹⁹

157. In the light of criticisms about *Prevent* undermining community cohesion, many of our witnesses were puzzled by the Government’s recent announcements about the *Connecting Communities* programme. *Connecting Communities* is “a £12m plan to reinvigorate and connect with communities that are feeling the pressure from recession most acutely and ensure they are well placed to share fully in future prosperity and emerge stronger and more cohesive”.²²⁰ One of the challenges the programme hopes to address is the rise of far right extremism. The plan stresses the need to provide opportunities for grievances to be aired and, as the Secretary of State commented in October 2009, acknowledges that “if we fail, the danger is that extremists will try to exploit dissatisfaction and insecurity in ways which pull communities apart”.²²¹ Many of our witnesses felt that this more ‘cohesive’ and ‘positive’ approach to tackling far right extremism was in sharp contrast to the negative approach adopted by *Prevent*. The majority of our witnesses felt that extremism, in all its forms, should be tackled in a similarly positive way by CLG.

158. Confusions over *Prevent* and cohesion have played out on the ground. The worst of these were described as “Mickey Mouse projects” by an individual we met during our visit to Birmingham. Several witnesses agreed with this assessment, suggesting that, in some areas, *Prevent* money had been wasted on projects with no relevance to the *Prevent* aims. A

216 Ev 115

217 Q 319 [The Rt Hon John Denham MP]

218 Q 83

219 Ev 145

220 “John Denham—Connecting Communities”, Communities and Local Government press release 14 October 2009, available at www.communities.gov.uk.

221 *Ibid.*

second category was described during our visit as “nice dinners”: pleasant opportunities for community members to get together and talk about issues which may relate to *Prevent*, but which lack focus, involve the ‘usual suspects’ and may be difficult to justify in terms of value for money. Both PeaceMaker and Dr Paul Thomas referred to these types of projects in their evidence:

At delivery level, over 90% of activities delivered as *Prevent* projects, of which we are aware, are nothing more than community cohesion projects delivered to Muslim communities and individuals. It seems that the only criteria for a project to be delivered under the *Prevent* agenda is that it work with Muslim people, regardless of the actual content of the delivery or the aims and outcomes of the project.²²²

There is clearly a disjuncture between the stated national aims of the *Prevent* educational activity and the reality of much of its content—much of it is positive and diversionary youth activity, but it is not *Prevent* activity in any meaningful sense [...] ²²³

159. A third consequence is that, despite the best efforts of *Prevent* partners to identify the types of interventions needed in an area, local organisations may not be willing to carry out *Prevent* requirements. During our visit to Birmingham, local group Local Leagues described the positive work they were doing with young people from a variety of backgrounds, including Muslims. When we asked them whether they would see fit to pass on information to the authorities about a young person who may be displaying concerning behaviour, they were adamant that this would be improper, and a betrayal of their community.

160. For Naz Koser of Ulfah Arts, however

the confusion is what is the government trying to achieve. I switch from community cohesion to something that is criminal, is a crime, and something that the police and counter-terrorism should be dealing with, not an arts organisation. When it comes to things like community cohesion and raising aspirations, those are things that my organisation can do. It is about being clearer when you are asking me these questions. If you are talking about community cohesion and supporting women to do with this issue then, yes, I do that, but in terms of have I taken your money and actually prevented extremism directly, no.²²⁴

Ed Husain of Quilliam also referred to this lack of capacity, specifically with regard to counter-narrative work:

The money has not gone in, in the amounts that it should have done, to the counter ideology, the destroying the narrative strand of the work. [...] Just like most of us, most Muslims do not understand the causes of extremism and do not understand what makes a terrorist tick. Most Muslims, like everybody else, do not know what it means to put up a counter narrative. As a result, the huge amount of money that the

222 Ev 136

223 Ev 108

224 Q 60

government has been offering to people is being grabbed by people who have been doing work previously which was not related to counter ideology.²²⁵

161. Suleman Nagdi of the Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicestershire added another problem, referring to a broader range of *Prevent* interventions, saying

in my experience, the vast majority of the people within the county where I reside who have applied for funding have not been the mainstream settled community of the county; they have been new groups that have come up and [been] created—women-only groups, young people’s groups, sports centres, et cetera—and applied for funding. These people do not really have the credibility within the community in the sense that they are not part of the settled community. The mosques themselves believe that they have run the mosques through their own charitable giving and have built up the structures, including the capacity of the imams et cetera through internal mechanisms and not from outside, so “do we really need the money?”²²⁶

This seems to chime with Forward Thinking’s view that “the stigma attached to PVE funding and its rejection by many grassroots organisations has created a vacuum which is being filled by groups and individuals who lack any real constituency within the communities but who are repeatedly being awarded funding for projects that appear to have little merit”.²²⁷

162. The final consequence of confusion over what *Prevent* aims to achieve is funding being used to support the ‘business as usual’ of organisations which see *Prevent* as an opportunity to secure funding for much-needed work in Muslim communities, as Huda Jawad of Forward Thinking explained:

Prevent has provided an opportunity for a lot of reinvigoration and the mobilisation of Muslim organisations at a grass roots level like never before. It is unfortunate that it is being done through the prism of counter-terrorism.²²⁸

163. Our evidence therefore seems to agree with the analysis of Dr Hisham Hellyer, Deputy Convenor of the Preventing Extremism Together Working Group on Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation, who says that:

Grassroots *Prevent* initiatives that are in the public interest, but not necessarily directly related to issues of security, should continue. We may not see direct consequences of such efforts for some time to come, but in the long run, we would be well advised to consider such initiatives as far better than the mass production of violent, radical discourse. [...] But, it must be stated—if the proposed aim of the initiative(s) are for community cohesion, they should be directed through a separate and non-related process, as distinct from counter-terrorism as much as possible.²²⁹

²²⁵ Q 9

²²⁶ Q 92

²²⁷ Ev 179

²²⁸ Q 59

²²⁹ Ev 222

164. We are concerned that much *Prevent* money has been wasted on unfocused or irrelevant projects, as a result either of misunderstanding of *Prevent* or of a lack of willingness and capacity of local organisations to deliver. The evidence we have heard suggests that funding credible local organisations to carry out work on building strong and cohesive communities is a vital strand in addressing the set of risk factors which may lead an individual to violent extremism or terrorism. However, this type of work is being undermined in Muslim communities due to the perceived direct connection to counter-terrorism work. Any approach to community cohesion should be from a positive stance.

165. The Government needs to acknowledge community cohesion work—particularly that focused on tackling exclusion—as a much sharper tool in the long-term fight against violent extremism. Building strong and cohesive communities and tackling exclusion is not only critical in addressing the set of risk factors which may lead an individual to violent extremism, but is also very important in itself. Exclusion can affect a much wider group of individuals who are not necessarily at risk of radicalisation. Furthermore, in order to address exclusion, it is critical that both the excluded and the mainstream of society are involved. Tackling one without the other is detrimental to cohesion. CLG’s responsibility for and expertise in community cohesion puts it in a position to make a very positive contribution to that fight. As the evidence which we have set out in this chapter and throughout this report shows, however, the current configuration of *Prevent* is not enabling it to do so in the most effective manner.

Conclusions on *Prevent* and cohesion

CLG’s role in Prevent

166. We agree with the Government that a range of preventative work and interventions are needed to tackle the very real threat from al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism in Britain. We also agree with the Government’s stance that communities must be at the centre of the response to violent extremism.

167. We can see a very clear role for CLG in facilitating community cohesion and integration. Whilst cohesive environments will not necessarily prevent one individual from turning to violent extremism, they may succeed in deterring another. Crucially, they may also ensure that communities themselves are better equipped to identify those within them who are at risk of falling into such activity, and to take appropriate action against it. **Ensuring that communities are approached from a positive perspective is therefore vital, to ensure that individuals and communities do not feel alienated by the very work that is meant to draw them closer together and give them a stronger sense of identity and belonging.**

168. Local authorities have a vital role in promoting safer, stronger communities and promoting ‘shared values’ at a local level. Any attempts to promote shared values through a counter-terrorism strategy which singles out one section of the community will be futile. **All community cohesion work and work focusing on shared values should be decoupled from the *Prevent* agenda and brought under CLG’s broader responsibilities for cohesion and integration. Specific cohesion work which is directly aimed at preventing extremism should be addressed through one broad programme encompassing all types**

of extremism—from al-Qaeda-inspired extremism, to that inspired by the far right—and clearly focused on tackling disadvantage and exclusion, as opposed to being targeted at a single social, cultural or religious group. The Government should learn lessons from the *Prevent* experience, that any programme which focuses on a single community risks alienating that community, and ignores the fact that no section of a population exists in isolation from others.

169. Decisions as to how tackle the conditions in which all forms of extremism can develop need to be made at the local level, based on a risk assessment of the local area as a whole, rather than focusing on individual communities. To clarify the split between Home Office and CLG responsibilities in preventing crime and increasing community resilience respectively, the Government needs to provide clearer definitions of extremism, violent extremism and terrorism and the different approaches required for tackling these issues.

170. Funding for cohesion work in all communities should be increased. That work should be done on a thematic basis and not on a mono-cultural or individual community basis. It should be clearly targeted at disadvantaged and excluded groups, many, though not all, of which are likely to be from the Muslim community. Without adequate funding for community cohesion and tackling exclusion, breeding grounds for extremism risk becoming stronger.

Crime prevention and targeted interventions

171. We are concerned that CLG's positive work on cohesion should not be tainted and confused by a link to counter-terrorism. That does not mean to say that work on counter-terrorist crime prevention should not take place. It is the role of CLG in this that we question. **We therefore conclude that CLG should have less of a role in the counter-terrorism agenda and more in the positive work it undertakes in building strong and cohesive communities.**

172. However, the reality of delivering *Prevent* on the ground is that partnership working between local authorities, the police and other agencies is a normal part of day-to-day service delivery. More hard-edged interventions such as *Channel* (which is Home Office-led) rely on such partnerships, therefore confirming a continuing role for local authorities in counter-terrorism related work. We support the need for targeted interventions with vulnerable people.

173. *Prevent* interventions targeted at crime prevention should not be subsumed into the community cohesion agenda. As we have shown, attempts to combine capacity-building and community cohesion work with counter-terrorism interventions have been both ineffective and counterproductive. Instead, we recommend that all interventions, including *Channel*, which are clearly targeted at crime prevention be brought under the remit of the Home Office and, where possible, mainstreamed into existing mechanisms for identifying, and providing support to, individuals with a range of vulnerabilities. Examples of such mechanisms include Social Inclusion Panels, the Common Assessment Framework and Safeguarding frameworks.

Conclusions and recommendations

Allegations of spying and surveillance

1. We believe that the misuse of terms such as ‘spying’ and ‘intelligence gathering’ amongst *Prevent* partners has exacerbated this problem. We recommend that the Government take urgent steps to clarify how information required under *Prevent* does not constitute ‘intelligence gathering’ of the type undertaken by the police or security services. We also recommend that clear definitions of these terms be provided in all public guidance inviting bids for *Prevent* funds. (Paragraph 39)
2. We welcome the Government’s investigations into allegations of spying and intelligence gathering under the *Prevent* programme, but we cannot ignore the volume of evidence we have seen and heard which demonstrates a continuing lack of trust of the programme amongst those delivering and receiving services. Based on the evidence we have received, it is not possible for us to take a view. If the Government wants to improve confidence in the *Prevent* programme, it should commission an independent investigation into the allegations made. (Paragraph 40)

Prevent and CONTEST

3. We remain convinced that a targeted *Prevent* strategy at national level is required. The nature of the contemporary terrorist threat is specific and, as our inquiry has shown, extremely complicated to comprehend and tackle. Broadening *Prevent* could add further complication and confusion to an already complicated arena. Other forms of extremism are being addressed in programmes such as *Connecting Communities*, which we very much welcome. The risk-based approach of *Connecting Communities* offers a potential solution to the problems which we have identified in this section of our report. (Paragraph 54)

Risk factors for radicalisation

4. It is impossible to define a single pathway to radicalisation or to predict which specific individuals will progress to overt extremist violence. We are encouraged that the Government has committed to keeping its analyses of risk factors up-to-date. However, our evidence suggests that the Government has taken insufficient account of recent research and intelligence on this subject. We therefore recommend that the Government update CONTEST, and the guidance which accompanies it, in the light of analysis of the most recent research on risk factors for radicalisation, and commit itself to regular future updating in the light of further such research. (Paragraph 58)
5. We recommend that the Government make available a proportion of the funding currently available to communities through *Prevent* specifically to projects aimed at encouraging participation in democratic means of debate. We further recommend that the Government more explicitly acknowledge, in the CONTEST strategy, in guidance to local authorities, and in project funding criteria, the contribution to counter-terrorism objectives of work to improve understanding between people of different cultures and religious groupings. (Paragraph 69)

6. Tackling socio-economic deprivation is important in its own right to achieve a more equal and cohesive society but it also has a key role in diluting the impact of the call to violence on vulnerable individuals. Tackling socio-economic factors will not necessarily directly reduce the incidence of violent extremism, but we recommend the Government continue to prioritise investment in this area in recognition of the positive contribution it makes to achieving the aims of the *Prevent* agenda. (Paragraph 74)
7. We recommend that Government take urgent steps to ensure that work in universities and prisons is better co-ordinated with the overall *Prevent* programme. We also recommend that, where appropriate, universities and prisons are included within local risk assessments. (Paragraph 76)
8. We support CLG's work on improving standards in mosques and believe that religious institutions have a very important role in educating communities about the threat of terrorism. However, we believe there has been an excessive concentration on the theological basis of radicalisation in the *Prevent* programme. Engagement with preventative work should also focus on political and socio-economic challenges. We therefore reiterate our calls for opportunities for greater empowerment and civic engagement with democratic institutions which strengthen Muslims' participation in communities and society as a whole. (Paragraph 83)
9. We recommend that the Government take steps to clarify its understanding of the terms 'violent extremism', 'extremism', and 'radicalisation'. Holding extreme views is not illegal and *Prevent* should clearly focus on violent extremism. Extending *Prevent* interventions to those holding extreme views should only take place where there is a risk that an individual's adherence to an extremist ideology may predispose them to violence. The Government should ensure that this understanding is shared widely across the range of its partners in delivering *Prevent-related* projects. (Paragraph 84)

Theological matters: who should be engaged; who should advise; who should intervene?

10. Government interference in theological matters must be avoided. The Government's current approach to engagement with Muslim organisations has given the impression that there are 'good' and 'bad' forms of Islam—some endorsed by the Government, others not. The construction of an "Islamic experts industry", funded and sanctioned by Government, has caused a variety of problems, including a failure to represent the views of the whole Muslim community. The issue of representation is a particular concern for young people. Empowering young people from a variety of backgrounds to take part in open and honest discussion and debate—and facilitating their influence and access to democratic institutions—is key. Initiatives such as Project Safe Space must be pursued, and backed with appropriate funding. Support and funding should also be made available to initiatives which improve communications between young people and Government. (Paragraph 94)
11. The Government has made clear its position on non-engagement with groups which support, or actively promote, the al-Qaeda ideology. However, there is widespread criticism of the Government's failure to engage with more 'radical' voices which do

not promote violent extremism. The Government should engage with those who demonstrate a desire to promote greater understanding, cohesion and integration. No organisation—unless proscribed—should be excluded from debate and discussions. (Paragraph 98)

12. In terms of Government and local authorities partnering and funding organisations to undertake *Prevent* work aimed at resisting the ideology of violent extremism, more subtle criteria need to be applied than those applied to engagement. Many local authorities lack the skills and expertise to identify those organisations which are best placed to challenge the al-Qaeda narrative. This problem is exacerbated by the possible risk that any organisation endorsed by Government or local authorities—however ‘radical’—stands to lose its credibility once ‘approved’ by the authorities. Notwithstanding the excellent practice in some local authority areas, it should not be left to local authorities to decide which local organisations should or should not be engaged with—or funded—through *Prevent* for counter-narrative work. The Government should investigate how more independent and academic initiatives that support public and community bodies to resist the ideology and politics of violent extremists and terrorists can be developed. Part of the work of such initiatives should be the challenging of violent extremist networks on the internet, which featured powerfully in the evidence submitted to us. (Paragraph 108)
13. We recommend that the Government fund more initiatives along the lines of the recent study hosted by the University of Cambridge. Such self-managing and independent initiatives provide space for thorough debate—and possibly criticism—of Government policy and practice, making them credible to the widest possible audience. (Paragraph 109)
14. We also recommend that the Government revisit the recommendation in *Our Shared Future*, (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2006) for a central Rebuttal Unit which can assist local authorities on a day to day basis in tackling all extremist myths (not just those relating to Muslim communities), effectively and with facts. This would be in addition to, or an extension of, the work currently undertaken by RICU. Whereas RICU’s focus is predominantly national, this unit would work closely with local authorities and focus on local issues. We recommend that such a unit be led by an agency external to Government. (Paragraph 110)

Central and local control of Prevent—lack of risk-based assessment

15. We recommend that the Government prioritise work on facilitating the development of ‘local narratives’ and improving information sharing between local partners—including a more rapid roll-out of Counter Terrorism Local Profiles—to provide local authorities with the vital information they need to undertake their roles effectively. Alongside this, much greater training and support for front-line workers such as council staff, police, teachers and youth workers should be provided. (Paragraph 129)

The Prevent funding formula

16. The current system for allocating *Prevent* funds is not based on risk and work on addressing this should be a priority. We recommend that the Government apply the approach being adopted for the *Connecting Communities* programme, which demonstrates that risk-based approaches to identifying need in similar programmes is achievable. (Paragraph 133)

Monitoring and evaluation

17. Monitoring and evaluation of *Prevent* interventions has not been a strength. Weak monitoring and evaluation is inevitable when aims and objectives are not clear in the first place. The development of a proportionate and risk-based approach to delivering *Prevent*, along with greater clarity as to what the programme aims to achieve, are needed before any useful performance measures can be agreed at national and local level. (Paragraph 138)

The overlap between Prevent and Pursue

18. The overlap between the *Prevent* and *Pursue* strands of CONTEST has given the impression in some quarters that all community work with Muslims is counter-terrorism work. However, the police have an important role not just in solving but in preventing crime in all its forms, terrorism included. This work involves important relationship-building across communities. We do not, therefore, argue for the police to be excluded from preventative work on this agenda. Many of the concerns about the *Channel* project may be based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the referral process, which is very much a partnership—not a police-controlled affair. It should be made clear that *Channel* does not focus exclusively on al-Qaeda-inspired extremism, but on all forms of extremism. We therefore recommend that *Channel* be removed from the CONTEST strategy and placed within the context of other crime prevention initiatives. (Paragraph 148)

Prevent and Cohesion

19. We are concerned that much *Prevent* money has been wasted on unfocused or irrelevant projects, as a result either of misunderstanding of *Prevent* or of a lack of willingness and capacity of local organisations to deliver. The evidence we have heard suggests that funding credible local organisations to carry out work on building strong and cohesive communities is a vital strand in addressing the set of risk factors which may lead an individual to violent extremism or terrorism. However, this type of work is being undermined in Muslim communities due to the perceived direct connection to counter-terrorism work. Any approach to community cohesion should be from a positive stance. (Paragraph 164)
20. The Government needs to acknowledge community cohesion work—particularly that focused on tackling exclusion—as a much sharper tool in the long-term fight against violent extremism. Building strong and cohesive communities and tackling exclusion is not only critical in addressing the set of risk factors which may lead an individual to violent extremism, but is also very important in itself. Exclusion can

affect a much wider group of individuals who are not necessarily at risk of radicalisation. Furthermore, in order to address exclusion, it is critical that both the excluded and the mainstream of society are involved. Tackling one without the other is detrimental to cohesion. (Paragraph 165)

21. Ensuring that communities are approached from a positive perspective is therefore vital, to ensure that individuals and communities do not feel alienated by the very work that is meant to draw them closer together and give them a stronger sense of identity and belonging. (Paragraph 167)
22. All community cohesion work and work focusing on shared values should be decoupled from the *Prevent* agenda and brought under CLG's broader responsibilities for cohesion and integration. Specific cohesion work which is directly aimed at preventing extremism should be addressed through one broad programme encompassing all types of extremism—from al-Qaeda-inspired extremism, to that inspired by the far right—and clearly focused on tackling disadvantage and exclusion, as opposed to being targeted at a single social, cultural or religious group. The Government should learn lessons from the *Prevent* experience, that any programme which focuses on a single community risks alienating that community, and ignores the fact that no section of a population exists in isolation from others. (Paragraph 169)
23. Decisions as to how tackle the conditions in which all forms of extremism can develop need to be made at the local level, based on a risk assessment of the local area as a whole, rather than focusing on individual communities. To clarify the split between Home Office and CLG responsibilities in preventing crime and increasing community resilience respectively, the Government needs to provide clearer definitions of extremism, violent extremism and terrorism and the different approaches required for tackling these issues. (Paragraph 168)
24. Funding for cohesion work in all communities should be increased. That work should be done on a thematic basis and not on a mono-cultural or individual community basis. It should be clearly targeted at disadvantaged and excluded groups, many, though not all, of which are likely to be from the Muslim community. Without adequate funding for community cohesion and tackling exclusion, breeding grounds for extremism risk becoming stronger. (Paragraph 170)

Crime prevention and targeted interventions

25. We therefore conclude that CLG should have less of a role in the counter-terrorism agenda and more in the positive work it undertakes in building strong and cohesive communities. (Paragraph 171)
26. The reality of delivering *Prevent* on the ground is that partnership working between local authorities, the police and other agencies is a normal part of day-to-day service delivery. More hard-edged interventions such as *Channel* (which is Home Office-led) rely on such partnerships, therefore confirming a continuing role for local authorities in counter-terrorism related work. We support the need for targeted interventions with vulnerable people. (Paragraph 172)

27. *Prevent* interventions targeted at crime prevention should not be subsumed into the community cohesion agenda. As we have shown, attempts to combine capacity-building and community cohesion work with counter-terrorism interventions have been both ineffective and counterproductive. Instead, we recommend that all interventions, including *Channel*, which are clearly targeted at crime prevention be brought under the remit of the Home Office and, where possible, mainstreamed into existing mechanisms for identifying, and providing support to, individuals with a range of vulnerabilities. (Paragraph 173)

Annex

Visit to Birmingham, Amana Centre, 11 January 2010

Participants

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP
John Pugh MP

Clive Betts MP
Alison Seabeck MP

The Committee was hosted by Mahommed Saif, Media & Communication Director of The Muath Trust, at the Amana Centre in Camp Hill. Yusuf Desai, Deputy Director of Forward Thinking, arranged for the Committee to meet a range of local front-line *Prevent* workers, academics and religious leaders in the Birmingham Muslim community.

The Committee started their day with a round-table discussion of the Government's current analysis of the risk factors for radicalisation and whether *Prevent* was currently focused on the most important of these. The discussion was wide-ranging and touched on factors including the impact of an individual's life experience; issues of identity and alienation; the role of grievances relating to foreign policy and socio-economic factors; and theological factors. Taking part in this discussion were

- Oliver McTernan, Co Founder & Director of Forward Thinking
- Yusuf Desai, Deputy Director, Forward Thinking
- Yusuf Tai, Regional Director, Forward Thinking
- Dr. Nafeez Ahmed, Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Research & Development UK
- Jahan Mahmood, Community Historian and Director of community affairs at Decorum Institute
- Tahir Alam, Director of Al-Hijrah Training Academy and School Governance Consultant Trainer for Birmingham City Council
- Tassadaq Hussain, Public Relations Officer, Green Lane Mosque & Community Centre
- Sabeel Saddique, Birmingham Street Gang leadership.
- Abdullah Saif, Young Muslim Advisory Group (CLG).
- Aisha Iqbal Young Muslim Advisory Group (CLG).
- Robina Iqbal, Vice-Chair Muslims Women's Network, Sparkbrook Community Association

Following this discussion, Jahan Mahmood provided a presentation on how to address radicalisation and the relevance of this agenda to Muslim youth. During his presentation,

Mr Mahmood highlighted the impact of the internet in the radicalisation process on young people.

The Committee then paid a visit to Saheli Women's Centre in Balsall Heath where Saheli's CEO, Naseem Akhtar, spoke to the Committee about the importance of leisure and community activities in helping women – and particularly local Asian women - gain new skills and build greater confidence, allowing them to play a stronger role in both their families and within the communities in which they live.

Finally, the Committee met Mahommed Shafique & Mazhar Ali, Directors of community sport organisation Local Leagues. Local Leagues provides sport and recreational activities for children and families from deprived communities across Birmingham. Mr Shafique and Mr Ali stressed the importance of cross-cultural sporting activities for young people in helping to build strong and cohesive communities where people from different backgrounds are able to work together. The Committee also heard how such activities help excluded and isolated members of the community get more involved in mainstream society.

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 16 March 2010

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Andy Slaughter

Alison Seabeck

Preventing Violent Extremism

Draft Report (*Preventing Violent Extremism*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 173 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 19 October, in the previous session of Parliament, and 30 November, 7 December, 11 January and 8 March was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report.

[The Committee adjourned

Witnesses

Tuesday 20 November 2009

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Mr Ed Husain, Co-director and Co-founder, Quilliam, **Professor Ted Cattle**, Institute for Community Cohesion, and **Ms Anna Turley**, Deputy Director, New Local Government Network Ev 1

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain, **Ms Humera Khan**, An Nisa Society, and **Mr Massoud Shadjareh**, Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission Ev 7

Ms Huda Jawad, UK Programme Director, Forward Thinking, **Ms Naz Koser**, Chief Executive, Ulfah Arts, and **Ms Ratna Lachman**, Director of JUST Ev 12

Monday 14 December 2009

Canon Guy Wilkinson, National Inter-Religious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England and Secretary for Inter-Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, **Mr Michael Whine**, Director, Defence and Group Relations, Board of Deputies of British Jews, **Dr Indarjit Singh**, OBE, Network of Sikh Organisations, and **Mr Brij-Mohan Gupta**, General Secretary, Hindu Council Ev 17

Mr Suleman Nagdi, *Prevent* Co-ordinator, Federation of Muslim Organisations, and **Mr Fahad Mohamed**, Managing Director, Somali Family Support Group Ev 22

Dr Paul Thomas, Course Leader, Diploma in Professional Studies, Youth and Community Work, University of Huddersfield, **Mr Bob McDonald**, Principal Lecturer, International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion, and **Mr Yaser Mir**, Senior Lecturer, International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion at University of Lancashire Ev 27

Monday 11 January 2010

Councillor Margaret Eaton OBE, Chairman, Local Government Association; and **Mr Robin Tuddenham**, Group Director for Safer and Stronger Communities, Calderdale Council Ev 33

Ms Sheila Lock, Chief Executive, Leicester City Council; **Ms Heather Wills**, Head of Community Cohesion & Equalities; and **Councillor Alan Rudge**, Cabinet Member, Equalities & Human Resources, Birmingham City Council Ev 38

Sir Norman Bettison QPM, ACPO lead for *Prevent*, Association of Chief Police Officers; **Mr Jonathan Charlton**, Strategic Policy Adviser, *Prevent*, Association of Police Authorities; and **Councillor Paul Murphy**, Chairman, Greater Manchester Police Authority, representing the Association of Police Authorities Ev 46

Monday 18 January 2010

Mr Minhaz Khelya, from Blackburn, **Mr Rob Clews**, from Gloucestershire, and **Ms Lisa Carroll**, from the East Midlands, Project Safe Space Steering Group, UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) Ev 53

Ms Nahid Majid, Convenor of the Tackling Extremism Together Working Group on Regional and Local Strategies, and **Mr Arun Kundnani**, Editor, Institute of Race Relations Ev 56

Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and **Mr Shahid Malik MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Communities and Local Government Ev 60

Tuesday 19 January 2010

Mr Charles Farr, Director-General of the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism Ev 72

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3	Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) (PVE 04)	Ev 89
4	Iqbal Wahhab (PVE 05)	Ev 90
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13	Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) (PVE 15)	Ev 116
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20	Somali Family Support Group (PVE 26)	Ev 141
21	Association of Police Authorities (PVE 28)	Ev 142
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36	Department for Communities and Local Government	Ev 201
37	Ms Nahid Majid and Ms Alveena Malik (PVE 64)	Ev 212
38	Birmingham Active Citizens Group (PVE 65)	Ev 215
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40	National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) (PVE 71)	Ev 223
41	Reading Council for Racial Equality (PVE 72)	Ev 227

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs has not been printed. Copies are available on the Committee's website. Copies have also been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives (www.parliament.uk/archives), and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074; email archives@parliament.uk). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council (PVE 01)
 Insted Consultancy (PVE 06)
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Second Report	Local authority investments: the role of the Financial Services Authority	HC 287
Third Report	Communities and Local Government's Departmental Annual Report 2009 and the performance of the Department in 2008–09	HC 391
Fourth Report	Beyond Decent Homes	HC 60-I
Fifth Report	FiReControl	HC 352
Sixth Report	Preventing Violent Extremism	HC 65

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First Report	Work of the Committee in 2007–08	HC 120
Second Report	Communities and Local Government's Departmental Annual Report 2008	HC 238 (<i>Cm</i> 7614)
Third Report	Housing and the Credit Crunch	HC 101 (<i>Cm</i> 7619)
Fourth Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Infrastructure Planning Commission	HC 354
Fifth Report	New Towns Follow-Up—Government Response to the Ninth Report of the Committee, Session 2007–08	HC 253
Sixth Report	Balance of Power: Central and Local Government	HC 33-I (<i>Cm</i> 7712)
Seventh Report	Local authority investments	HC 164-I (<i>HC</i> 1013)
Eighth Report	Housing and the credit crunch: follow-up	HC 568 (<i>Cm</i> 7695)
Ninth Report	Market Failure?: Can the traditional market survive?	HC 308-I (<i>Cm</i> 7721)
Tenth Report	Need and impact: planning for town centres	HC 517 (<i>HC</i> 1082)
Eleventh Report	Appointment of the Deputy Chairs of the Infrastructure Planning Commission	HC 749
Twelfth Report	Appointment of the Local Government Ombudsman and Vice-Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England	HC 1012
Thirteenth Report	The Supporting People Programme	HC 649-I(<i>Cm</i> 7790)

Session 2007–08

First Report	Coastal Towns: the Government's Second Response	HC 69
Second Report	DCLG Annual Report 2007	HC 170 (<i>Cm</i> 7335)
Third Report	Local Government Finance—Supplementary Business Rate: the Government's Response	HC 210 (<i>HC</i> 1200)
Fourth Report	Work of the Committee in 2007	HC 211

Fifth Report	Ordnance Survey	HC 268 (<i>HC 516</i>)
Sixth Report	Refuse Collection: Waste Reduction Pilots	HC 195 (<i>HC 541</i>)
Seventh Report	Existing Housing and Climate Change	HC 432 (<i>Cm 7428</i>)
Eighth Report	The Supply of Rented Housing	HC 457-I & II (<i>Cm 7326</i>)
Ninth Report	New Towns Follow-Up	HC 889
Tenth Report	Community Cohesion and Migration	HC 369-I & II (<i>Cm 7489</i>)
Eleventh Report	Planning Matters—labour shortages and skills gaps	HC 517-I & II (<i>Cm 7495</i>)
Twelfth Report	The Provision of Public Toilets	HC 636 (<i>Cm 7530</i>)

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Fourth Report	Is there a Future for Regional Government?	HC 352-I (<i>Cm 7119</i>)
Fifth Report	Refuse Collection	HC 536-I (<i>HC 1095</i>)
Sixth Report	Equality	HC 468 (<i>Cm 7246</i>)
Seventh Report	Local Government Finance—Supplementary Business Rate	HC 719
Eighth Report	Local Government Finance—Council Tax Benefit	HC 718 (<i>HC 1037</i>)

Session 2005–06

First Report	ODPM Annual Report and Accounts	HC 559 (<i>HC 1072</i>)
Second Report	Re-licensing	HC 606 (<i>Cm 6788</i>)
Third Report	Affordability and the Supply of Housing	HC 703-I (<i>Cm 6912</i>)
Fourth Report	The Fire and Rescue Service	HC 872-I (<i>Cm 6919</i>)
Fifth Report	Planning Gain Supplement	HC 1024-I (<i>Cm 7005</i>)
First Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004–05, on the ODPM Annual Reports and Accounts 2004	HC 407
Second Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2004–05, on the Role and Effectiveness of The Local Government Ombudsmen for England	HC 605
Third Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2004–05, on the Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England	HC 988

Oral evidence

Taken before the Communities and Local Government Committee on Monday 30 November 2009

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Dr John Pugh

Alison Seabeck
Mr Andy Slaughter

Witnesses: **Mr Ed Husain**, Co-director and Co-founder, Quilliam, **Professor Ted Cantle**, Institute for Community Cohesion, and **Ms Anna Turley**, Deputy Director, New Local Government Network, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Can I welcome you to this first oral session of our inquiry on the Prevent programme? Can I make it clear that when we come to write our report it will be informed not just by the oral evidence but also by the very extensive written evidence which we have received from a very wide range of organisations including obviously those of you who are here as oral witnesses. We do not have to go over absolutely everything. We will be focusing only on certain aspects. We have a lot of witnesses this afternoon so we would be very grateful if the witnesses could try to be as concise as possible. The first question that I would like to ask each of you about is to explore some of the concerns that have been expressed about whether it is appropriate for Prevent to be part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy and in particular whether CLG as a department should be so closely identified with counter-terrorism.

Professor Cantle: My view is that it should be entirely separate. I think the Prevent agenda has had a great deal of difficulty with the Muslim communities that we have been working with, precisely because it has been seen as part of the counter-terrorism strategy, because it has associated the Muslim communities—and there are many different Muslim communities—with terror, with a problem as such. The Prevent agenda really should be entirely separate. There needs to be some relationship but it has to be a separate agenda. I think the counter-terrorism strategy obviously needs to have its own programme and its own dedicated team, but the problem with the Prevent agenda is that it has been solely focused on the Muslim community. It needs to be widened out. It needs to deal with all potential acts of violence, whether from the far right or other communities, and to be part of an ongoing cohesion strategy which recognises that violence is not just found in the Muslim community, that problems exist in all communities, and that leadership and other issues are also a problem in other communities. I think this is the fundamental issue really. I think it would be very helpful to disengage the two and to see Prevent as part of community cohesion and have an entirely separate counter-terrorism strategy.

Q2 Chair: We are going to explore in subsequent questions the issue about whether it should be

targeted only at Muslims, so perhaps we could not pursue that one at the moment.

Ms Turley: I would certainly agree with Professor Cantle. I think you really have to have a quite separate approach between what is an intelligence-based security effort that is targeted, where we know there is a fundamental issue, as opposed to a much more broad brush community cohesion approach which is positive, which brings communities together rather than trying to drive a wedge between them, which the Prevent agenda has often been seen as doing. From the local authority perspective, there is real and serious concern that many communities simply do not want to engage in this programme and simply do not want to accept this money because it is seen as stigmatising, as stereotyping all the Islamic community as potential terrorists and actually is being used to almost drive a wedge between local authorities, local government and the broader community itself. At the moment there is a lack of clarity and I think the important thing here is just being clear about what is intelligence based and targeted, where there are real issues, and what is a broad brush approach to bringing communities together and having a positive means to community cohesion.

Mr Husain: I think I disagree with the premise that somehow there are Muslim communities out there that do not welcome Prevent. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Prevent funding at least has been able to drive a discussion forward that otherwise would have been left on the margins. Should Prevent be part of the Government counter-terrorism strategy? Absolutely it should be because, without Prevent, we are consequently left with pursue, protect and prepare. In order to make sure that the others are bolstered, Prevent has to be part of that. I have no doubt in my mind that Prevent is a crucial part of that entire CT strategy. Should CLG have a role in countering terrorism or playing an active part in Prevent? More thinking needs to be done on it. My hunch is to say CLG should have less of a role in the counter-terrorism part and perhaps more of a role in doing some of the things CLG does so well, building up capacities, women's work and so on and so forth. Much of that has been looked at through the Prevent prism and it should not be. In that I am in agreement with the other two panellists.

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Ms Turley: If I could support that, I do want to be clear as well. There has been some really good work done by Prevent. I would like to get that on the record. There are some excellent projects that have been funded around the country that are supporting particularly young women's groups and others, enabling some Muslim communities to find their voice and also in some areas encouraging the local authority and the police to reach out to communities they would not necessarily have engaged with before. That is a positive thing to come out of it. As long as that trust is built, there is clarity and good communication.

Q3 Mr Slaughter: Is each of you of the view that the Prevent programme as it currently exists is directed primarily and exclusively at the Muslim community and primarily and exclusively at religious aspects of the Muslim community? Whatever good works that may be done—I am sure we probably all agree that investing in whatever social, cohesive or perhaps building programmes may be very good—is that how you see it at present, as specifically being directed at targeting what is considered a potential evil that could come out of the Muslim community and religious parts of the Muslim community? Is that your understanding?

Professor Cattle: I think the irony is that the Prevent agenda reinforces the Muslim identity because it only approaches Muslims through their faith rather than recognising that everyone, all communities, all people, have lots of different identities and multiple identities. Prevent does not engage with them as parents, as employees, as members of any other type of activity at all. It makes the community more inward. It creates the impression that the only thing that the government is interested in is their Muslimness. That is exactly the opposite of the approach that we should be taking, which is to try and recognise that members of the Muslim community, like all other communities, have multiple interests and have the ability to engage at a lot of different levels. There is a real irony in the Prevent agenda in that it actually strengthens the faith identity. This has been criticised by academics and, as we mention in our evidence, and by practitioners. It is creating almost completely the opposite ethos to the one that we really want to champion.

Ms Turley: The Government has made some attempts to try and take some of that almost branding away from it. I know some have tried to change the emphasis so that it took out a lot of references from guidance towards this being targeted at Muslim communities. It has been very clear historically as the programme has developed that that was the fundamental purpose of it or the target community. It is very clear through things like the national indicator and so on that it is aimed at Islamist fundamentalism rather than being a broader approach. We also know that the funding is allocated in a very broad brush way, based on the number of Muslims in an area rather than on a specific risk-based, intelligence approach. That for me sends out a fundamental message about how the approach has been.

Mr Husain: I am not known for tip-toeing around this agenda so I am going to be brutally blunt and say who else should it be targeted towards? Let us be open. The 7/7 bombers came from, whether we like it or not, a Muslim background. The suicide bombing videos that they left behind talked clearly about their Islamic identity. They talked about their people being under attack in Iraq. They identified with a misperception of the Ummah, that includes only Muslims whereas the Prophet Mohammed's Ummah in Medina included Jews, Christians and others. Islam and an understanding of Islam, which we at Quilliam refer to as "Islamism" backed up by academics and Islamists themselves, is at the core of this agenda. To say that somehow we are going to undermine Islamist terrorists without talking about the Muslim community somehow seems, to me at least to be a folly. Is Prevent targeting Muslim communities? It should target those communities in which there is a serious terrorism problem. My hunch is at times it is not targeting those communities in particular and hence this broad brush approach. That comes about as a result of not understanding where the problem lies.

Q4 Mr Slaughter: I think you are missing the point I am trying to make in targeting. There are lots of instances of terrorism coming either from Irish Republican terrorism or far right terrorism in the country. The approach to that is not necessarily to target Catholic communities in Ireland to make them see the error of their ways or to target people on the far right to politically re-educate them. There is a fairly broad brush approach in terms of investment in a generalised way but with a target which is very specific. I do not think you can possibly disagree that if there is evidence of individuals or cells or what have you of terrorism, whatever they are, to deal with that by giving lump sums of money to communities which might somewhere contain them, does that not seem to be a rather wrong-headed approach? In addition to that, if we are moving anyway from that, are we not moving in the wrong direction by now saying, "Actually, we will include all types of extremism" when in reality the focus is still on Islamic terrorism, so we are getting vaguer in our targeting, for what reason I do not understand other than political correctness possibly; and yet we are sending out completely the wrong messages, both to the Muslim community who may think they are being tarred with a particular brush and to perhaps the wider community who are puzzled about what this programme is actually about.

Mr Husain: I think if you speak to Joe Muslim in Bradford or Joe Muslim in Leicester, you would be hard pressed for them to come out and say, "We are somehow the targets of the state's preventing terrorism or preventing violent extremism agenda." Most Muslims, like everybody else, get on with their lives. Those who say that the "community", again a misnomer, has a huge grudge or a huge problem with this tend to come from a certain political background, tend to have a certain axe to grind and make all these noises about Prevent undermining

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Muslims, marginalising Muslims. It is not. What it is doing is undermining and marginalising a group of people who have a certain background. If those people were not being upset by the Prevent agenda, then there is something wrong with the Prevent agenda. I agree with you that it should not be a broad brush, *carte blanche* approach. What it should be doing and what it has not been doing in parts is identifying the narrative and the ideology behind terrorism and targeting that. It does not have to be targeting against all Muslims and I do not think that is where it is at the moment.

Q5 Chair: Who should it be targeted at then? If you are agreed that it should not be at all Muslims, how should you target it then?

Mr Husain: Terrorism does not occur in a vacuum, as we will all agree. It responds to a certain mood music. It responds to a certain narrative. It wants to advocate a certain cause. That cause, that narrative, that mood music, is something along the lines as follows: that the West is somehow at war with “Islam” and “Muslim” countries, that somehow we British Muslims do not belong here in Britain, that we are a fifth column community that is waiting for a caliph to arrive somewhere in the Middle East to which we will respond. The narrative believes in overthrowing every single Arab government and imposing some sort of Islamic state. It believes in the destruction of Israel. It does not believe in the freedoms that we have, either in Britain or in Bangladesh, which I have just come back from over the weekend. That narrative, that ideology, is what needs puncturing and dismantling. The funding for any kind of work, in my opinion, should go for work that is driven against that counter—ideology that is driven against bolstering a liberal, democratic, secular British public space. In whichever parts of Britain, Muslim or otherwise—thus far it happens to be Muslim—where that narrative is strong, that is where the funding should go and the counter ideological work should be supported to undermine that ideological narrative.

Q6 Chair: Professor Cantle, just before you answer, I suspect you might actually agree with some of that but would suggest that there are other types of extremism that would also challenge the same values, maybe from a different perspective.

Professor Cantle: I do not think anybody is saying that, where there is a problem associated with sections of the Muslim community and a link to terrorism, that is not challenged. Of course it should be and of course there should be a direct approach to that, but the Prevent agenda is solely on that particular area. What members of the Muslim communities and other communities want is to see a focus on violence and extremism in those other communities as well. We have been to plenty of local authority areas where we have been told by the police about how those associated with the far right are involved in bomb making activities. There has been a number of recent arrests for example, and there are a number of other areas with violent extremism, which are completely separate from the

Muslim community. I think we need to see a proportionate, risk based approach which runs across all communities and, in so doing, it will help to build the trust of the Muslim communities in that this is not just about them. We are not just concerned about the violence associated with that area. We are trying to be open and fair and transparent in the way we deal with this. At the moment it tends to be counterproductive.

Q7 Dr Pugh: The government endeavours to identify the risk factors associated with radicalisation and produces lists of the kind of things that might make people prone to engage in extreme political action and violent political action. How accurately and successfully do you think they do this?

Ms Turley: If I could just offer a local authority perspective on this, from the conversations we have had, I think local authorities feel they do not really have enough of the toolkit and available evidence. I know it is early days in all of our understanding of these issues but certainly local authorities I think are struggling. They are responsible for targets about reducing vulnerability of a local area to extremism, but they actually do not themselves necessarily have the toolkit and the understanding of what these risk factors are and how to handle them. Often there is a failure to share evidence, information and intelligence with police and counterterrorism organisations to really enable them to make the decisions they need and to allow them to follow a risk based approach. I think local authorities feel they do not necessarily have the toolkits they need to understand some of these pathways towards extremism.

Q8 Dr Pugh: What would a good toolkit look like? I read through some of these futures and some of the futures do not divide terrorists and things like having an ideology that makes you prone and susceptible to commit terrorism and things like that. When you have got that far already, you are practically easily identifiable as a terrorist. What the scheme presumably purports to identify is those people who are at risk, who are not necessarily overtly claiming to be terrorists or terrorist inclined at the moment. How useful are the risk factors stated in the CONTEST strategy?

Professor Cantle: I think they are not particularly useful. There is no typecast terrorist or potential terrorist. We do not know in truth what the risk factors are. If you look at the evidence submitted by CLG, ACPO and others, they make it perfectly clear that there have been some general academic studies which have tried to identify risk factors associated with terrorism, but there is not a clear typecast. On the one hand, I think it would be extremely difficult to say if a person comes from this background, they have this sort of personality; they have been exposed to this sort of radical ideology. That just does not exist. Even if it did, we have to ask who are the agencies that will identify people with those risk factors. To my mind, the only people who possibly can do that are the counter-terrorist team and again disassociate people who are the amateurs within

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local authorities, schools and others from that role, because otherwise they themselves I think are going to be severely criticised for pointing the finger at people without really any understanding of the risk factors associated with it. It is an extremely difficult task.

Q9 Dr Pugh: So there is no accurate method of identifying those people who are the real objects of this strategy, as it were. Is there not a serious danger that money will be spent in vain? You will just simply look at communities that may not be cohesive with the rest of society, who may not particularly be terrorist prone and put money in that may be achieving some good effects but not the effect that the strategy has in mind. Could I ask Mr Husain his opinion on that?

Mr Husain: The latter part of your statement is true, that a significant amount of funds has more or less gone to Muslims and others, primarily Muslims who are not extreme. If you have projects going on, you are not necessarily extreme, here is your pot of funding to carry on doing whatever it is you are doing. The money has not gone in, in the amounts that it should have done, to the counter ideology, the destroying the narrative strand of the work. That is not because the government—when I say “the government” I think I am talking more here about the Home Office or the Foreign Office—wanted to put money into those projects. It has been more a case of those partners, those projects, just not being available. This is a very murky, very blurry area. Just like most of us, most Muslims do not understand the causes of extremism and do not understand what makes a terrorist tick. Most Muslims, like everybody else, do not know what it means to put up a counter narrative. As a result, the huge amount of money that the government has been offering to people is being grabbed by people who have been doing work previously which was not related to counter ideology.

Q10 Dr Pugh: Your organisation receives some money from the government, does it not?

Mr Husain: It does.

Q11 Dr Pugh: How much, as a matter of interest?

Mr Husain: About £850,000 per year.

Q12 Dr Pugh: Do you think that money is best spent on counter ideology, if I can put it like that? I would have thought it was quite tricky to spend money in order to change ideas.

Mr Husain: It is a multiple of factors. It is not about just changing ideas. It is about challenging current ideas. No one can guarantee that it will change ideas. The work we do in Syria, in Pakistan, in Bangladesh and communities here in Britain, university campuses, in the media—we employ 17 members of staff—is all based on at least 30 projects which are to do with countering the narrative along the lines that I mentioned earlier. I think more of that should happen because ultimately, as Professor Cattle rightly said, it is not about one’s background or one’s propensity; it is about what one is offered in the

afterlife. There is a religious aspect to that. No suicide bombers, whether it is in Palestine or here in Britain, believe themselves to be suicide bombers. They believe themselves to be what they call Shahids or martyrs. They are people who see themselves as part of the martyrdom operation. Unless we have the confidence as Muslims and others to say, like Sheikh Hama Yusuf Hanson said after the 9/11 atrocity, if there are any martyrs involved here, it is the innocent people who died and it is the fire workers who are involved; it is not about those people who think that they are killing themselves, being martyrs and being rewarded in the next life, my contention is thus far among UK Muslims and other communities globally we are not at a situation where we are saying those who have become suicide bombers are not heaven bound. If anything, they are hell bound. We are not at that level of discourse. Unless that mood music changes around suicide bombers, they will continue to be seen as martyrdom operators and heaven bound.

Q13 Chair: What evidence is there that other voices within the Muslim community itself, however theologically well qualified, have actually ever managed to stop one of these individuals choosing to follow a different version of Islam?

Mr Husain: What are often referred to as deradicalisation programmes at deradicalisation centres in Saudi Arabia, in Yemen, in Egypt and recently in Libya have come up with huge successes to the extent that ideologues who went into prison for the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian President, or ideologues who went into prison for belonging to Jihadi organisations spent time with the result of their exposure to mainstream traditional Muslim scholars as well as political thinkers have written entire books now refuting that ideology. Egypt is a classic example, Libya most recently and Saudi Arabia, not necessarily producing books but other indications that people have been stopped from the terrorist pathway which they were on previously.

Q14 Dr Pugh: What I was going to ask you to follow through is about the socio-economic correlates of being terrorist inclined, if I can put it like that. You seem to be suggesting that there may not be any, that the people who may have the particular ideology that leads to terrorism or the Muslim version of the ideology that leads to terrorism may as easily be unemployed with no skills, but equally they may be young, qualified doctors. Almost anybody is susceptible within the faith groups to this particular misguided ideology and the job is to combat it ideologically because it has no socio-economic route. Do you not see any connection between people’s social background and favouring an ideology?

Mr Husain: No. I wish I could. I really wish I could. Osama bin Laden comes from one of the wealthiest backgrounds in Saudi Arabia. Ayman al-Zawahiri comes from one of the wealthiest backgrounds in Egypt. Some of the suicide bombers in this country came from very well integrated families. The man

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who killed Daniel Pearl—I forget his name now—came from the London School of Economics and before that went to a private school. If suicide bombing and a disgruntlement with the current world order were to be linked to mere socio-economics, then we should be seeing a lot more suicide bombers come from Bangladesh for example, but we do not see that happening because it is not the key motivating factor. The motivating factor is a certain reading of world politics, a certain recruitment by an ideological network and a promise by a religious text that says if you give yourself up in God's way you will be rewarded in the afterlife. Unless those three ideological underpinnings are challenged, no matter how much we concentrate on socio-economics, I am afraid we will not be anywhere near containing this problem.

Professor Cantle: I agree that there is no correlation between socio-economic status and attraction to terrorism, at least as far as the Muslim community is concerned and the present association with terrorism. There have been other studies in relation to other communities which have links—alienation, deprivation—to other forms of violent extremism, but in this particular area I have certainly seen no studies that link it with socio-economic status. Therefore, as I was saying earlier, there is not a typecast and it is important I think that we approach the Prevent agenda through a much broader spectrum than we have at the moment in just a single minded focus on the Muslim community.

Q15 Dr Pugh: From what you say, Professor Cantle, I imagine that you might even find people who are politically radical that have no ideology to speak of. They are just driven to aggression and whatever. Just going back to Mr Husain for a second, if the government department charged with dealing with social factors knows how to do that, it can provide more resources, a community centre or something like that. It seems to address those issues. If they are asked to fight a battle of ideas or to fund a battle of ideas, it is more problematic for them to do. They are not used to doing it and it is hard to find out whether you have been successful, is it not?

Ms Turley: I think that is why a lot of local authorities are struggling. They are falling back on safeguarding agendas, wellbeing agendas and often anti-poverty agendas because that is what they know in terms of protecting the vulnerable. They are not properly equipped and do not have the right support and the right training to focus money on these issues, or the right links with the security services.

Q16 Dr Pugh: How within Muslim communities is the Prevent agenda seen? Do they see it as just another mechanism by which some degree of social support and effort at social cohesion takes place?

Ms Turley: It varies. In our experience from a local authority perspective, some find they have built excellent links. They have reached out to communities they have not traditionally engaged with. Others simply will not engage, do not want anything to do with the money and call it so-called blood money and are using it almost themselves as a

tool to soak up alienation, fear and mistrust of the state, of the government, local government public services. It has just become a running sore, I think, in building relations between local authorities and communities in many areas.

Professor Cantle: I think local authorities are trying to avoid using the label “Prevent” in their programmes. They are trying to integrate Prevent moneys into other programmes so that it no longer appears as though it is coming from purely the one perspective. They are trying to broaden it out. They are being demanding—and have had some success—in applying it to far right and other groups. I think the recent, very welcome guidance from John Denham to local authorities in August to broaden out the Prevent agenda has helped that but, by and large, we found all Muslim communities very reluctant to engage with the Prevent agenda. Some have, as you have heard, I think for different reasons, but there is this huge reluctance because of the single minded focus on them.

Chair: Can we just explore a bit further the local authority or central direction angle on this?

Q17 Alison Seabeck: Has government struck the right balance between central and local government involvement in this programme or not?

Mr Husain: That really is the nub of the matter. The thrust of the big picture set by a Whitehall understanding of national issues is more or less, I think, in the right direction. The direction of travel is right but when it is filtered down to local authorities, local councils, local community groups that are able to hold hostage local authorities with all sorts of emotional blackmail about political correctness, the rights and wrongs, favouritism of one community over another and insecurity, being branded a terrorist and all the rest of it, I think that is where at local level it often goes wrong. It is not just because communities are holding local government hostage over emotional blackmail and all the rest of it. I think it is also to do with the fact that Britain today lives in a post-religious, post-ideological space in which most people here in Britain find Christianity difficult, never mind understanding Islam and never mind understanding extremists within Islam. I think the challenge we are setting people, many of whom come from—forgive me for saying so—white, middle class backgrounds is such that they find this whole terrain very difficult to comprehend. As a result of all those factors, you see the muddled thinking and the clunky behaviour at local authority level that has appeared across the country.

Ms Turley: I would try to defend local government at this stage because I do think many of them often know their areas much better than central government. They know the challenges they face. They desperately want to be the place shapers, the people who can protect the vulnerable and their communities and keep their public safe. That is what they are there to do. I think they want the funding and they want to use it in the right way to reach out to these communities and I think it is right that it is done through the area based work and they have the flexibility to decide how that is used. However, you

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have to have the proper support from the police, from the security services, to help them understand where to target this, how to use it and where the problems are, because they are struggling at the moment without knowing where the hot spots are really. There is a willingness there. There is a desire to do better and there is a strong community basis which you can only get at local level. It cannot be dictated from the centre, but you also have to have that communication fed back up as well. Central government and the central security services have to know what is happening at local level as well and I think it is part of the disconnect we have in this country between central and local that we are not seeing proper communication going through.

Q18 Alison Seabeck: Much of the evidence says that people are seeing this money as being state down, directing local communities as to how they spend it. We have heard from Ms Turley saying we need to have a bit more freedom so that we can spread it more widely. Mr Husain, I think you said this: it is not just focused on Muslim communities, but we look more widely at other potential groupings that might be drawn into terrorism of one sort or another. Do you see a way through this if we stay with the Prevent programme, or do you just feel that central government ought to offer local authorities a bit more flexibility in this field?

Professor Cattle: I think there has to be a separation of the Prevent agenda from the counter-terrorism strategy. I think the counter-terrorism strategy has to be much more nationally directed, police led. What local authorities should focus on is a much broader programme of preventing any violent activity in any community. The tension monitoring arrangements which they have in place at the moment are comprehensive. When we talk to local authorities, often they are worried about gang violence or violence between different communities or, yes, far right violence. They have to try and reconcile all of those different pressures and deal with them in a proportionate way. They therefore have much broader based programmes and would find it very difficult to focus on some of the very specific concerns of Muslim communities without getting drawn into some of the counterterrorism activities. Bear in mind that in London there are 300 spoken in London schools. In most of our principal cities there are 200. Even in small market towns like Boston, Lincolnshire, there are 65 languages. Those local authorities and others have to manage the interface between so many different communities. I think it is absolutely crucial that they are allowed to get on with the Prevent work on a broad based approach and that specific Muslim centric programmes are directed much more nationally and kept separate as part of the counter-terrorism strategy.

Q19 Mr Slaughter: I am persuaded that the current intention and actuality of Prevent are entirely misconceived from both ends of the spectrum. I am not entirely persuaded by your alternative, if I have understood it, which is that it is very clearly directed ideologically at re-education or persuasion. That

sounds as if it might work in Saudi but I am not sure that that is going to work. It might be even worse. We get a lot of briefings from your organisation and other organisations. A lot of those seem to be constantly critical of other organisations and what they say or individuals in that way, which may be interesting in a technical way but how on earth is that going to resolve issues of terrorism in particular communities?

Mr Husain: It is part of the process. If the thinking of Muslim organisations now does not end, the wallowing in victimhood, the blaming on foreign policy, the desire to be seen constantly as bullied, if that is not changed and the narrative reshaped, if the discussion does not occur and we do not see the bickering that you are seeing at the moment, I do not think we will be in a healthier space. If, God forbid, there is a terrorist bomb that goes off in the next two or three months, I think people rightly will ask what did people like us in this room do about it. In order to have the right answers at that time, I think the Prevent programme must stay. The options without the Prevent programme would be to somehow talk about this or put the pressures on necessary places which to me seem inconceivable.

Q20 Mr Betts: Can we just talk about the race relations industry? We have an Islamic experts industry now which you are part of. In relying on advice from people like yourselves, is this really getting views that reflect the views of the Muslim community as a whole?

Mr Husain: Why do you go out and seek opinions of the Muslim community? The Muslim community is no different from any other community. Muslims are British citizens like everybody else. Their concerns are the same as anyone else's concerns. I think the desire from Westminster and Whitehall to see a different expectation for Muslims is wrong. Where we have a problem is among the ideologues. That is where the focus should be. Therefore it is wrong I think to bring the entire 2.5 million Muslim community into all of this other than to say that they continue what hopefully they are doing in rejecting the narrative of extremism and terrorism. There is no need to have this mindset of "take us to your leader". In other words, show us the representative groups. That is part of the problem. When we go out looking for representatives, we find normally male, middle aged, middle class, politically engaged people come forward.

Professor Cattle: I think what we have to do is to show that we are not just interested in the Muslim community as Muslims. They suffer disadvantage. We need to tackle some of the inequalities. We need to tackle the fact that many of them, rather like young people more generally, do not vote. There is a democratic deficit and we need to tackle them much more widely, as with all other communities. At the moment, the Prevent agenda creates the impression that we are just interested in one thing. We are pursuing that through the Muslim identity, yes, with the relevant experts as part of that process, rather

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than being interested in the things which we should be interested in, in other aspects of their identity and disadvantage.

Q21 Mr Betts: You all think that you are right to be advising government on these matters obviously. Are there any organisations government should refuse to engage with and on what criteria?

Ms Turley: I guess I am here representing the local authority perspective of those who are given the responsibility of using this money and trying to help build the kinds of communities that we want to live in. They have a very difficult balance to strike. They are not there to represent any particular portion. They have to be very careful who they deal with, that they do not always deal with the same people. They have to be fair in the way they distribute resources. All these pressures on them in the way they try and manage their local places. Going back to the original question, I do not think they would see themselves as having a particular message on the Muslim community but about their places as local areas that have identities and the kinds of communities they want to support and build.

Q22 Chair: The question was: are there any groups that local authorities should not be engaging with.

Professor Cattle: In my view, no. I think you have to have the widest possible engagement with groups and that means sometimes dealing with very marginalised, difficult groups. I am thinking here across all communities in order to try and make sure that you understand the pressures on people from all different perspectives. I think it is extremely

dangerous to try and refuse any particular group because you are obviously going to fail to hear some of the voices that probably are the ones that you most need to hear.

Mr Husain: Much depends on what you mean by “engagement”. If engagement means financial backing, then I think there should be limits on who the taxpayer funds. If engagement means sharing a platform with, then I think it depends on what a politician or a government minister is saying at that platform. If they are bolstering the case for parliamentary democracy against those—and they exist—who stand against parliamentary democracy, then the framing of the debate needs to be such that endorsement is not given but critical engagement happens. Much depends on what we mean by “engagement”, when it happens and why it happens. I think it is difficult for us to give a straightforward yes or no answer.

Ms Turley: We have to remember the importance of local, political leadership as well. Local authorities have to make these decisions all the time. If they choose to take a difficult position, then they will face their public at the next election. Those are the kinds of things they have to juggle. I think the fundamental thing here comes back down to the point about information sharing. Local authorities do not always know who they are dealing with until perhaps something reaches the papers. The importance of working with the police and intelligence services is absolutely critical for them to know who they are funding, who they are working with and enabling them to make the decisions they need to make.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Witnesses: **Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari**, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain, **Ms Humera Khan**, An Nisa Society, and **Mr Massoud Shadjareh**, Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission, gave evidence.

Q23 Chair: I think the three of you were here in the previous session so you heard what I said about how we will take into account the written evidence as well as the oral evidence. We do not have to cover everything in your oral evidence. We are time limited, obviously. The first question again is whether you, from your viewpoint, think it is appropriate that Prevent is part of the CONTEST, counter-terrorism strategy and whether CLG should be involved.

Dr Bari: I think anything that conflates community cohesion with security has problems. Anything that has conflation of community cohesion and security has a problem because community cohesion is a totally different thing. So far, what we have seen is that CONTEST has been conflated with community cohesion is what it is about. We have serious reservations about this. Our report from our FES from the community is that it is counterproductive.

Ms Khan: I am in place of Khalida Khan who is our director. She is not feeling well so I am here in her place. She is the expert so if there is anything in particular that I cannot answer then she will have to get back to you. As an organisation we feel very strongly that Prevent should not be part of

community cohesion for a number of different reasons which have been stated in our submissions already, but primarily for the reason that a whole community cannot be made responsible for the acts of a minority. It is unprecedented in this country. I personally have grown up in the London Borough of Brent. I lived through the troubles at the time of the IRA and also the race riots in the seventies and eighties. During all those times never was the entire community made responsible or accountable for the actions of a few. What is also unprecedented at this point, following 7/7, is that there are no real, meaningful strategies to work at looking at where the barriers have been within the local engagement with communities, what is leading to the disengagement of Muslim communities, the radicalisation on the ground, why are our young people susceptible to certain types of ideas. We have not had any kind of real, meaningful engagement at the local level to understand that. The government and local authorities have lost the opportunity certainly from the time of the Cattle review, which I was part of, of not identifying institutional Islamophobia. We did hear people talk about that across the country when we went visiting but the

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report did not reflect that. I think we lost an opportunity at the time of the Cantle review to actually take the bull by the horns on the issue of institutional Islamophobia to have some policies which may not have prevented 7/7 but would have created the engagement with local authority that we would have needed in order to make the Muslim communities feel that they have a stake in this society and maybe that they can work more cohesively, constructively and more harmoniously with the authorities who are dealing with the crisis that we have had since 7/7.

Q24 Chair: Mr Shadjareh, can I maybe ask you to amplify on what I asked before? As well as considering whether Prevent should be part of the counter-terrorism strategy—and I suspect you are going to say no—how do you think that cohesion work might contribute in any case to reducing levels of radicalisation?

Mr Shadjareh: I personally think that one of the main problems is alienation of the Muslim community which has amplified in the last few years. If anything, rather than trying to address that issue, all these policies including Prevent have alienated the community even more so, identifying the whole of the community as possible terrorists with the criminalisation of the community, creating them into this outside community. Mosques, centres and organisations, when they are being asked to bid for Prevent, have to acknowledge there is a major problem in the community. Most of them do not believe there is. There is this double standard both in the community and also on the government's part. On the government's part we are also hearing that this is not a problem with the Muslim community, but the way that they have been dealt with is taking a whole blanket approach to the whole of the Muslim community. I think it is counterproductive. Also I think it counterproductive from the point of view that when you are dealing with intelligence and intelligence agencies they need to talk to the very people who are more likely to be a threat. Prevent excludes those people. In some ways the two things are completely counterproductive, because the intelligence needs to go to those specific groups. Prevent is saying that those groups should not be approached. I believe that it is counterproductive on many levels but, more than anything, I think one of the main problems has been from the beginning. We failed to identify what we mean by "extremism". I think that what we are really talking about is trying to stop a means of violence to address issues of concern or issues of grievance. There has been a failure to understand that aspect. We are dealing with a much wider, blanket problem or perceived problem in the Muslim community.

Q25 Alison Seabeck: Do you think therefore that the attitude of the non-at risk groups towards communities that are seen as more likely to be or perceived as harbouring violent extremists needs to be dealt with more vigorously? Clearly, their attitude in a sense can increase feelings of disengagement and exclusion within minority communities.

Mr Shadjareh: Yes.

Q26 Alison Seabeck: We are not looking across the piece is what you are saying?

Mr Shadjareh: Yes. I agree. We have failed to address this main issue of engaging the community. As my colleagues were also saying, I think the whole of our attitude of anti-terrorism and Prevent or even cohesion has been on exclusion rather than inclusion of the communities. That is very dangerous. We need to understand that every single Muslim organisation, with the exception of very, very few, condemned this and they were partners in fighting this. They excluded a whole lot of them. We only wanted to listen to the music that we like to listen to. Afterwards we went into it further and created an organisation that will specifically play the music that we want to listen to. That is really not going to address the issue. If anything, we will exclude the main community even further. Something needs to be done to make everyone a stakeholder in our society because that is very important.

Q27 Chair: Can I just tease out this point slightly more? I think we would all agree that we should be trying to engage every part of the British community in the wider community. That is what community cohesion is all about, but what I am not quite clear about is whether you are suggesting that by so doing, in relation to the Muslim community, that would have any effect whatsoever on the small number of Muslims who are engaged in violence.

Ms Khan: In a sense, the Prevent strategy is already a strategy once the horse has bolted. It is already too late. The 7/7 bombings were symbolic of the fact that the lack of investment in the past has resulted in this tragedy. My own personal view is that there is no reason why any Muslim in Britain should be prone to extremist violence. In theory we do not have the circumstances that should lead to that. Therefore, by having this prevent strategy where there have been many opportunities in the past that government could have created the infrastructure for engagement, it has left it too late to do it at 7/7. I already mentioned the Cantle review team and the report that came from that. In fact, it goes before that. It went with the failure of the Race Relations Act to recognise that communities are very diverse and needs are not just based on race. The Muslim community has been spiralling into this socio-economic decline and also intellectual engagement, let us say, with local authorities or any kind of establishment here, because it is not felt that it has been understood and able to come in, in a way that is authentic to it. While I agree with Ted that we need to look at a local level, we need to look at the general issues that face all communities. You can only do that to a specific community if it has the facility to do that. For example, with the white working class and low educational achievement of African-Caribbean communities, we see statistics which show again and again the lack of achievement, the criminalisation, the whole range of things that are making those communities feel that they cannot engage and they cannot move forward. The census

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has showed us statistics upon statistics that the Muslim community are at the lower end of everything. There is no engagement. There is no moving forward because a lot of their social needs come from the fact that they are a faith based community. Therefore, it is not about religion. It is about the fact that some of the social needs, some of the criteria of our life that we live by, are shaped by our faith. Local authorities as such in the statutory sector do not understand that. They have not been able to engage with us in a way that makes sense. Therefore what happens is the Muslim community vote with their feet. They step away. They do not engage. For example, if they go into schools and they feel the schools do not understand their children because they do not understand certain aspects of their way of life or something, they will disengage their children from being involved in all the different facets that our education system enables. That is the beginning of many different levels of disengagement. We have had experience around the country when we have done training and things that the statutory sector, people working in the front line, have themselves held what I would call institutional Islamophobic attitudes about the Muslim community, perpetuating stereotypes, projecting them onto their Muslim community in a way that further creates this problem.

Q28 Chair: Can we try and focus back on the question I asked in the first place, which is: are you contending that that disengagement of the Muslim community as a whole has then contributed to the small number of people within the Muslim community who have involved themselves in outright violence? Yes or no?

Ms Khan: It has contributed but I am not saying it is necessarily the major factor. It created the arena for young people to disengage. I am trying to explain to you. The personal dis-engagement did not happen overnight so the process of re-engagement is not going to happen overnight. If you want to re-engage, you have to re-engage in the proper mechanism.

Q29 Chair: If you are suggesting that the disengagement of the Muslim community as a whole has somehow contributed to a small number within the Muslim community becoming violent, that would suggest that re-engaging with the entire Muslim community, which is what Prevent is trying to do in a sense, is actually a good strategy.

Ms Khan: No, because what it is trying to do is re-engage with the Muslim community on the issue of counterterrorism.

Q30 Mr Betts: How do we then engage in government bodies, whether they are national or local, with the Muslim community? There has been criticism in some of the evidence we have had about the representative organisations so-called that the government does engage with and the feeling that perhaps they are not representative and are not really engaging at all properly with the Muslim community as a whole. To engage with the Muslim community

as a whole is a massive job, is it not, because you say there are so many different variations of interests and views within that community?

Dr Bari: Muslim communities are very diverse and evolving. Before the disturbances in the three northern cities in 2001 this community was praised by everyone for what it has been doing, contributions in many areas, in spite of all the difficulties. 7/7 suddenly came and there must be some reasons for that. There is no reason for violence or terrorism or criminality but unfortunately our community also has a disproportionate number of the prison population compared to our own population. That is the reality, for whatever reason. There will always be a minority of people who would probably go for this violence, extremism or terrorism. What all of us should do, community organisations, communities, the government and everyone, is try to engage with everyone who does not break the law. That is the important thing. What is happening with the Prevent agenda is there are community organisations they support but they are not representative enough so produce some new organisation. Some new organisation comes with no background of serving the community or working in the community and the money is spent. This has created an envy from the other communities. I work with different types of faith groups. Many non-Muslim faith groups envy us that we are getting lots of money. At the same time, it is also creating internal division in our community, envy within the community, because money is going to certain groups of people because they probably listen to the government. This may not be right. Other organisations may represent this chunk of the community. They do not get anything or they do not apply for that. There is an environment of envy and lack of confidence has developed because of this Prevent funding.

Mr Shadjareh: I think the first basis of engagement is on the right basis. The way that we are being engaged as the Muslim community now is we are looked at as either terrorists, possible terrorists or possible future terrorists etc. On those premises you cannot really have a positive engagement with any community. The problem is, as my colleagues were saying, that real infrastructure of inter-communication between local authorities and the community has failed. Also, there is another issue that we have failed to understand, that there is a perception, although sometimes denied, that Islam is the cause of terrorism. We are looking at the concept of the philosophy that the end justifies the means as a main cause of terrorism. Any community or any group believes that the end justifies the means. Then they would end up becoming a terrorist. Indeed, within the religious community of not just Muslims and others, the concept that the end justifies the means is non-existent because as a religious faith group, like others, we believe that we are responsible for the means. The end is in the hands of God. Therefore, Islam in this form is practised by a majority, not specific groups that you target or engage with. I believe that. I think that has been

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again another opportunity that has been missed as a means of addressing this problem. The whole thing has been mixed up with cohesion etc., anti-terrorism, Prevent and so on. Now, we have a policy which is alienating people. Alienation does not automatically turn to terrorism but alienation does contribute to some who might become terrorists and some might just go into themselves and create other problems in our society. We keep on saying that people should not have grievances. People in the real world do have grievances. Even if the grievances are not appropriate, still they have the right of having those grievances. What we could ask as a society is to make sure that those grievances are going to be addressed within the means of civil society and democracy rather than anything else. For that, we need to create and support organisations that are getting involved in the community, promoting that sort of concept rather than just saying that you should become passive and therefore be a good citizen. That is another area that is really counterproductive to what we are trying to achieve, getting people engaged and giving them the tools of being good citizens.

Q31 Mr Betts: I live in a constituency where there is a mixed population in part of it from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and people originating some years ago. There is not overt racial tension, by and large. People do live side by side in the same street but they live completely separate lives. They probably never go in their next door neighbour's house. They do not socialise. They do not go to the same sports clubs. They do not play football or cricket together. Obviously these are different religions, if you have any religion at all. I just wonder how you get engagement there because they are communities who are not engaging with each other but they are living as part of the same community. If it is what causes alienation, the fact that people are not engaged in that way, how do we deal with it?

Mr Shadjareh: It is a problem. I go and give talks in the schools and when I go into schools I find in one classroom the black children in one corner and Bangladeshis in one corner. They are all sitting down in their own corners. This is a challenge going beyond the issue of terrorism. It should be addressed. After the Oldham riot, we were suggesting a lot of projects needed to go into sport and so forth, bringing the communities to engage with one another. All those opportunities are being missed at the moment under Prevent and cohesion. I believe that even some of the faith schools are more effective in addressing this issue than the secondary schools. Secondary schools are ignoring this problem and are not really addressing it the way they should do. That needs to be addressed. The emphasis needs to be on creating better citizens for the future. We need to have something more than just the issue of terrorism in mind all the time when we address this issue.

Ms Khan: I think this whole thing about community cohesion is a bit of a red herring. I grew up in the London Borough of Brent. I went to school in Kilburn. I went to a comprehensive. It was not great, but I loved it. There was the social life, but we were

very diverse. Education was not our priority. It was an extremely diverse community that we had there. At a very human level we got on with each other. We knew for example the Muslim girls can do this and the Jewish people could do that. The Spanish could not do this. Italians could not do that. The Catholics had this. We knew how that all worked at a human level amongst ourselves as young people. What happens is it becomes a systemic problem because the system does not know how to harness all the potential of all this diversity. How do you acknowledge all these different people? I think the illusion about community cohesion is that, just because you say, "Okay, give the funds and we will create the space for people to come together; therefore they should" for community cohesion to work people all need to be equal. We all need to be able equally to feel that we are part of the process. We are able to articulate ourselves and be heard. For example, one thing I have said in the past is, for me as a Muslim to be engaged, I would like to be able to say in one sentence what I usually say in 10 or 20 sentences. The only way I can explain who I am, where I come from, I need 20 sentences to explain what otherwise somebody might say in one sentence because society as a whole understands where some of these other communities come from. They have that understanding. Another example is, if a white male rapes a woman, we do not suddenly say all white males are rapists but if you see a minority, particularly now if you see a Muslim person who does something wrong like rape somebody, because of the images that we have of Muslims which are all negative, we immediately put them in that box. Therefore, we need to create a dialogue between understanding where our perceptions of understanding of community comes from and remove the barriers, stereotypes and prejudice from that. The problem is we do not have a systemic process in place. We have not had that historically. For Muslims to be seen for ourselves and understood and to look at what institutional Islamophobia is, like we have done in other communities, it does not mean that you solve all the problems but you give the space for ordinary people in the community to have the framework in which to work. For me, I do not think community cohesion works in the way that we talk about it.

Chair: We are not actually supposed to be discussing community cohesion in this session. We are supposed to be discussing the Prevent programme.

Dr Pugh: Could I follow through on something Mr Shadjareh said which I think follows from what Mr Husain said before? Mr Husain suggested in the earlier session the fact that we have to fight a battle of ideas. What you seem to be suggesting in your response is this battle of ideas is not just purely a battle about Islamic ideas, the reference to text and so on; it is a more fundamental battle about how you behave as a civilised being. You mentioned the end and the means, an ideology which has to be contested no matter what the religion is. In a sense, you are giving some marker as to how to fight the battle of ideas. We do not need to be experts on the *Koran* to do it.

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Q32 Chair: Can I focus you on this: if we are all agreed that there are some individuals out there who are more likely to become extremists than others—not just Muslim extremists but BNP type extremists, animal rights extremists, whatever—how do we identify those individuals rather than just dealing with groups as a whole and hoping you vaguely hit the individual?

Mr Shadjareh: Identifying them is a security issue. If there are people like that in any section of the community—and there are extremists, the extreme right etc.—that is an issue that security needs to deal with. It is not something that the communities or councils and so forth could deal with. If you are talking about how we could minimise that type of engagement, we need to promote other engagement and give other avenues for people to deal with their grievances. If we do not do that, we are pushing more people to issues of extremism. This is a natural concept. I think we have failed in creating those avenues. What we are saying and hearing from politicians is that people should not have grievances. I am sorry; people do have. My whole family and my children have grievances in the house and so forth. We as human beings do have grievances. Some are right and some are wrong but they need to be addressed within appropriate means. I think it is essential because even nowadays governments are involved in the concept of the end justifies the means. We need to say that is something that is unacceptable in any form. This leads to violence which is unacceptable.

Dr Bari: Any security issue is a matter for the security agencies, the police and definitely society and communities should cooperate with them because it is the overall security of society. The nature of a dynamic and living society is that society is vigilant. There are ways of engaging people who can think of doing something atrocious to society because societies are not full of NGOs, so good parenting, good education, good moral education and citizenship in schools. There are many, many ways that we should all engage with every society but the most important thing is every community should be treated with respect. Us and them does not help.

Q33 Alison Sebeck: You will have heard the witnesses earlier talking about the relationship between central and local government and the fact that there was a view that local government was not equipped to manage this programme or to identify potentially organisations and individuals that might be encouraging terrorism. Do you have a view on that?

Ms Khan: One thing is about them not being equipped. The question is: are they the right place for it, as people have been saying. Certainly we do not think that it is the job of local authorities to act as a policing agency. The job of local authorities is to engage with their communities, provide services and therefore represent their communities and their needs. In some respects you could say local authorities have failed the Muslim community because they should already be having an understanding of the Muslim community and what

their issues are. I would throw the thing back to local authorities and say, “Why have you not understood your local communities? Why have you not already engaged?”

Q34 Alison Sebeck: Do you not have a sense that they are being directed from the top down and therefore it is outside their control, as some of the evidence suggested?

Ms Khan: In our experience locally in Brent, we found that the way this policy has been implemented has been that local authorities are seeing it as a little bit of extra money for them. They are given that little bit of extra money to do something that they should be doing anyway, but they will get this extra money to do whatever they are doing without really putting into place in the man consultation processes, accountability; there is no transparency. There are whole ways that these things have not been done appropriately. They do not even know how to implement it.

Q35 Alison Sebeck: Does that perpetuate rivalry between different groups to see money going to different places, as was also alluded to in earlier evidence?

Ms Khan: Historically, whenever government gives to particularly minority communities following a crisis, pots of money like this, for example, at the time of race riots when lots of money is pumped in to certain types of groups or whatever and of course it created tensions and conflicts. By definition when you do that it is going to create conflict. I would just like to add that the Muslim community did not ask for this money. The money was given by the government’s own criteria, whatever it decided. In the main, certainly when it has come to a local level, it has been imposed on them. We as an organisation were persuaded to go for this money as pathfinder and then we decided not to take it because we could see the implications of it. We only agreed to it with our local authorities. We said to them that the only way we would do it is if you then begin a strategy with us on how to mainstream outside Prevent the issues to do with the Muslim community.

Dr Bari: I think local authorities may not be fully aware of what is happening in their area. I have seen, through my interaction with our affiliates and communities, they are probably far more aware of their local communities than central government. What happens sadly is some of the local authorities were not told they could take this money. I have some practical experiences and personal as well from my dealings with other affiliates. There was a lot of persuasion from central government for local government to take that money. There is some discrepancy between the central government perception and the local government which works with the local community. Wherever I have gone, local Muslim communities have worked quite well with local authorities. They have worked quite well with the local police. There could be mixed pictures but that is what I know in the whole of the country.

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Mr Shadjareh: First of all, the problem is top down, putting on pressure. Secondly, it is not really identifying the need within communities and the need perceived in the government is based on anti-terrorism again. It is very counterproductive and negative. Also, it fails. There are many issues in the community which have been created or have been promoted and escalated because of what happened in 7/7 and 9/11. There are huge problems of Islamophobia in our community. There are mental health issues that have been created out of criminalisation of the whole community. There is no

counselling available. There is no legal aid available. There is no help line available to help these communities. No money has gone into this area while we have spent millions in other areas and even internationally. The problem is that this money is earmarked in certain ways which are counterproductive and are not addressing the real needs of the community. Even local authorities are finding it unacceptable because it is turning them into police officers, watching for extremism when nobody knows what is the definition of extremism.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Witnesses: Ms Huda Jawad, UK Programme Director, Forward Thinking, Ms Naz Koser, Chief Executive, Ulfah Arts, and Ms Ratna Lachman, Director of JUST, gave evidence.

Q36 Chair: I think some of you have been here at least during part of the previous evidence so you have heard what the previous witnesses have been saying. I will just repeat the bit about the written evidence also being included, so we do not need to cover absolutely everything. Can I start on the issue of who is giving advice to the government at the moment and information on the issue of preventing violent extremism and ask first really who you believe the government should be talking to and whether you think that organisations within the Muslim community who are seen to be advising government on this issue are then somehow delegitimised with the rest of the Muslim community.

Ms Jawad: I apologise if any of this is repetitive but in answer to the question that you have asked what we have found since 2005 is that there has been a process by which information about the Muslim community or things that are appropriate with regard to engaging with the Muslim community has changed from consulting a wider group of stakeholders, if you like, to a narrowing down. I feel it has come to the point where information is listened to depending on the organisation you claim to represent or the way in which you claim to engage with government. In my experience, I believe that the advice government has been getting about engagement with the Muslim community has been quite limited. Engagement with the diversity of the Muslim community has not been reflected in the process of consultation, ministerial advice and reaching out to Muslim communities. I feel that there is an agenda being played by various Muslim organisations to influence government policy and to claim to have the representative voice of the Muslim community rather than to say that we are a diverse group of people that cannot be represented by one strand of Islam or by two or even three organisations within the country. My personal opinion would be that the process of advice and consultation has been extremely limited to the detriment of Prevent.

Ms Lachman: For me, what has happened with the Islamic Council of Britain and the Quilliam Foundation is symptomatic of how the government conducts itself. Where there are messages that it does not want to hear or does not like to hear, those are

the organisations that are marginalised. Those organisations refer back to the government in terms of the messages it wants to hear are the ones that it prefers to listen to. I think that is replicated in the local arena too. If you are going to have a meaningful dialogue, you need to understand the notion of radicalisation. It is important that you are speaking to a diversity of organisations, not just those who perpetuate the moderate version of Islam that the government is most comfortable with. I think, in terms of who is advising the government, it is those organisations that mirror back the government's views. Secondly, I also think that because the police are such key drivers at a local level together with your counterterrorism officers and the intelligence services, they become the funnel through which what is happening in the community is funnelled back to the government. Whether you look at the assessment of the NI35, whether you look at tension monitoring, whether you look at the conversations that are happening around CDRP tables, it is the police who are leading the agenda. They are the ones who are assessing the intelligence and they are the analysts who then feed it back to the government. It is not just about Muslim organisations, we need to remember that the police are key drivers in terms of how that information is being translated.

Q37 Chair: Ms Koser, can you extend it to the local level as well. Do you think that those bits of the Muslim community that are being excluded could maybe force themselves back on to the agenda and into the dialogue?

Ms Koser: Yes, absolutely. Whilst I was listening to the other evidence I was thinking of how we could encourage this. IT and technology is at such a fast pace, and we have got things like Facebook and MySpace, tools like that, which we as organisations could use to take your message to young people and women's organisations and women that we work directly with to bring their voices forward. As an organisation, we try not to talk on behalf of the women and young people that we work with, we act as a broker so we bring those voices forward directly. Some kind of tool where other organisations could

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send that message out to their stakeholders, to women directly and encourage them, engages them in this debate a lot further.

Q38 Chair: Do you think there are specific organisations which are currently excluded from the government debate who ought to be included?

Ms Jawad: The obvious example is the MCB, but in my opinion and my experience there has been a trend to categorise organisations as either Islamist or not, and if you seem to have a political agenda or an organisation that has a political opinion about what is going on in the world yet retaining Islamic identity, that is seen as a threat and unacceptable version of Islam that we do not wish to deal with. That is at a central government level. At a local level there are different nuances, primarily because the faith agenda is so recent. What has happened in my locality is that previous race groups who talked on behalf of BME communities or race relations organisations have taken on the faith discourse without really having much experience of or articulation in faith matters, and I feel that has been problematic at the local level.

Q39 Alison Seabeck: Can you tell me whether or not you think there are risks in adopting an even more local approach to administering the Prevent programme? Would you have worries about local authorities' capacity to do it or would you be worried that the local police forces—the point you have just made—would be the key drivers?

Ms Lachman: My view is that the sooner the local authority moves away from the entire security agenda, the better it is in terms of restoring confidence and trust of the communities that it works with. It is critical that local authorities are service providers and it is critical that Muslims are seen as citizens who are service users, and their ability to leverage local authority services should not be predicated in terms of whether they are Muslim or not. There is a profound amount of challenges that local authorities have to face. We talk about place shaping, localism, engagement, and they cannot seriously be involved in those debates and do that in a leadership role if by the same token they are seen to be playing to another master who in some sense is on the opposite spectrum to the Muslim community. I think that the local authorities are between a rock and a hard place because they have a role as a service provider but, on the other hand, they are being pulled by the government towards a security and anti-terror agenda and are severely compromised.

Q40 Alison Seabeck: You do not think they are equipped for that role at all, and nor should they be?

Ms Lachman: I do not think you can say yes or no. It may be that some local authorities might be better positioned in terms of knowing their locality and where the issues are. I do not think that is the issue. We need to go back to ask what is the role of the local authority, and it is that of a service provider, that of leadership. Its role is to reflect the aspirations of the community. Its role is not to impose the aspirations of the government without engaging communities in that process.

Q41 Alison Seabeck: Ms Koser, you were nodding at that point.

Ms Koser: Yes. We have experience of our local authority contributing to local politics within the Muslim community. When you break it down there are 73, if not more, different sects of Islam and we all practise differently, we are all from different cultural backgrounds, and whoever gets funded everybody else is thinking, “They have been funded because of this, that or the other” and there is this conversation around Muslim women who are supported are women who wear hijab, not the women who do not wear hijab. All of these rumours are escalating at local level.

Q42 Alison Seabeck: Unhealthy.

Ms Lachman: As a result of these politics, what it has done is it has contributed not just to inter-ethnic divides between black communities and the Muslim community, but critically it has led to intra-ethnic divides between black communities. No local authority should be put in a position where it is seen as positioning itself with one community against the other because it is dangerous for the local authority to be embroiled in something like that.

Q43 Chair: Can you expand on this? A facile view would be to say that terrorism is a threat to all of us, so how can a programme that is trying to combat terrorism be seen as siding with one community or another.

Ms Jawad: The idea of transferring power to the local level is aspirationally welcomed. What it does miss on the ground is the actual factors and daily nuances that people in different geographical locations with different ethnic backgrounds and diversity of ethnic community actually go through. I know in the guidelines on Prevent it asks local authorities to attach Prevent to other local agendas, like community cohesion, youth services, leisure services, which I think is absolutely detrimental to these services but also to Prevent itself because what happens is every interaction with the state becomes through the lens of countering terrorism so, therefore, there is a great mistrust of any interaction. People are afraid to send their kids to school because they will be spied upon. That is the kind of misconception that there is. Another consequence of local authorities' inability to know their constituencies and also deal with the Prevent agenda has been that those who have been, if you like, given Prevent money, or in the eyes of the community co-opted into local authorities, have then been asked to be accountable by their own communities for actions by the police or by the government, to explain why a certain action has been taken against their own community by the police or the government. For example, should there be arrests made in certain localities then the people who have been involved in the Prevent agenda from the Muslim community are seen as agents of the state: “You gave information. It is your involvement in this that has led to the arrest of community leaders or young people”.

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Q44 Alison Seabeck: Would that not happen anyway even without the Prevent programme, that somebody would point the finger at someone and say, "Someone must have told the police"?

Ms Jawad: I think it is the way you engage with these organisations because in certain localities only certain community groups have been awarded funds to the detriment of others.

Q45 Alison Seabeck: That does suggest a lack of understanding of the diverse nature of Muslim communities on behalf of local authorities and central government.

Ms Jawad: The fact that local authorities are asked to provide a service but also uphold a central government agenda that is about policing communities, if you like, gives these mixed messages where people feel they cannot trust any interaction with government. Finally, we, as an organisation, do a lot of visits for civil servants to Muslim communities and we were doing a visit to the Midlands and met with a local government officer there. The way he talked about Prevent clearly illustrated to me the huge gap in understanding between how local authorities, or maybe central government representatives, see Prevent in local communities. He talked about Prevent as a brand. He said, "The Prevent brand was not selling well at the beginning, but it is selling better now and there is more acceptance of it". I found that deeply offensive being a Muslim because should Prevent the brand go wrong my face is in the fire, I am on the frontline, not him, he does not come from that community and does not seem to have a remit in his job requirement to engage with communities, it is something left up to the local authority. When I questioned that and asked, "How do you know the local authority is engaging with the right people?" he said, "Your cross your fingers and hope it's right". This is at the heart of why things keep going wrong and there is that issue of mistrust.

Q46 Dr Pugh: Could we have a bit of clarity on this. Are you saying that no money should be spent by the government in reducing the risks of violent extremism, in other words spend the money on something else?

Ms Jawad: Personally, I am not.

Q47 Dr Pugh: You are saying that some money should be spent by the government on preventing violent extremism, you are all saying that?

Ms Jawad: Yes.

Ms Lachman: I am saying that local authorities—

Q48 Dr Pugh: You are saying that some money should be spent by the government on preventing violent extremism?

Ms Lachman: No, I am saying no money should be spent.

Q49 Dr Pugh: No money should be spent at all by the government on preventing violent extremism?

Ms Lachman: Not on violent extremism. I think that should be within the purview of the intelligence service, the security service, not within the purview of local authorities.

Chair: I do not think that was quite what John was asking. He was not asking whether local authorities should necessarily spend that money.

Q50 Dr Pugh: No, I think I made myself reasonably clear. You are basically saying that if any money is spent on violent extremism it should be spent exclusively on intelligence services and not any other attempts?

Ms Lachman: Policing, intelligence, security, that is where the money should be spent.

Q51 Dr Pugh: That is relatively clear. If anybody was going to spend money on violent extremism, you are suggesting local authorities are not well-equipped to do it and should not do it. Is that generally the case? And so far their efforts at endeavouring to do it have been fairly cack-handed and counterproductive.

Ms Lachman: Not just cack-handed.

Q52 Dr Pugh: I did say counterproductive as well.

Ms Lachman: I will tell you why it is counterproductive. We work with very young people, we do the Mythbusters project in some of the most deprived wards, and I can tell you that a lot of the young people will not work with council youth workers because they do not know where that information is going. There is a real concern that if they say something wrong, for instance, they might be channelled into the Channel project, which is seen as a de-radicalisation scheme. There is a real concern in terms of the relationships of trust and confidence that used to be there with youth workers from local councils and I know a lot of young people who will not do that. From the point of view of youth workers, the fact that they have to sign information sharing agreements and are bullied and cajoled into sharing that data with other parties is a real problem. Where does that data go? Who is monitoring that data? How long is that data going to be kept? Where are the scrutiny mechanisms? Where are the accountability mechanisms?

Q53 Dr Pugh: To be fair, is that not an argument about how it is done rather than that it is done. Clearly if people have suspicions about what is basically a benign effort to get people more happily ensconced in their own community and less inclined to radical extremism and they are doing it in a way, that creates suspicion then it is not being done well. Would you accept or not that local authorities are huge organisations and they do a range of things, some of which are beneficial and we all appreciate, and some activities, like funding police forces and so on, are not always seen in quite the same way? There does not seem any reason why a big organisation like a local authority should not successfully do a number of different things and do them well.

Ms Lachman: I would suggest that it needs to do what it needs to do well, and that is be a service provider. That is its *raison d'être*.

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Q54 Dr Pugh: No, it is not. Local authorities do a range of things apart from providing services.

Ms Lachman: It is involved in CDRPs—Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships—it is involved in tension monitoring, so it is not that it does not have an overview in terms of what is happening in its locality, of course it has, it has very vital partnerships with the police and they are represented on the Local Area Agreement. That information flow is ongoing, but whether it becomes an extension as a security arm of the state is a completely different thing because I think that responsibilities and accountabilities should be very clearly earmarked. The police need to do policing, intelligence services need to do whatever they are doing in terms of intelligence gathering, and local authorities need to do what their role and responsibility is, and that is advocating for the communities for whom they are there. I am very clear about accountability and transparency in terms of function. This continuum that we have that you cannot hold them accountable any more is very dangerous for civic engagement, for local democracy, and the sooner we go back to first principles on accountability the better.

Q55 Mr Betts: I am not sure how far you are going with this. I can see an argument which says that local authorities should not have a structured and particular responsibility in the area of counter-terrorism, but surely when local authority officers are engaged with any members of the public in their job, if information comes to them both as a public servant and a citizen which they are concerned about they should have a responsibility to pass it on to the appropriate authorities.

Ms Lachman: I agree with that. They have a responsibility, as would I as a citizen if I did find out. For instance, in Birmingham in the equality and diversity unit you have got a counter-terrorism officer co-located with that department and I ask why is that necessary at all. Why does a CT officer have to be together with an equality and diversity officer? It suggests that the entire landscape is changing, that something is happening in terms of how local authorities are seeing themselves in relation to intelligence and the whole operations that we are looking at right now. I have never seen that happening before and it is in this present environment that we see this co-location. Does that not disturb you?

Q56 Mr Betts: It is interesting information.

Ms Lachman: I will send you the information after about that.

Chair: Can you send that to the Clerk of the Committee afterwards.

Q57 Dr Pugh: I was going to reiterate the point that local authorities are not simply service providers, that is a false statement, because they do things like antisocial behaviour orders, for example.

Ms Lachman: Absolutely.

Q58 Dr Pugh: In a sense, what you are trying to say is that local authorities are trying to do two things which cannot be done together or we have not hitherto seen successful examples of that being so.

Ms Lachman: I think there are real tensions in that role. Local authorities need to have the confidence of the communities that they serve and if that confidence is lost then they cannot do what they need to do well.

Q59 Mr Slaughter: There does appear to be consensus, at least on this, that it is a waste of money. Do you all agree that the Prevent programme is a waste of money?

Ms Koser: I started my organisation in 2004 and at the time there was no mention of Muslim women, and that was my target group. What Prevent has done is make Muslim women very visible, so now if I want to do a tour up north I know a number of Muslim women's organisations and for me as an organisation in that sense it has been quite productive, but in relation to what the Government's aims are and what they are trying to achieve, that is something I cannot answer, I am afraid.

Ms Jawad: Personally, I think a lot of money has been wasted but I do not think it is a waste of money. Prevent has provided an opportunity for a lot of reinvigoration and the mobilisation of Muslim organisations at a grass roots level like never before. It is unfortunate that it is being done through the prism of counter-terrorism, but it is a form of public engagement that there has never been before on such a scale. In many ways it has forced government to seek the local voice. The question that I have is on the quality of engagement. When we were founded in 2004 our whole ethos was to bring the establishment to the grass roots community and vice-versa, and we do not need to do that any more because you can be engage fatigued by the number of ministers and policymakers coming to visit people and see local authorities or local communities. There remains the question of the quality of interaction that is important and the way in which accountability has in many ways never existed or been very opaque when it comes to Prevent. "Your project sounds good", but there is not an ability to compare. You can compare a football youth project in Luton and a de-radicalisation programme in Walthamstow, but you cannot make comparisons so how do you know what is or is not working. For me, the attachment of the counter-terrorism agenda to local issues like housing, leisure, youth work, has caused a lot of confusion for people. That demarcation that is not there has been suggested before and has caused many people to have a confused view where anything that sounds like it is dealing with Muslims must get Prevent money. Unfortunately, if you are a Muslim who wants to engage with the state on issues that do not have to do with Prevent there is nowhere for you to go, it is either through Prevent or nothing. It is all or nothing.

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Q60 Chair: Ms Koser, I know that your activities are largely artistic and cultural ones. You seemed to be suggesting that you were happy to take the money and thought your projects were doing good things but they were not actually doing anything for Prevent. Is that your assessment?

Ms Koser: I took a while to engage with Prevent. I was listening to my community and they were very nervous and expressed quite a lot of concerns. I engaged with Prevent trying to access this bridge because I had experience firsthand in my life when my sisters were engaged in a group. I do not have the language to explain what happened but they became quite extreme which led to my family collapsing, hence my organisation was set up. I am very passionate about this issue. One of the things I realised from my personal experience was the isolation of my mother when my sisters were going through this process of where they were coming home with these really extreme ideas and forcing them upon the rest of the family. We were quite isolated and did not have anyone to go and talk to. You cannot go to the mosque and talk about it. They were using Islam and this is something that is our faith, we cannot question it. My mother was really isolated and did not know where to go. In the end she had a stroke and suffers from schizophrenia. That was a key thing for me and that was why I set up my organisation to target Muslim women to use arts and creativity as a way to bring them together rather than to say, "I am going to talk to you about religion and these are my views" and create that environment where people can talk about things. For me, the confusion is what is the government trying to achieve. I switch from community cohesion to something that is criminal, is a crime, and something that the police and counter-terrorism should be dealing with, not an arts organisation. When it comes to things like community cohesion and raising aspirations, those are things that my organisation can do. It is about being clearer when you are asking me these questions. If you are talking about community cohesion and supporting women to do with this issue then, yes, I do that, but in terms of have I taken your money and actually prevented extremism directly, no.

Ms Lachman: You have to listen to the local authorities. You have to ask yourself why is it that Bradford, where the northern riots happened, and Leeds, where the 7/7 bombers came from, are uncomfortable with the whole Prevent agenda and do not want to call it the "Prevent monies". They have completely distanced themselves from it.

Q61 Chair: When you say "they", who do you mean?

Ms Lachman: The local authorities. Bradford is known for not wanting the money and telling the government they did not want the money. In some senses the money is laundered through names that do not go back to Prevent so you cannot identify. You have to ask yourself the question why. You also have to ask yourself the question in terms of NI35 and how is it that four of the five West Yorkshire areas have not put it in the top 30 or 28, or whatever it is supposed to be LAA indicators, it is only Calderdale that has done it. Bradford has not done it; Leeds has not done it; Wakefield has not done it; Kirklees has not done it; and all these areas have large Muslim populations. The reason why they have not done it is because they are not convinced that is an issue. The issue might be of social cohesion, around barriers to discrimination and service access, it certainly is not extremism or terrorism. I rather like the Denham model in terms of the 12 million that is going to be invested into white so-called working class communities because what that 12 million is about is starting a dialogue with those communities, starting to understand what are the reasons why those communities are feeling the way that they do. I would suggest this cancer of far-right politics is far more insidious than the extremism that we talk about. It is starting a dialogue with the 12 million pounds, not pouring, as we have, almost 100 million into Prevent monies and 3.5 billion into counter-terrorist operations. If you used a fraction of that to start that dialogue with Muslim communities and engage with them in meaningful ways, I think the kind of anti-terrorism dividend and anti-extremism dividend might be more potent and powerful than the way we are doing it right now.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. You will send us the extra information that you mentioned. Thank you.

Monday 14 December 2009

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
John Cummings

Alison Seabeck
Mr Andy Slaughter

Witnesses: **Canon Guy Wilkinson**, National Inter-Religious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England and Secretary for Inter-Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, **Mr Michael Whine**, Director, Defence and Group Relations, Board of Deputies of British Jews, **Dr Indarjit Singh**, OBE, Network of Sikh Organisations, and **Mr Brij-Mohan Gupta**, General Secretary, Hindu Council UK, gave evidence.

Q62 Chair: Could I welcome you to the second evidence session on preventing violent extremism and just repeat what I said last time, which is that the eventual report will be informed by the written evidence as well as the oral evidence so we do not have to repeat everything in this oral session that has been said in your various written submissions. What we will be seeking to do is to explore some particular aspects of the issues that are before us. Perhaps I could start by asking each of your views on whether you think that the role of religion has been overplayed as a driver for radicalisation in the *Prevent* programme.

Mr Whine: No, I do not think it has. I think the *Prevent* programme is very clearly focused on preventing crime and on preventing radicalisation. It does not speak of religion and indeed the whole counterterrorism programme is not focused on religion; rather on violent extremism, wherever it comes from.

Canon Wilkinson: Certainly that is the intention of the programme but I think that the law of unintended consequences has played its part. *De facto* the *Prevent* programme or the preventing violent extremism programme has actually had a major impact on religious communities. One of the negative impacts has been on distorting the relationships between different communities. I can expand on that, if that is helpful, later on.

Q63 Chair: Would you like to expand on that slightly now, briefly?

Canon Wilkinson: Yes. Because of the way in which the *Prevent* programme has worked, both institutionally and in the resourcing and funding of the *Prevent* programme, other faith communities have extensively felt that they have been either sidelined or excluded from the issues which are of importance to the whole community. In that sense, it has created a set of tensions between, on the one hand, our Muslim communities and, on the other hand, most of the other communities.

Dr Singh: I very much echo the view expressed by Guy that religion has been brought into it and there are constant references to Islam. Islam is often portrayed as a recipient of great amounts of funding and also the unintended consequence of being targeted and made a scapegoat for everything that goes wrong. Again, the impact on other communities is quite considerable. They are ignored

or the feeling is that they are being ignored and there is some confusion between community cohesion, service delivery and the *Prevent* programme.

Mr Gupta: I fully endorse the sentiments and feelings expressed by my colleagues but I have to add on religion that, if I am a true follower of a religion, as Lord Krishna said in Gita, "The whole universe is mine." Where on earth are we different? We have one universal God and we should follow what he has asked us to follow in every day life. If that is so, I think religion does not ask or preach to any follower of his to follow differently and go astray from what religion says to live in a harmonious society.

Mr Whine: My response was focused on what the *Prevent* strategy was intended to be. I do not disagree with Guy Wilkinson that there are some unintended consequences and indeed with Dr Indarjit Singh, but I took it to mean that you wanted to know what it was we understood by *Prevent*.

Q64 Chair: We do. Do you think that there are other drivers of radicalisation that should be being included within *Prevent*?

Mr Whine: Radicalisation is promoted by a whole range of things and there are many, many studies into what puts people onto the conveyor belt that begins with radicalisation and ends possibly with violent extremism. Certainly a distorted view of religion is one of them, but there are many other things. It may be that there have been some traumatic episodes in a person's life that have turned them away from society. It may be a reaction to things going on in society. Religion really is only one thing, but what happens of course is that people who are the radicalisers use their distorted view of religion to radicalise people and send them further along that conveyor belt.

Q65 Chair: The question I was trying to get at was whether there are not some forms of violent extremism which are nothing to do with religion at all and whether they ought also to be within the *Prevent* programme.

Mr Whine: Yes. People use religion as an excuse but in fact I think violent extremism has much more to do with a lot of other things as well.

Canon Wilkinson: Perhaps I could just add a comment to that. There certainly are other forms of violent extremism. I think for me though the question is where those issues on radicalisation, leading on into violent extremism, should be located.

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As soon as perhaps inevitably you locate policy in respect of those problems in the context of communities, then automatically you have to move into the realm of what communities believe, how communities act, how they interrelate. Of course, communities and neighbourhoods are made up amongst others of a whole series of groups of religious and non-religious people. As soon as you focus or over-focus your policies on one particular group, you create all kinds of difficulties like the ones that we have seen.

Q66 Alison Seabeck: I want to try to draw this away from post-9/11 because the group of witnesses we have here are all very experienced and have been involved in their faiths and communities for decades, I suspect. You will know because you have been around long enough to know that there have always been these sorts of tensions, irrespective of which group, and it is very much the point that you were just making. Therefore have we year on year missed tricks? Local authorities used to give grants to certain areas. We have very deprived areas in my constituency which get lots of grants. Other parts of my constituency resent it enormously. Is it about the message we are giving to other people? Are we not explaining why, if it is a short term investment, if you like, or a short term commitment to a particular area, that is necessary and why others should not be jealous about the money that is going in there? Do you have the sense that we have failed in that respect?

Dr Singh: It is not jealousy. It is a sort of sadness to see interfaith dialogue being skewed or moved away from something that should be purely to do with the evils of crime and crime prevention. The involvement of religion in a nebulous way or a hinting way suggests religion is a problem where the interfaith dialogue was moving towards getting communities together, tackling real differences and impediments to understanding the bigotry of belief and things like that. They have been pushed to one side.

Q67 Chair: Can I just pick you up on that issue about interfaith dialogue? In an earlier inquiry that this Committee did about community cohesion and integration in Burnley I definitely remember somebody saying to us quite forcefully that the problem they felt with the interfaith dialogue was that it was all the same people talking to each other and it was not actually reaching those parts of the communities which one might say were a bit problematic. Is there any evidence at all that interfaith dialogue, whilst a good thing in itself, is in fact at all relevant to what this particular inquiry is about, which is about *Prevent*?

Dr Singh: It is extremely important. I totally agree with you that interfaith dialogue is now becoming very much the same with people talking to each other. It is not percolating down to the people who need to have a little understanding of other religions. That is important, but the whole focus of the government's attention means that we people from different faiths have also got to meet in different

meetings on these sorts of programmes rather than get to looking at the real impediment to understanding which is bigotry in religion: mine is better than yours; mine is the only one. We have to find a way of going around that and accommodating each other.

Mr Whine: I think it is our experiences with multifaith and interfaith activities that have led the Jewish community in recent years to look at it in two ways. One, there is the top down, religious leaders and community leaders meeting one another but, at the same time, we are also now trying to focus on the bottom up, which is to get members of synagogues, members of gurdwaras, members of mosques together, around some common issues, something that they can do together. We have been trying to drive this forward for some years. Indeed, we got some money from the Communities and Local Government Department to help us do that. That is one point I would make. The second point is that I would agree that interfaith dialogue is important. I think sometimes multifaith, where all faiths are coming together, tends to deal with the lowest common denominator and perhaps, in answer to your question do they really go that far, interfaith—in other words, the Jewish community and Muslim community, Jews and Hindus, Jews and Sikhs, Jews and Christians or Christians and Muslims—is much more productive.

Q68 Chair: Can you point to any positive examples of where it has actually tackled radicalisation?

Mr Whine: Yes. In north London, as indeed there is in north Manchester, there are longstanding Jewish/Muslim dialogue groups which have dealt with local issues and local tensions successfully.

Q69 Chair: Does anybody else have any other positive examples?

Dr Singh: Yes. I think there has been an attempt at Sikh/Muslim dialogue but it does come down to people being nice to each other and not getting down to the things that really can cause tensions between the communities. It has not got very far at all.

Mr Gupta: I can give you one example about what we have been doing to prevent something untoward happening in our part of London. That is the west London area. They say that whenever it snows back home we start sneezing here. Whatever happens politically between India and Pakistan, we here are affected by those happenings but as my colleagues have very rightly said, because of the interfaith dialogue, because we have the sorts of facilities whereby we can sit down and sort it out, things have been avoided. Now you can see not a single untoward incident has happened in that part of London. Whatever happens between India and Pakistan, we are not affected. We are living here and we have to solve our problems in this country. Let them solve their own problems. This is as a result of very good relations by bringing them to temples, by going to mosques, by sharing happiness, by sharing in our Ead and Diwali, all those things.

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Q70 John Cummings: Could you tell the Committee which social groups you see as being most at risk from radicalisation?

Mr Whine: It is not a social class issue. If you look for example at the 7/7 bombers or the 21/7 bombers or indeed some of those who have gone one way or another to end up in Al Qaeda from the UK, they have come from a whole range of classes but indeed some of them came from well integrated and even wealthy backgrounds. I am not sure it is a class thing.

Q71 Chair: Does anybody dissent from that?

Canon Wilkinson: No.

Dr Singh: I agree (with Mr Wilkinson)

Q72 John Cummings: Do you think the government should be doing more in schools, universities and also prisons in relation to preventing radicalisation and perhaps embarking on detailed discussions?

Canon Wilkinson: I am not sure that it is necessarily government that has the only role in this. I think it is how you engage others with whom those in schools or the prisons subsequently will live. How do we engage the people alongside those who are likely to be radicalised more in these processes rather than governmentalising these kinds of issues?

Q73 John Cummings: If the government does not do it, who will?

Canon Wilkinson: The government can be a catalyst. One of the things we would say about the *Prevent* programme is that it has not really engaged other communities and neighbourhoods are made up of schools, churches, mosques and so on. If we do not engage those people in these programmes which are about neighbourhoods and how we live together, then I think we will not succeed. Part of the problem I think is how do you measure deradicalisation and the success of these programmes. One of the real issues we face at the moment is that we have all these programmes, large amounts of money spent—I noticed 350,000 was spent on the radical middle way programme bringing scholars from abroad into this country—but I have not seen any assessment as to what impact that has had. There is a wider range of measures involving neighbourhoods and a wider range of communities that should also be attempted.

Q74 John Cummings: Dr Singh?

Dr Singh: I speak from experience, sitting on the chaplaincy council about prisons. It is the view, not only my view but the view of the Muslim adviser, that radicalisation has increased with the *Prevent* programme. It is the radicals that seem to be getting the support and the funding for doing what they want. It is quite an accusation. It has come through not myself only but anyone involved in prisons and on university campuses. The proselytising is extremely aggressive and nothing is being done about it.

Q75 Chair: Can we pick up the issue about the prisons, Dr Singh? Are you saying that the groups that do the radicalisation have been getting support from government, or what?

Dr Singh: We are talking about the Muslim community. They have been getting additional funding for all sorts of projects and they therefore see themselves in a sort of favoured status as a result of radicalisation. It has not made things any better.

Q76 Chair: You are not suggesting that radical groups themselves have been funded?

Dr Singh: Not as radical groups, no.

Q77 Mr Betts: Is there a reverse thought process, that your communities feel let down and disadvantaged because you do not have extremists in your midst or are not perceived to have them and therefore you do not get the funding? There is a sort of reward for having extremists amongst you? Is that the case?

Dr Singh: Absolutely. If I may say so, I have been told that by more than one government minister. In prisons Sikhs have one full time chaplain compared to 50 or 60 Muslim chaplains.

Q78 Alison Seabeck: Hearing your comments, you are sort of suggesting that there are certain groups the government should not be engaging with, effectively. Is that the case?

Dr Singh: I am suggesting the government should be even handed and engage with all groups in an even handed way. I feel that that would improve the situation.

Q79 Chair: When you say “all groups”, do you mean all communities?

Dr Singh: All communities. They should not favour one or the other. They should tackle crime as crime.

Q80 Chair: Are you suggesting that, in relation to combating radicalisation, it should not be within communities at all because it has had this perverse effect of appearing to channel funding at one community?

Dr Singh: To combat radicalisation, one needs to look at the causes of radicalisation. As my colleague said, there are all sorts of causes. It does not have to be religion, but most religious texts have ambiguities within them and they can be interpreted in different ways. Someone who feels deprived can latch on to the wrong teachings. Someone with an affluent upbringing can latch on to the ‘wrong’ teachings. It is those teachings that we need to get addressed and that is where interfaith dialogue was beginning to go. It stalled badly.

Q81 Mr Slaughter: I do not want to over-simplify it but it seems that you are saying that it is not religion *per se* but perhaps a perversion or using religions at all specifically within radical Islam, as I understand what you are saying. Do you think that other aggravating factors—I will mention two—either a lack of national identity amongst minority communities or British foreign policy—i.e., an

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identification with what is happening abroad, perhaps in countries of origin—are active, aggravating features?

Dr Singh: I believe they are. Obviously anyone belonging to particular communities, when they see that fellow members of their community in another part of the world are in their view suffering, being ill treated or badly treated, will feel an impact. It is the extremists within the community who will manipulate that sense of concern to more extremist activity.

Mr Gupta: There can be three motivating factors to radicalisation. (a), as you said is very likely, reading of world politics, what is happening in Afghanistan, what happened in Iraq, why did it happen and why did it happen to only Muslim countries? The perception within a faith community is that they want to destroy Islam, the west wants to destroy Islam and Islamic states. (b) a half truth is a very dangerous thing and this is a half truth. The interpretation of the holy book is if you die in the way of God you will have a better life. After life, you will have a lot of good rewards. This is another thing. The brain is washed. Third is the people who are coming into this country and interpreting the holy book in a very wrong, un-Islamic manner. This is the part of Islam, if you do it like that, you will be having a good place in heaven. To young minds, that becomes very attractive. In schools, colleges and universities I have seen the literature which is being printed and sent out. That is distributed on the high streets. If these things are not prevented, if the leaders who preach day in and day out are not brought with a view to see that they are in a position to do good work in this country amongst young people and followers, this is a very dangerous thing which is coming up. They come here; they preach something and you cannot challenge that. That is one thing. In my view, if something is done towards, when they apply for a visa, if they are scrutinised, their mindset, what they are going to do there, literally the values they have, I think that will go a long way to sorting out this matter at the very root before it is too much.

Q82 Chair: I do not want to get into this in great depth but would each of you be happy if the government did the same sort of thing? Are we just talking about clerics here essentially? Should the government really be getting into vetting clerics of every religion to work out what they are going to say and whether it is acceptable or not?

Mr Whine: I think that would not be acceptable. If I can just go back to the question Mr Slaughter posed, there are two very important issues there. The first of them, national identity, is one that is increasingly confused with the whole *Prevent* strategy. National identity is about cohesion and the promotion of cohesive societies in which communities can learn to live with each other and with the greater community. That is a vital and parallel process from *Prevent*. On the issue of foreign policy I would agree with the previous speaker. Certainly the radicals promote the idea that Islam is under attack and this is the point where they tip people into radicalisation, in defence

of Islam. The issue of foreign policy, whilst it is important and is a contributing factor, is not the only thing. There are so many other ways that one can deal with the issues of foreign policy on the streets of London or the streets of England without resorting to violence.

Chair: Andrew, do you want to pursue any parts of your question?

Mr Slaughter: Not at the moment.

Q83 Mr Betts: Do you have any examples, despite the criticisms you have of any projects in the *Prevent* Programme being successful?

Mr Whine: I do a quite a lot of work with police. I have been fortunate to have sight of some of the ops that they are involved in, and I can think of several. The Channel project is a substantive part of the *Prevent* strategy seems to be working. The Operation Nicole brings together Muslim community leaders primarily and presents them with the issue of, “How do you deal with a problem in your community?” through the various steps. I think that these are well thought-out programmes and are working. You have got proof of that, for example with one particular case of Andrew Ibrahim, who was reported on by local Muslim community leaders and as a consequence was arrested, tried and convicted. That is all a successful part of *Prevent*. There are other parts we would be critical of, but in general the strategy works. It is one of those strategies that needs to evolve and learn. We have seen some amendments over the last couple of years. That should be a continuous process.

Canon Wilkinson: Yes, I can think of some examples, one from Bedford where there is quite a mixed community and where the local Church of England parish is working with a number of other community organisations, particularly Muslim organisations in that area on sports programmes with young people and that is funded from the *Prevent* Programme. I would add just a couple of riders to that. One is that it is more likely that these programmes will be successful where they are rooted in organisations that have existed in a neighbourhood for some considerable time. One of my colleagues from Leicester was saying that one of the problems is that funding has gone to bodies that nobody local had really come across before. It is a common problem with bidding type programmes, but that is no less true in this case. One of the difficulties of course, particularly in the cases I mentioned in Bedford, has been that until very recently it has been possible for bodies like Hizb ut-Tahrir to be saying to local young Muslim people that to engage with other faith communities funded by *Prevent* money is *haram*, something you should not do. So it has been quite important for Government try to make clear—and this is where the cross-over comes—whether this funding under *Prevent* is about integration or whether it is about crime prevention. The reality is that it has not been clear and can never be clear. I notice that in the first part of the Secretary of State’s important speech the other day he said that this is a crime prevention programme, and I understand that that is the intention; but the reality is that it certainly

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is not just that; it is a much more extensive programme around how communities live together and engage with these issues of radicalisation and violence. Once one accepts that reality, then one has to address some of the problems that the *Prevent* Programme has given rise to.

Q84 Chair: Can I ask you about this programme in Bedford: have you any evidence that it has actually reduced radicalisation?

Canon Wilkinson: Chair, I go back to my point that I think the measuring of impact is a very underdeveloped science in this arena, so I am not entirely aware of how one measures whether a particular person has been de-radicalised or kept away from—or whatever—here we are, spending 50, 60, 70 millions of pounds on a basis of measurement that I do not think anybody is very clear about. That is something to be corrected as the programme continues. I would say that there is evidence that those young people for example in the Bedford case, but we can all quote many others who are engaged with a whole range of people outside their own immediately intense context, with other young people who have other cultural values other than religious values, that you can show that their attitudes to the other are shifted.

Q85 Alison Seabeck: You have all flagged up the lack of clarity in the aims of the *Prevent* Programme and the ability to deliver, and the lack of evidence. Yet a lot of the statements we had suggested that the Government should be leading this differently, essentially led from a values-based perspective very much a theological faith-based delivery mechanism rather than coming at it from any other way. However, we are sitting here saying we have not got any evidence of outcomes so we are not sure. Do you think this programme should be led through faith-based approaches and, if so, why?

Mr Whine: I think it is balancing values and means—you have been talking about the means by which you deal with it. Values is also part of it, promoting the values of autonomy and a democratic society and so on. There probably has not been enough of that and I think there has been some inconsistency in the way in which the Government has approached it in dealing with some organisations that do not promote those values. I think that if one is to make suggestions for the future, then it could concentrate a little bit more on promoting the values that I think we all would find acceptable.

Q86 Chair: Can I push one of the questions that was asked earlier and we got a partial answer? Dr Singh talked about engaging across communities but there is a debate about whether there are some groups within the Muslim community that you should not engage with, which I do not think we have had an answer on.

Dr Singh: I do not think you should not engage with particular people, but it is the theme of engagement that is important. If I may just explain, religion is a very complex mix. At one extreme there are ethical

values that all religions teach, and there is a lot, much more than we often assume, in common. Those are the values that should be brought to the forefront and worked on. For example, we talked about that at the turn of the century at Lambeth Palace, and different faiths listed a set of values that we should live by in the 21st century, but then they were filed, and now people talk again about these again. That is the better road. Otherwise religions with values, with all sorts of cultural entanglements can be misinterpreted—there is ambiguity in religious texts—with those it gets very difficult. We have got to go back to finding what our faiths have in common and embed those in the way we live in society. At the same time we have to tackle the real differences about “mine being the only way and anyone who does not belong to my faith will roast in hell” and things like that. We have got to do something about that, and there is a way I can suggest: we can believe what we like but we should not push our beliefs on to others. We can believe that the earth is flat. I do not mind that as long as people do not try to push me off the end.

Q87 Chair: I think that is not quite the question I was asking, and I am not a theologian myself and I do not want to get into it. It is a very pragmatic issue. As I understand it, if we are trying to reach young people within the Muslim community who are starting to be radicalised and we do not engage with those groups that are not themselves involved in any violence but which have quite an extreme type of Islam, then we are reducing our ability to relate to those young people. That was the question I was trying to get at, not whether we should be trying to persuade all the religions to respect each other—of course we should—and people who do not have religion, which is after all the majority in this country. Pragmatically, should we be using all of the groupings within the Muslim community to reach the young people who are at risk, or should we be exercising an ideological filter and saying some groups are beyond the pale?

Mr Whine: It is an important practical point, Madam Chairman. Of course you have got to engage, we think, with all groups; but there is a difference between engagement and funding, and I think that is the nub.

Mr Gupta: I agree with the last speaker that we should not leave any group disengaged; we must engage each and every group and see what their requirements are, why they became radicalised.

Canon Wilkinson: Could I put a gloss on that, Madam Chair? In principle there are always circumstances where engagement is anything but, but it seems that the important principle is that we engage more with those who demonstrate they are looking for integrative and cohesive action. So I would say, if I am allowed to name organisations, bodies like Hizb ut-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun are not bodies that have any real interest in engaging with the kinds of programmes and activities that most of us I am sure would think were appropriate. It is not to say—because they are not illegal—that we should not touch them but it is to say that we should

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not by engaging with them in effect give them more importance in the eyes of young people and others than those that are more positive. There is a fundamental principle there about how and who we engage.

Chair: Can I thank you all very much. We could go on all evening but we have other witnesses. We have got your written submissions which obviously go into an even wider range of issues, and that will be part of our eventual report. Thank you very much.

Witnesses: Mr Suleman Nagdi, Prevent Co-ordinator, Federation of Muslim Organisations, and Mr Fahad Mohamed, Managing Director, Somali Family Support Group, gave evidence.

Q88 Chair: Can I welcome you both. Mr Nagdi has been sitting listening to the previous witnesses.

Mr Nagdi: That is right, yes.

community. But that can only be achieved if the community does not feel that it itself is the target of profiling by legislation.

Q89 Chair: You at least have the advantage of knowing some of the issues that have been covered already. Can I start with the speech that the Secretary of State John Denham made recently and ask you what your thoughts are on what appears to be the emerging strategy for the future of this *Prevent* Programme?

Mr Nagdi: I was encouraged by his speech. However, I am not quite sure how it will translate on the ground. The reason for this is I have been involved in a number of training programmes for senior police officers and prison staff on the *Prevent* strategy to try and understand the single terrorist narrative, and the understanding is pretty limited in my opinion, of the statutory authorities in understanding the whole *Prevent* strategy and what it is all about. The issue also around political correctness normally kicks in and so people do not understand the issue itself at hand, so there is some difficulty how you translate that on the ground and how the vast majority of frontline service staff understand the message itself.

Q91 Chair: Mr Mohamed, on the same question—do you have the same view or a different view?

Mr Mohamed: I have the same view, and also when it comes down to the local authority it is the mixing of the *Prevent* strategy and community cohesion—they are two separate streams, especially with the mindset that it is targeting the Muslim community, and also winning hearts and minds; but there is already that negative association with the labelling, “the money is being put out there for us to spy on each other.” In actual fact, people who work in the first sector understand that but it is better for them to have a deep understanding and filter it down to the grass-root people who are working with the hearts and minds in these communities. But that is not being accessed effectively through the first orders, who are local authorities, and that is not streaming down and the voices are not being heard effectively.

Q90 Chair: What about whether the counter-terrorism strategy, with its current four bits, should be part of the role of the CLG at all or whether it should all be within the Home Department and that CLG should concentrate on the community cohesion integration front?

Mr Nagdi: I think it should be with the Home Office. I also think we need to look at it in the whole, not confine it to the four. The issue around legislation that has recently come out in the 2001 counter-terrorism legislation, certainly section 44, which has been regarded as a blunt instrument by some of the chief constables up and down the country, and more importantly schedule 7, the powers to stop people at ports of entry, in and out of the country, has caused enormous problems within my community. The very people whose hearts and minds we are trying to win over are the imams and senior leaders of the community; if they are subject to these searches at airports continuously, day-in day-out then that itself is causing a very negative effect. I think we are creating a “them and us” scenario; in other words, the police and security on one side and the Muslim community on the other side. What we need to do is create a bridge and marry the two together because acts of terrorism affect us all and we need the support from the community, and also intelligence from the

Q92 Mr Betts: It seems that we are being told two things which appear to be a contradiction, but probably are not. One is that within the Muslim community many people feel that this money is tainted because it is counter-terrorism money and they do not want to be associated with that sort of work, yet from people from other communities we are being told, “It is unfair that the Muslim community is getting all this money for community projects simply because that is where the perceived extremists are, whereas our community does not have extremists and therefore we do not get anything.”

Mr Nagdi: You are right. The difficulty arises on a number of counts. First and foremost, in my experience, the vast majority of the people within the county where I reside who have applied for funding have not been the mainstream settled community of the county; they have been new groups that have come up and created—women-only groups, young people’s groups, sports centres, et cetera—and applied for funding. These people do not really have the credibility within the community in the sense that they are not part of the settled community. The mosques themselves believe that they have run the mosques through their own charitable giving and have built up the structures, including the capacity of the imams et cetera through internal mechanisms and not from outside, so “do we really need the money?” Also, if we take the money there is an

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expectation that if, God forbid, this whole strategy fails, will we then be held accountable? We are already victims as a result of terrorist attack; and we are already victims in replying to this. By taking the money and there is a failure at the end of it, because it is not guaranteed where this would lead, what would be the result then, and will we be made answerable at that point? This is the fear of being accountable at the end whenever the strategy finishes, and saying, “We have given you X amount and you have not produced the result.” That is the expectation they feel that is there by Government.

Mr Mohamed: It is the non-clarity between “foresee” and “prevent” that people do not understand, the community and also the people who are trying to develop the programmes, and you find key individuals who are well placed who make comments that completely break every work that has been done on the grass-root level. Other communities feel neglected because the money is being poured into the Muslim community. What we need is a deeper dialogue and to create programmes on these inter-community issues to break the barriers and have a deep understanding and respect for each other rather than tolerance.

Q93 Mr Betts: Could they just be community programmes which are targeted at people from different religious backgrounds? Is that something we should be looking at?

Mr Mohamed: It should be an element. For inter-community dialogue and inter-community working it is a vital part; but we should also remember that the Muslim community has felt marginalised after 9/11, 7/7; they have been labelled “terrorists” and this money is supposed to capacity-build organisations, strengthen foundations so they work effectively and make them feel more resilient to violent extremism.

Q94 Mr Betts: Do we know of any particular programmes you could point us to where you think they have been successful in preventing or countering violence and extremism in any form?

Mr Nagdi: Personally—I am sorry to sound negative—very few, in my opinion. The ones that have generally helped are the ones that have gone around the educational side, educating the wider community to understand what Islam really stands for and to separate the Islamic faith itself from acts of terrorism, and I think it has gone a long way in relation to this. This work not only within my community, the faith community, but certainly also the frontline agencies that work with these communities—it could be probation, prison, police officers, et cetera—because there is still a perception in their minds—and you must remember this—that they are also part and parcel of the community and they read or see the same news bulletins that you and I would see, and they are tainted with this. But the difficulty I have is this: we talk about the Muslim community as if it is one block; it is a community of communities; the communities cover all parts of the world. They have settled in this country over the last 40 or 50 years, sometimes in the 1970s and 1980s, and the others most recently among the Somali

community; each one comes with their own experience and understanding of the British way of life. A one-size-fits-all right across the UK cannot work. We need to say to local authorities, and give them more leeway to say, “You have a particular migration pattern within your city or county; what is best suited for your set of circumstances? What happens in Leicester may not be relevant to what happens, for example, in Bradford. Bradford may have a 70 or 90 per cent Pakistani community, whereas Leicester would have an East African/Indian community that came and lived under the British mandated territories, and their understanding of integration and working with other communities is far different to, say, somebody from Birmingham. However, it seems from Government that there is one programme right across the board, and they say: “This is the *Prevent* money; you apply for it”, without understanding the complicated migration patterns. I think this should be taken into consideration.

Q95 Mr Betts: The programme you drew attention to is essentially exactly about informing other people that all Muslims are not extremists. Are there any particular programmes that have targeted those Muslims who are extremists or who may become extremists and actually does the job that *Prevent* is supposed to do?

Mr Nagdi: Personally, I do not think so because most people taken down violent extremism are people generally with bigger profiles. If you read the profiles of the suicide bombers of 9/11, 7/7 they are people who have disengaged from mainstream Islam, away from the mosques and in some cases they meet in the coffee shop round the corner or the kebab shop round the corner, and they have a new set of networks. We are trying to address the existing established organisations, thinking that they will be best placed to talk to these young people, but these young people are not engaged with mainstream; they have already moved away from mainstream. In fact, in many cases they regard the mainstream as being people who are also legitimate targets. For example, myself, working within this—I am also regarded as a legitimate target by these people. So where are we directing the money to? This is the question we need to ask. Will it actually go to those who are already disengaged with us?

Q96 Chair: Mr Mohamed, do you want to talk from the point of view of your experience?

Mr Mohamed: My experience is—I work with young people and families especially from East Africa—Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan. Because they are migrant communities, newly arrived communities, many of them do not access the services available to them and integrate effectively, and then you find young people either feeling marginalised or have gone through the institutional systems and have got a criminal record, and they are vulnerable, English is their second language and they get pulled in by people who are prone to radicalisation by looking at what foreign policy is: “Look what happened to your brothers and sisters in Afghanistan and Iraq”.

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They go into that. It is understanding exactly, as Suleman said, it is sort of branding it one Muslim community. We are Muslim communities and we have these cultural norms that affect us more than faith, and you find people stick in different areas. The money and the policies need to be effective with the population residing in the boroughs or the counties.

Q97 Alison Seabeck: Some of the questions I wanted to ask you have already answered and therefore I would like to trawl back to what we have just been talking about and the evidence in the previous session. All witnesses have said: "The money is not going to the right groups; it is going to little groups springing up all over the place." We have heard in evidence that the people who are radicalised are generally not engaging with groups to whom you feel the money ought to go and therefore some of these other little groups that are springing up—are they not in a better place to deal with, or perhaps have a connection with?

Mr Nagdi: It depends what the intention is. If it is to stop and prevent violent extremism, then I would disagree; I would say they are not best placed to do this work. I think we are in a very difficult situation. I do not believe there is a blueprint for this whole issue. I think we are learning as is the community and as is the government as to how we handle this issue. We must understand that it is not like a washing machine where we put someone in and they come out washed the other side and become de-radicalised; it is far more complicated than this. Can I be permitted to give one story to try and make people understand that what Government initially thought, that it was the mosques and then it moved up to prisons, and then it moved to hate preachers and so on and so forth from foreign policy over the last couple of years. I would like to relate a story that I have been working for the Sterling police in Scotland, and there is a family that lives just outside Sterling in a small village and they have been there for 34 years—a typical Asian family, or I think it is a typical Asian family, with a supermarket and a house on the top. Their son was born in the village and he went to the local primary school and secondary school. When he finished secondary school he came into the family business. He never had a university education. There are no mosques in the city and no outside preacher came in. All the parts that you can put together as part of the jigsaw that this is what leads to it were all missing, except that the Sterling police picked him up on counter-terrorism charges. Only when they went through his hard drive did they realise that he visited some websites that showed some pictures of war-torn countries which were terrible, which you and I would not normally see on the BBC or ITV. I know this because I have travelled to the Holy Land and spent over a week and seen some of the refugee camps with 65,000 refugees with one tap for 20 families, open sewers, et cetera. It affected me as an adult. I came back—how did I react to it? I reacted by joining with a human rights agency, writing articles, doing talks at universities. This is my way of clearing my conscience of working with the

situation. The question I pose is what happens to the young mind, the 14/15/18-year old who sees these graphic images on the TV and sees his fellow Muslims—because remember something, that Muslims are always thinking of the world-wide Ummah, the Muslim Ummah. They do recognise borders and nation hoods but they came up much later after the Ottoman Empire. Their mind-set is the whole world, so it is my family, my brothers and sisters who have been killed, and I have seen a dismembered body or something, I am sure has an effect. Also, something very, very important if I may and I am not going on too long, we need to understand and look at the profiles of previous suicide bombers and try and understand; though religion was in the background, they were not particularly religious in any way. In some cases they were people that just were walking the Road to Damascus and had just seen the light overnight and then did what they did. Others were converts to Islam, who are also vulnerable because they do not have the support mechanism as say someone like I would have, coming up from childhood, in a mosque, in a house—parents, brothers and sisters and people around me who I could look for support. What happens for someone who just converts to Islam and he then becomes an active picking for somebody who wants to sanction out a terrorist attack; he is an ideal person to be placing. I think it is more education, more Islam, greater understanding of the faith and to separate it. I hate the British way of saying "Islam" and "Islamist"—we just put three other letters at the end of it, and all of a sudden what is a religion of peace becomes a world of terror. It is very similar to the BNP: they have taken away the St George's flag and mainstream is trying to recapture it, and I think Muslim people need to recapture Islam in its true form as a religion of peace and not add "ist" at the end, and then all of a sudden it has a separate meaning altogether. Sorry for all that!

Q98 Alison Seabeck: Mr Nagdi answered in part in his long response to the question whether or not violent extremism only has religious and political origins. Can I ask Mr Mohamed whether you have a view on whether it is purely embedded in religion and politics or whether there are other causes?

Mr Mohamed: It is also about violent extremism on national aspects, nationalism. If you look at different terrorist groups many of them use religion, but the thing that frustrates a lot of Muslims and a lot of young people that I spoke to is they say: "How come terrorism and Islam are synonymous with each other? When the IRA were bombing, nobody called them Catholic bombers; people called them the Irish Republican Army so why are they saying Muslims are terrorists?" If I take it on an equal route, especially in the Somali community and East African community, what is happening back home with young kids being born, the Diaspora, their parents who are always in contact back home and they see what is happening, 18 years later they are still stateless, and especially when the Ethiopians came in. You find a lot of young people in the

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Western-style world who have actually not even integrated but assimilated and they listen to hip-hop and they dress the same way and they do all the things, but then one day they wake up and they realise “look what is happening; people are raping our women back there” and they pack their bags and go back and there is active recruitment because these young people are vulnerable and very idealistic. The way they view their motherland—they still have their heart there. Then, when you look at organisations springing up, I believe some of the money should go to those springing up organisations because those are the ones that will not be accessed effectively or their voice is not being heard. If you take a survey of people and they say the *Prevent* money has gone to the usual suspects, the ones that are easiest to access, that the Government has always found easy to interact with and they say these people represent the community, when in actual fact they do not represent the community because if someone is in London, London is a very diverse community and different boroughs host different Muslim groups. So if the representatives of those groups are feeling more marginalised than others, how do we counteract that?

Q99 Chair: Can I pick up on your point you made, Mr Mohamed, about the Somali community in particular. How do you think the government here or anybody could effectively engage with young people in your community who are feeling the pull of radical politics from your homeland, if I can describe it that way, or where your ancestors came from might be a more accurate way of putting it?

Mr Mohamed: Yes, the homeland, of course.

Q100 Chair: It is that interface between politics and events in Somalia and Somaliland what is happening to young Somalis in Britain.

Mr Mohamed: There was a report that was published in Canada that realised that many of the bombings that happened—the last bombing that happened in Mogadishu and the one that happened in Somaliland—were committed by men with Western passports, young men actually crossing the border with American or Canadian or British passports. The best way for the Government to engage is to understand that there is a problem because if do a census of everybody and ask them, “How do you describe a Muslim?” the British mentality of Islam means they would say somebody of Pakistani origin, somebody of Indian origin. They do not understand that it is a very diverse religion and that people come from all walks of life, they are people of Afghani descent and people of Somali descent, and many of them are living in the same society as their peers but they feel the pull-and-push factors from home and from their parents, and also their peers who are much older than them who have got extremist views because they have a bad viewpoint of the religion. They have a contrary viewpoint of the religion. It is by engaging effectively and listening to them and working with different—

on what is happening back home—programmes and active communication and dialogue between Somalia and the United Kingdom.

Q101 Chair: Do you think that that is the way forward?

Mr Mohamed: Yes.

Q102 Chair: In that specific community?

Mr Mohamed: In that specific community, yes.

Q103 Mr Slaughter: I was going to ask about the relationship between radicalisation and foreign policy but I think you have answered that in part. Can I ask one more general question. From the quite detailed answers you have given so far it does not appear from your point of view and your communities’ point of view that the *Prevent* Programme is working at all. Do you think it is working at all?

Mr Nagdi: No. To be quite honest, I think it has a very limited work. I say this by virtue of the fact that we have to be also responsible as citizens and taxpayers, and if taxpayers’ money is being used for a particular project then we need to be accountable to the electorate. The issue is two-fold: one is the idea of Muslims, no matter what time they came to this country, and how they see themselves; so this argument comes up: “Are you a Muslim first or are you British first?” That is a typical argument that comes from the press. A more difficult one is that it does not really matter how I see myself as an individual: it is how do others see me? That is the challenge, and I think a lot of education needs to be done around there. If I were to say that I am British, this is my home and I am proud of my splendid country, I have to go the extra mile to prove that. But something very sinister is in the minds of the British Muslim population: 1.5 million to 2 million people, depending on the figures you take, marched against the war in Iraq. They were made up of people from all different backgrounds, different faiths, and non-faith, and showed democracy at its best. We go out there and we can take to the streets and say to Government that we are not happy with a particular policy. The question I would pose is this: say only 5,000 Muslims had taken to the streets of London and demonstrated against the war in Iraq, would the question of disloyalty then kick in at that point? At what stage do we feel that we are British? At what stage do others look at you as being British? I have heard this argument in relation to the Sharia law, which has been brought up in this whole thing that we are trying to change the issues around. I have sat as a magistrate, serving on the Leicester bench for many years; three members of my immediate family are police officers serving within the county; and I still ask the question: how much more do I have to go before I am accepted? As work is being done in telling the Muslim population, “You need to better integrate yourself” I think the indigenous population also has to be told that it is slightly unfair. People have integrated—not wholeheartedly, and some to different degrees, and they have also come with different experience—for example the

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Somali community may have come from war-torn countries and they are still living the horror of what took place. I came from a country where it is relatively safe but I grew up under the apartheid system in Zimbabwe and South Africa, so I went to a school—where whites were with whites, Asians in Asian schools, and the indigenous black people went to their school. That was my formal education, of primary and secondary. That does not mean I have not integrated into wider society. The very fact that I am sitting in a powerhouse of democracy right now, being an individual who was brought up under the apartheid system, shows that it is a bit more complicated than a simple little sound bytes that we all try to give to the mass media. I think we have to go beyond that and truly try to understand if we are true, to try and dismantle the machinery of terror that exists out there, and also I believe we should keep it to a balance. If one were to read the Interpol figures for 2006/2007/2008, there is a figure of around 0.2 per cent acts of violent extremism conducted in the name of Islam on the European mainland—of course the Basque Separatists being the highest. So let us have a balance on this. People think that 98 per cent of all acts of terrorism are done by Muslims, but the police figure speaks something totally different. I think there needs to be a balance in this argument. When you talk about the Channel project, the only individual we have in the Channel project in our country is actually a 14-year-old young person who has been taken out by the far right and hatred for minority communities, and that is the only figure. That is not to say it does not exist among the Muslim community. There may be some cases of self-denial in certain sections of my community. I admit that as well because we need to be fair if we are trying to sort this problem out, but we need to work in partnership with the community and not the community at a distance.

Q104 Mr Slaughter: Let me ask Mr Mohamed in a positive rather than a negative way: how could the money from *Prevent* be better spent?

Mr Mohamed: On education, education and education. It is important because we—I call myself British. I can be British and Muslim at the same time, but a lot of young people and families cannot make that distinction because they are facing adversity every time they leave the house they find Muslim-phobic behaviour, marginalisation in uptake of services. Unless you get accepted for who you are and what you believe in—because we have a sense of tolerance. British society has a sense of tolerance. I have created tolerance from negativity because I tolerate breaking up apartheid, but what we need to have is mutual respect for each other's differences because we are building a nation, and when the atrocities were committed it was widespread across all faiths. In fact my sister missed that bus that blew up in Tavistock Square. I would say channel the money into local grass-root organisations, as Suleman said, that have credibility in the community that they serve or that have a long history of service and that have delivered great work before and know the make-up of the community

they are working with, and also bring in the host community and all the faiths must work collectively for the betterment of British society. That is the best way to get the money across.

Mr Nagdi: Something that has also been lost: the United Kingdom is known to be, its people and its Government, very generous, and we send out billions of pounds of aid world-wide when national disasters take over, or whatever the case may be. I think that this has been lost in this whole argument. It seems that the community has been targeted but we need to better articulate that argument, to say, "As a nation we also have a lot of plus signs in what we do"; and I think that has been missing out of this whole thing. It seems to be always around the negative issues. We are not talking about what a wonderful thing it is to be here. One example I can give is that I attended a police conference in Budapest and I was absolutely shocked to hear that in Europe issues on stop-and-search are not recorded where a disproportionate use of power is being used, and in the UK it is. Let us relay all of this good news to the people out there that they are not being targeted as a community; there are good practices as well in the United Kingdom and we are light years ahead of certain places in Europe.

Chair: There is just one brief question, John, on who should be identifying where the money is going.

Q105 John Cummings: Who do you believe should be responsible for identifying those at risk of promoting or partaking in violent extremism?

Mr Nagdi: I would think it would have to be the local law-enforcement agencies, the police, probation, and the local authorities. I do not think we should put the money in silos to tell them exactly where they can spend it. I think they should make the case and each county and city should make the case relevant and tailored for its own particular needs.

Q106 Chair: You are against the money being allocated on the basis of the number of Muslims?

Mr Nagdi: That is right, totally.

Q107 Mr Slaughter: You said the local authorities; we have had evidence previously where—I do not think anybody would disagree that if you are targeting criminal offences, whatever they are—why is it the job of the local authorities?

Mr Nagdi: Because local authorities better understand and also there is an element of fear that if everything came from the police then there would be the fear of actually accessing the funds, thinking it was security-led and it could lead to all kinds of fear within the community. I think local authorities are more seen as a safer pair of hands than just the police on their own..

Q108 John Cummings: Can I take that a stage further? Do you believe that local communities are adequately equipped to identify those at risk?

Mr Nagdi: No, I think they are very weak. I do not think they have the necessary training nor the skills to identify and actually report this.

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Q109 John Cummings: Do you think local government is?

Mr Nagdi: No, not local government, no. I think it is a job for the security forces, as part of the intelligence, to lead individuals. I also believe that as part of the Channel project you have the say-so of the chief constable and chief executive of the local authority. I think there has to be some community input at that stage as well because we are automatically assuming that these two high-powered positions would know exactly the issue about radicalisation, which is not only Islam but many others; and I think they need to draw in expertise from the community to help them identify it.

Q110 Chair: Mr Mohamed, you are not so keen on local authorities, I think. Is that right?

Mr Mohamed: No, because what I am saying is the Government's paramount factor is putting money into local authorities, and some local authorities are

excellent and working in partnership with local grass-root organisations. Some of them live in that silo attitude: "We know what is happening", and the money is not ring-fenced into what it is supposed to be doing. You find some of them using the money for different projects. We need to set a benchmark on what exactly standard a local authority needs to have for them to access money and for them to have a steering group of the diversity of communities that reside in their county or their borough to help facilitate the distribution of the funds. I wholeheartedly believe that the grass-root organisations and the community groups do have the capacity because they have worked in the first sector for decades, so they know what is happening in the community. Some need upskilling but many of them do have the capacity to deliver the projects and understand the nature of the agenda.

Chair: Thank you both very much indeed.

Witnesses: **Dr Paul Thomas**, Course Leader, Diploma in Professional Studies, Youth and Community Work, University of Huddersfield, **Mr Bob McDonald**, Principal Lecturer, International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion, and **Mr Yaser Mir**, Senior Lecturer, International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion at University of Lancashire, gave evidence.

Q111 Chair: Can I start by asking you whether you think that the *Prevent* Programme should be being broadened to include other forms of extremism other than that which is linked to political Islam?

Dr Thomas: I think I have got a mixed response to that. It is a helpful development with the connecting communities development, although that is not part of the *Prevent* money; but I would not want to extend it; I would want to fundamentally recast it. At the moment there is a suggestion that other forms of extremism could be an add-on to what we have got which is essentially focused on Muslim extremism, whereas I would want to fundamentally recast the majority of the budget on to community cohesion and start from a much different basis. That is why I have got a mixed response.

Q112 Chair: Just to pursue that, are you suggesting that you would decouple CLG from the counter-terrorism bit and just get it back onto community cohesion?

Dr Thomas: That would be my feeling, based on some of the evidence that I have got and reading academic material; that community cohesion would be a much more effective way of building resilience not just within individual communities but across communities, and that is something distinctly different from the very necessary security that the Home Office—

Q113 Chair: Do you feel that approach would work, for example, with far-right extremism?

Dr Thomas: I think there are some very well-established practices with young people being attracted towards far-right racism and involvement in far-right political organisations, but you hit the same problem that *Prevent* is now having, that if you

are going to change their values and change their attitudes, they need to be in contact with other people and involved in a wider process of dialogue and learning and exploration. That has to be done with other people. You cannot change people's attitudes and values in separate silos when the attitudes are about other types of people, other faiths and other ethnic backgrounds.

Mr Mir: Certainly our research would suggest that *Prevent* needs to be broadened out beyond just extremism with Muslim communities because Muslim communities at the moment see themselves as having a disproportionate focus on them as a whole faith community, and it needs to be broadened out to incorporate far-right extremism. That is at a macro level; there needs to be a response that deals with whole communities, working with Muslim communities and other faiths, building shared values. We know through our work that community cohesion on its own will not defeat and prevent violent extremism, al-Qaeda inspired violent extremism, therefore we need a targeted approach utilising local infrastructures and community organisations to work with those who are vulnerable and at risk.

Mr McDonald: I would echo what Yaser has just said, having worked with the same communities on similar work. Certainly from the evidence we have gathered with a range of different communities both in the capital and other parts of England, the indicators and messages that we are getting back from those communities is that Muslim communities were not happy about the singular focus on them as a particular community. They raised a range of different issues that they were concerned about, and far-right extremism, for example, was something that was raised quite

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commonly. At that time, a couple of years ago from the work we were undertaking, they felt it was not receiving adequate attention from their perspective.

Q114 John Cummings: Do you believe that the role of religion has been overplayed as a driver for radicalisation in *Prevent*?

Mr Mir: Certainly through our research we realise that communities feel resentment towards the *Prevent* programme, particularly in terms of how their religion has been attached to terrorism and violent extremism. They would like to see a diffusion between the religion and terrorism. What communities have told us is that this is an issue of criminality and should be looked at as a community safety and crime prevention agenda, rather than something that targets the Islamic religion. We know through evidence we have collated that religiosity is not a factor that contributes to radicalisation, it is actually a factor that helps in terms of protecting them against terrorism. A good understanding of their Islamic faith actually protects us against them who try to impose an al-Qaeda narrative on the community.

Q115 John Cummings: Do you agree?

Dr Thomas: Clearly there is an issue about understandings of religion. Going back to the previous question about white extremism, we have to ask the question why are minorities of young people in both some white communities and some Muslim communities taking such extreme positions. I would argue that those young people are often in segregated communities. They are often from communities that are socially excluded from an economic and social point of view. For instance, the research I have done in Oldham and Rochdale shows that poor white young people and some of the poor Muslim Pakistani and Bangladeshi background young people both feel that economic and social avenues have been closed down. I think that has got to contribute to the fact that some of them, a small minority of them, then travel a further distance in terms of hardening identities. There is certainly academic evidence that people who have been the losers in economic change—and there has been profound economic change—have often retreated to a very fixed and very singular identity, a sort of defence from the fact that the world is changing in a way that has not been helpful for them.

Q116 Mr Betts: You talked about the radicalisation of the 7/7 bombers. They did not come from particularly poor backgrounds and they were not particularly uneducated. One of the concerns is about the radicalisation process in universities where people are not segregated and where people are getting an education, but are still entering into some extreme views and extreme sects almost promoting those views.

Dr Thomas: There are a couple of things about that. There is clearly more than one background leading to violent extremism. What I would say about the 7/7 bombers—I work in Huddersfield where one of them lived very locally to us and I live in Leeds as

well—but the Leeds bomber certainly came from a community that is very segregated. South Leeds is a very segregated community and racial tension is very high. I think we have to step back from the individual's educational/employment status and look at the community experience. I would suggest that Ted Cantle's analysis of the lack of cohesion in many communities would fit that model very well.

John Cummings: Which communities do you see as being most at risk of radicalisation?

Q117 Chair: I think we are talking about within the Muslim community.

Mr Mir: If we look at the risk factors, just to pick up Dr Thomas's point in terms of social exclusion, deprivation and discrimination, these provide the hunting-ground in terms of Islamophobia. Discrimination as well as deprivation provides a hunting-ground particularly for al-Qaeda inspired extremists to prey on vulnerable young people. They increase the vulnerability. Where there are suggestions that the 7/7 bombers came from well-off backgrounds or were integrated into society, living in a cohesive community, they do have a sense of grievance and empathy with their brothers and sisters that are living in a deprived situation or are being discriminated against, so there is a deep sense of empathy and sympathy to those living in that situation.

Q118 Chair: Can I just pursue that. From the research is the community they live in in this country more relevant and their perceptions that they are discriminated against or deprived, or is it their identification with communities abroad, from whence their families came originally, although not exclusively, identification with what is going on in Palestine? There is a very tiny Palestinian population.

Mr McDonald: It is very hard to say definitively what the active risk factors are in that sense. From the work we have been doing, there seems to be a range of different indicators and risks associated with attraction towards violent extremism and no one single factor necessarily predominates. Different factors can occur at different times. It may well be in certain circumstances that it is experiences of discrimination in this country that are the determining factor, or it could be experience and insight into events that happen abroad.

Dr Thomas: To get back to Mr Betts's question, it is very true that background of people being attracted that way are very highly educated, and it is true that on some campuses there is a real issue. Again, those young people have not really been engaged in citizenship and democratic processes and their involvement is going in different directions. That is partly why I would argue for a broader community cohesion programme, to engage young people in much more democratic debates across ethnic backgrounds. We have got some examples of that, for instance the British Youth Parliament initiative around the Safe Space project and what local and national youth parliament processes are doing where young people from different backgrounds are

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engaging in very robust debates about foreign policy and national policy, but that is within a multi-ethnic and democratic background. Some of those young people on campuses are not getting engaged in wider democratic debate. At our own university, in Huddersfield, the Muslim Students' Association have got very involved in the students' union and play a really strong, positive role in wider student politics, and I suggest that is one example of the way forward.

Q119 Mr Betts: Can I turn that question round. You told me a few minutes ago that actually it was the poorer people in the community who were being radicalised. Now, the Youth Parliament is excellent and I have met them in Sheffield a couple of times, and they are very committed young people, but these are educated, intelligent people who are interested in wider political issues who are prepared to debate and engage with each other. It is not going to touch the vast majority of people, is it, who might be attracted towards either Muslim extreme organisations or the BNP, on the other hand?

Dr Thomas: It can be. Some of the research I have done in Oldham is about how youth organisations in communities in Oldham have tried to promote community cohesion so young people from every youth centre and youth project in Oldham come in together to celebrate Eid to discuss what the Muslim faith is about. These are very ordinary white young people from housing estates where there are pretty robust attitudes to other ethnic backgrounds. That community cohesion work is starting to change attitudes through building relationships and through creating safe space for young people to be around and to be together in a town where those safe spaces do not normally exist outside the school. There are not the avenues outside of the youth projects that enable people to come together because housing is very segregated and that is why I argue so strongly for community cohesion work to build resilience across communities as well within communities.

Q120 Chair: Do any of you work on communities in London because London is not segregated except in some extreme circumstances and you might get a different model.

Mr Mir: We have done research in London and we are working with community organisations in London. Do you want to know about the risk factors?

Q121 Chair: Yes.

Mr Mir: In terms of what Bob has already highlighted, there is not one risk factor, there are a number of risk factors leading to a similar outcome. One of the other risk factors is having a persuasive ideology which distorts Islamic theology which promotes religious language and imagery amongst vulnerable young people and takes advantage of foreign policy grievances. These are other risk factors. Coming back to the point in terms of what communities have suggested as solutions, as there is no one risk factor and there are a number of risk

factors, there is a number of solutions and responses that are required also to the various risk factors. We feel through our research it is suggesting that at a macro level community cohesion and a whole communities approach is required, building understanding between different communities, promoting shared values, but you need to prevent violent extremism still as a criminal activity, looking at it as part of the crime and community safety agenda. In the same way you would prevent gang crime, knife crime in London, you would prevent violent extremism among those that are vulnerable and at risk, and to do that the research is suggesting you would work in the local community infrastructure, work with credible individuals, organisations, individuals that have street credibility and have a good understanding of the religion also.

Q122 John Cummings: Do the advisers also have an opinion as to how the impact of British foreign policy on those at risk through radicalisation could be managed? You have identified a problem, but what do you say about how to mitigate it, to manage it?

Mr Mir: Is that directed at me?

Q123 John Cummings: Well, you are the one who just spoke about it.

Mr Mir: As my colleague has already suggested, room and safe environments need to be provided to discuss and debate foreign policy, particularly for young people. Another risk factor is an identity crisis or reaching a crisis point. Safe environments need to be provided to be able to debate and discuss the issues to do with foreign policy.

Q124 Alison Seabeck: Yes. International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion have talked about community cohesion and the difference between the values-based approach and the means-based approach and, slightly confusingly, you suggest they are mutually exclusive. It would help to have a little bit more on that. What are the strengths of the values-based approach?

Mr McDonald: Maybe I could respond to those issues there. First of all, the distinction between values-based and means-based approaches does not come from us. We were referencing it from something that we came across. It seemed at the time an interesting framework or conceptual framework to look at analysing the various approaches that were being taken that seemed to be quite varied. From our perspective, in our work we have tended to think in terms of macro and micro. There are macro approaches which Yaser and colleague have referred to in terms of community cohesion, which should be used as a tool across a range of different communities. It is separate from *Prevent*. We certainly see it as a separate part of *Prevent*. It does contribute to helping all people with a sense of values and loyalty to this country and a sense of belonging with commonly shared values being promoted. However, we have recognised through our work as well that certain micro, more targeted work, needs to be undertaken with particularly

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vulnerable individuals. That is where we see the agenda really forming part of the crime and community safety agenda. We have come across occasional examples of local project work undertaken by grass-roots community organisations who have that local credibility and understanding of particularly young people in their own areas, who are able to connect with those young people who are—

Q125 Chair: Can you give us a brief example?

Mr McDonald: Yes. There are examples of young men who have had drug-related problems and drug-dealing problems. Some of them have actually been ex-offenders. They have been found to be vulnerable to violent extremist narratives in their local areas and this has been promoted to try to give them an “in principle” justification for continuing their criminal activity. It has been called colloquially things like “economic jihad” and “chemical jihad” in terms of drug use and fraudulent activity—stealing credit cards and things like that.

Q126 Chair: A bit like the IRA robbing banks.

Mr McDonald: Yes. Those vulnerable young people then are actually prey to violent extremists, who encourage them to go to further stages, which is clearly dangerous.

Q127 Alison Sebeck: How important are the faith groups in getting to some of these people, the different religions, in terms of enabling access to and supporting those people particularly?

Mr McDonald: I would say very important. There needs to be a local street and religious credibility that the young people can connect with that does not come from far outside their local area, and that they are comfortable with and feel that those local organisations actually “speak their language” and can understand.

Dr Thomas: I see the values-based from a slightly different point. It seems like the Government has got itself into a bit of a cul-de-sac by asking organisations to essentially sign up in advance to values. For me, community cohesion is about building values and process, and one of the youth workers in Oldham said to me, “What we are doing with young people is helping them through a value change and that is very difficult”. We are talking about white young people as much as Muslim young people. You are asking them to take on different values. Values are created through processes, and surely organisations should be judged by what they are doing, are they doing cohesion work, rather than what they sign up to?

Q128 Alison Sebeck: That is important. My constituency is Plymouth and we had the Exeter bomber who came from Plymouth. It is not an obvious area and quite difficult to target, and therefore what you are saying is a broader community cohesion agenda is what places like Plymouth need rather than trying to target very, very small groups within our city.

Dr Thomas: I would agree that there should be a much more targeted programme aimed at individuals or peer groups in the way that is being suggested. In the first year of the Pathfinder activity CLG were pleased to say they had worked with 40,000 young people, virtually all Muslim young people. That is so broad brush. That is why in the submission we suggest there is such a disjuncture between the stated aims and the reality of what is going on on the ground. A lot of it is very good youth activity but it is mono-cultural youth activity and that is not getting the effects that we should be getting for our money.

Q129 Alison Sebeck: Intermediary groups therefore do have a use in this process whether they are faith groups or others.

Dr Thomas: Yes. I think there is a real danger that we reinforce one identity, which is young people’s faith identity. Research I have done in Rochdale show that all Muslim young people do see their Muslim identity as very important, but also they are very comfortable with British identity and they ask for cohesion. They want more contact with other young people. There is a real danger that we focus too much on faith. They are also young people and are also British and also Mancunians, they have got other identities as well.

Q130 Chair: Can I get at the specific question, which is my understanding of the difference between the community means-based and values-based thing. It was Mr Mir who said that some of these young people do not have a firm religious base which then leaves them vulnerable to extreme ideologies. Are you suggesting the government should be involved in building up their theological base, or are you suggesting somebody else should? The second question is, are there some organisations within the Muslim community that we should not be engaged with, or should engagement be with the widest possible range of organisations?

Mr Mir: Can you repeat the first part of your question?

Q131 Chair: If you were identifying that some young people do not have a very good understanding of Islam and, therefore, they are extremely vulnerable to extremists who come along and say, “We have got the answer” and it sounds good and coherent and so they go and sign up, what are you suggesting you should do against that? Are you suggesting the government should get in there and get more Muslim education going, specifically religious education going?

Mr Mir: No. In terms of those getting involved and vulnerable to violent extremism, they are religious novices and actually do not have an understanding of their religious faith, and it is not for the state to impose a values-based approach or a particular strand of the Islamic faith on the community. This is exactly what the community resents and feels that somehow the hearts and the minds of the community need to be won, when actually most of the community condemn acts of violence and crime, and

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therefore *en masse* the community's hearts and minds do not need winning. Therefore, it is for local community organisations, mosques, faith organisations, building their infrastructure, using local credible individuals, to work with those at risk and not working with all the faith community at large. Also, they must have a good understanding of their religion, so more capacity-building with local infrastructure and local community organisations, including the mosques and faith organisations. This is not the role of the Government. This is how communities see this.

Q132 Chair: The second question then is: if you are trying to get at the young people who are particularly at risk of radicalisation, there is an argument says you need to be working with groups which, whilst not involved in violence themselves, might share some of the religious analysis. Should those groups be worked with or should there be concentration on what one might call mainstream?

Mr Mir: There needs to be—communities have suggested this through our evidence—an inclusive approach of working with grass-roots organisations, those voices that are seldom heard as well. However, there cannot be engagement with groups that promote violence or acts of terrorism. This would be in any community. You need to work with grass-roots organisations that have credibility and understanding of the religion, but not those that promote violent extremism or extremism.

Q133 Mr Betts: You talk about working with mainstream organisations based in the community and everybody would accept this is a good starting point. What happens in a situation where some young Muslim men came to see me concerned about a situation where they thought it was the mosque that was actually radicalising some young people in the community rather unhelpfully and was not being challenged?

Mr Mir: Where the mosque is involved in radicalisation? I think if they are then they need to be challenged.

Q134 Chair: Yes, but who by? That is the question.

Mr Mir: The communities themselves. Other parts of the community. Our work is suggesting that the communities are best placed to tackle this.

Q135 Alison Seabeck: How difficult is that for established communities where people respect the mosque and everything it stands for? How easy it is for them to challenge the mosque and say, "We think this particular imam is doing X, Y or Z"? I cannot imagine it is easy.

Mr Mir: There is an issue with the mosques and imams not being able to engage with vulnerable young people.

Q136 Chair: That is not the question we are asking. In this example, which I accept you do not know the detail of, but just take it as it is, Clive gets approached by two young men in his constituency who say, "We are really concerned because the

mosque" whichever one it is "is actively promoting radicalisation." Now, are you suggesting they should go and speak to the imam? What do you do in a situation like that?

Mr Mir: If there are acts of violence that a mosque is promoting then they need to go to the police.

Q137 Mr Betts: It is not acts of violence; it is probably promoting views that may be at the fringe of Islam where people are being encouraged to take quite extreme views contrary to more mainstream Islamic thinking, which are not being challenged, and which are being pushed at probably relatively uneducated young people in the community, and also the imam himself is out of touch and has probably come from abroad and does not have an understanding of how British systems operate. There is a concern there that has been expressed to me on more than one occasion.

Dr Thomas: Going back to the first question, I totally agree there needs to be capacity-building. In Kirklees where I did some of my research there has been very good capacity-building within the madrassa sector and within incorporation of a lot more organisations in the form of management committees, but you saw in the first part of this session about how other faiths feel there is a very partial focus. While *Prevent* is so focused on one community and it is called a crime prevention programme, there is a disjuncture. I have a community work background, and salute really good capacity-building, but it has to be across all the communities and it has to be tied much more into promises and action on cohesion otherwise it looks like a very partial programme.

Q138 Chair: The trouble with that one, Dr Thompson—I do not know whether the rest of you were listening to the religious panel we had—I do not think any of the other communities were coming forward and saying, "We also have got a problem within our community of fanatical priests" or whatever. They were not complaining that they needed to be targeted by the *Prevent* programme. They were complaining, I think, that money was going to a community which was seen as problematic and money was not going to communities that were seen as not problematic.

Dr Thomas: They are very significant amounts of money, and I would agree with the point that one of them made that it seems to have squeezed cohesion out.

Q139 Chair: The suggestion that you then slid off into was the suggestion that we should be policing the theology of every community, which is not the question we were asking.

Dr Thomas: No, I am not suggesting we should police theology. Capacity-building of community infrastructure is different from policing of theology. At the moment capacity is being built in one faith community with the *Prevent* money but not in other faith communities, and I am suggesting that is problematic.

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Q140 Chair: Are you talking about community capacity or are you talking about religious capacity? You can have community capacity within—just to pick one—the Somali community in Sheffield, and you could have community capacity to help women within that community to be able to run mother and toddler groups or whatever. That is a different issue from the issue that Clive has raised about whether there may be some religious persons within some Muslim communities who are themselves purveying religion. That is not a community capacity issue, is it?

Dr Thomas: I am just saying that is what *Prevent* money is being spent on quite often.

Q141 Chair: Yes, but what we are trying to get at is, is it a problem if there are persons within a particular religious community who are using their position within their community to purvey a form of Islam which we have all agreed is not consistent with mainstream Islamic values nor particularly consistent with British norms? Is that a problem and, if it is, what should we be doing about it?

Mr McDonald: It is a very good example that you have raised and a very difficult one to answer.

Q142 Chair: That is why we are asking.

Mr McDonald: Absolutely. My response in consideration is go to the community and ask. There would need to be an exercise based upon a community engagement approach where you asked a range of different local people and got them involved in examining the particular problem that you have raised and listening to what their solutions were.

Q143 Mr Betts: Is this not part of the problem? I am not saying there is an easy answer because if I had the answer I would probably have done something positively than I was able to. The answer is what is the community there, is it not? If you go to the community, you might go to the community leaders, and they might be the people who are the leaders in the mosque as well, and as these young people said to me, and they were educated people and they knew exactly what the issues were and wanted to engage

across community boundaries, was “the last thing we would do is go to the mosque or give them any money because the people running this mosque are not interested.” They are perceived as the community leaders as well. It is a real dilemma, I think. I do not know how you get out of it.

Mr McDonald: I think some suggestions go beyond the community leaders.

Dr Thomas: That is why *Prevent* is partly trying to highlight the role of women and young people and probably rightly, but that is bound to create tensions. The previous speaker suggested that people without credibility in communities were being funded, meaning they are not established community leaders. These are community development tensions, very real ones and community workers have been very well aware of them. You will know better than I do, being representatives. There is still a disjuncture between what *Prevent* money says it is for and these nitty-gritty community development issues.

Q144 Chair: Just to finish, because we could go on for ever. Can I ask for a very quick “yes” or “no” really. Should *Prevent* be shoved into the Home Department and CLG should just concentrate on building capacity within communities and community cohesion? “Yes” or “no”, I think I would like from each of you.

Mr McDonald: That might be the answer! Cohesion work is very important, in a sense, whichever department. What matters is not which department does it.

Q145 Chair: It might alter the perception. I do not want to guide your answer! Anybody else want to try?

Dr Thomas: Yes, absolutely, providing the resources currently spent with CLG do go on cohesion because my concern is that there is not enough money for cohesion at the moment.

Mr Mir: Yes, in terms of cohesion CLG has a key role to play. In terms of the criminal element and the targeted work with vulnerable individuals, perhaps the Home Office has a key role to play on the criminality aspects.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Monday 11 January 2010

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Dr John Pugh

Alison Seabeck

Witnesses: **Councillor Margaret Eaton OBE**, Chairman, Local Government Association; and **Mr Robin Tuddenham**, Group Director for Safer and Stronger Communities, Calderdale Council, gave evidence.

Q146 Chair: Can I welcome everybody to this session which is a formal evidence session of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee as part of our Preventing Violent Extremism Inquiry. Could I just explain that because this is a formal session, which we normally hold in the House of Commons, though it is an examination in public and we are really pleased to see a significant number of people in the public gallery, it is not the sort of meeting where I am afraid there can be public participation. As part of this visit to Birmingham we have already had an informal meeting with a lot of people from the local community and we are going to visit a couple of groups, and those will be opportunities and have been opportunities for an actual dialogue, but this is a formal session with witnesses being recorded by the parliamentary shorthand writer and will be part of the formal record of this Committee and I am afraid members of the public cannot intervene, although if you feel moved please do drop a note afterwards with your views or comments to the Clerk of the Select Committee. So if we could begin this first session which is with representatives of the Local Government Association and I guess I should first of all congratulate Councillor Eaton on her recent honour. May we address you as Councillor Eaton?

Councillor Eaton: Please do. I would be very happy if you did. I would start looking round to see who it was you were talking about!

Q147 Chair: As I said, we have had an informal meeting before this where we had a lot of very interesting and frank views expressed, and I think one of the areas of our concern that we would like to rehearse with you is whether from the LGA point of view local authorities feel they actually have the expertise and knowledge to be able to carry out the *Prevent* programme as it is currently conceived within their localities?

Councillor Eaton: I would say yes because I think this is largely about communities and the well-being of communities and the ability of people to live together harmoniously and to be in a situation where we prevent extremism arising. I think local authorities and the elected members are the very people who understand the communities where they live. They understand the shortfalls and the things that they might need and I think they are best-placed to deal with particular issues, not in isolation but as the basis for partnership working with other agencies that work closely with local authorities, so I would say yes.

Q148 Chair: But from what you have said that is interpreting the purpose of the *Prevent* programme, it seems to me, as largely to do with community cohesion and not, as it certainly has been suggested in the past by government, more as part of crime prevention or counter-terrorism.

Councillor Eaton: I would say that the two work together. It is not either/or. Those two agendas sit very closely together because if you have harmonious communities then the likelihood of people feeling disaffected and moving into extremism is less. There are two different approaches. *Prevent* is a much more hard-edged approach than the community cohesion side of it, but the two things, I would suggest, run very closely together. A lot of what local government does through the cohesion and well-being activities can spot things that need to fall into the *Prevent* agenda, so it is not separation. I think that was one of the issues first of all when this whole idea of *Prevent* started that the Home Office and CLG were coming at the whole thing from slightly different positions and it was very difficult for local authorities quite to find their role. It was not completely clear. The Government seems to have recognised that local authorities are actually in a position of being responsible and doing well with this. That is why if you look at some of the activities that have happened recently there is a recognition from government that we can actually develop some of our particular aspects of work around sector-led support programmes which the CLG are funding, and funding the IDA to do, so they recognise that valuable work. The funding is very important because it is not ring-fenced, it is area-based, which clearly sends the message that the local area makes its decisions about how to manage that resource to deal with the *Prevent* agenda.

Mr Tuddenham: If I could just introduce myself. I am Robin Tuddenham and I am the newly appointed Director of Communities at Calderdale Council in West Yorkshire. Prior to that I was in Waltham Forest in East London for six years. Just building on what the Councillor has said, I think the two are complementary. I try to see it on a continuum but there is an element of community cohesion there which is good core practice role for local authorities to deliver, but there is an element of harder edge to this where we are building resilience in communities, and I think you have to build that from a basis of your work on cohesion because our role as local government and why *Prevent* exists is to get up-stream and intervene early and to build those

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networks of people in communities who work with local authorities, the police and agencies to actually work within schools, within public settings, within faith communities to work with us to tackle these issues. It is not about delivering counter-terrorism upon communities; it is working with communities on that agenda.

Chair: John, would you like to take up this issue about *Prevent* and community cohesion?

Q149 Dr Pugh: Just picking up on what you just said. Were you saying that the anti-terrorist side is about building resilience within communities? €

Mr Tuddenham: CONTEST clearly has four strands within it and *Prevent* is one of those and I think the distinct element of *Prevent* as opposed to other elements like *Pursue*, which is where you really are into a kind of security world, is trying to identify from an early basis risks within communities, involving communities in information-sharing in a constructive way and building trust with communities. I think the problem that counter-terrorism and security face is dealing with the symptoms and the effects of when things have gone wrong. There is a desire from the police and from security agencies to develop some capacity within communities very early on to share information, build trust and recognise the danger signs, and there is specific work around the *Channel* project as one example of trying to get in there early and develop early interventions because otherwise we are dealing with the consequences and the aftermath rather than the risks at a very early stage.

Q150 Dr Pugh: You presumably would agree with John Denham's proposals for the future of *Prevent* which is in some sense keeping a clear focus on the crime prevention and terrorist aspect and separating that from community cohesion initiatives and you said there that they are complementary.

Mr Tuddenham: They are complementary, they are inter-linked, but I think the way they are governed at local level is determined depending on what the local authority's strategic partnership approach is. It will not be a one-size-fits-all for local authorities. Many local authorities will have through the crime and disorder partnerships a very strong focus around *Prevent* and the whole counter-terrorism agenda. I suspect nearly all would have that. There are also other forums with communities where community cohesion works and is delivered. The key thing is that the key local players, the LSPs, need to have a close working relationship to make sure both those things happen effectively in a joined-up way.

Q151 Dr Pugh: Could you give you me some examples of local authority work which are clearly under the *Prevent* crime prevention anti-terrorism agenda which could not be seen as community cohesion initiatives?

Councillor Eaton: We can both make a contribution on this one. Particularly in areas of working with outreach youth workers who work in the community and who find and spot likely groups or individuals where there is obviously evidence or a suggestion

that they might go down the route of becoming an extremist. They are then channelled through activities for young people in a very positive and constructive way. That has come through mainstream community cohesion work and it is about preventing those young people—

Q152 Dr Pugh: Sorry, I am trying to tease out the difference between the two agendas which you said are complementary but you also accept are different. I am asking you to cite some examples of projects that belong to one agenda but do not necessarily belong to the other. You say that youth outreach work belongs to the preventative side?

Councillor Eaton: It leads to where there is a problem of stopping people being terrorists or going in that direction.

Q153 Dr Pugh: Are there any other local authority projects clearly under the banner of the *Prevent* agenda which could not be construed as community cohesion?

Mr Tuddenham: There are lots of community providers that we have begun to engage with around *Prevent* which we would not have done with cohesion and we have not done in the past. One example in London is the Active Change Foundation, who are very much focused on street-based outreach work with young people at risk of extremism. They also do work around young people at risk of gangs and there are some similarities in the type of approach that they have to both of those issues. What they will do is seek to directly engage in a street-based way—and it is happening in Waltham Forest and Brent and other parts of London—with individuals clearly at risk. The other thing they are doing is going into prisons and actually intervening.

Q154 Dr Pugh: How do you know these individuals who you do this outreach work with are people who are at risk of becoming extremists? How do you know they are at risk of becoming extremists? Presumably local authorities do not wander hither and thither meeting groups of youths on street corners in the expectation they might become terrorists? That sounds more like community cohesion?

Mr Tuddenham: The whole thing around *Prevent* and this whole new initiative is mainstream historic youth services have a role to play but there is some additionality that local community providers will play and we have developed work with a risk-based approach with those providers who have specialist knowledge of communities, so we are looking at local organisations who may be aligned to local mosques or other key forums of community representatives who have inside knowledge about the community.

Q155 Dr Pugh: So some youth work would be ordinary outreach youth work and some youth work would be counter-terrorism work under the *Prevent* agenda?

Councillor Eaton: Yes.

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Mr Tuddenham: ACPO, who I think you are speaking to later, are developing a set of interventions that are targeted around individuals at risk of extremism. That is something that they are putting into place because clearly it has to be locally based. It will not have credibility unless it is done at a local level and it is local practitioners and people that know local communities, so it is not imposing that model upon local communities.

Q156 Dr Pugh: I would ask the question, would it surprise you to know that a good number of people we have spoken to have seen these two agendas not as complementary but as antagonistic? Is that news to you?

Mr Tuddenham: No, it is not news. There is a certain level of concern about the *Prevent* agenda, both the language of the *Prevent* agenda and the approach and expectation of the *Prevent* agenda amongst both local communities and local agencies. We are very well aware of that.

Q157 Dr Pugh: And that view is wrong because they are complementary, according to you?

Mr Tuddenham: It is not wrong. That is how I see it and certainly the local authorities I have been working with—and I provide peer support to other local authorities—are seeking to build that so I know some local authorities will have their own language and their own approach to this in terms of how they actually explain it to communities. They will not necessarily say this is about preventing extremism because immediately upon conveying that people might disengage. There are other interventions at a higher risk level where you have to be quite explicit about the language you are using. You have to work very closely with the police on a risk-based approach to work with those individuals, particularly individuals coming out of prison. What I have been doing until recently in East London is developing a regional East London project for people coming out of prison who have been radicalised in prison. That is a real cause of concern. Their attitude to extremism and recruitment in prison is leading them to be very vulnerable coming into the community. I like to see it in terms of vulnerable people and the safeguarding work with particular individuals at risk.

Q158 Chair: Do you think local authorities are best placed to do this what is essentially intelligence work?

Councillor Eaton: Through the work that we do through social services, through child protection, through education, all the strands of local authority work brings local authorities into contact with communities and individuals and they know what happens in those communities. Very much more than any other organisation. Especially when they are working in partnership with others like the police. Local strategic partnerships work together. That is the agencies that all come together and decide on a strategy for that particular place. Most of the large places that we would talk about here today will have as part of that activity a strand within that community plan addressing both cohesion and *Prevent*.

Mr Tuddenham: Just to add that I could almost turn it round the other way and say that the police have been saying to local authorities for the past three or four years, “We cannot do this without you.”

Q159 Chair: That is a slightly different thing.

Mr Tuddenham: Because we are in a situation, particularly talking to head teachers, where the knowledge of the capacity of local young people within a head teacher or within a school is something that the police and intelligence services cannot access. Those local community groups where risks can emerge and concerns can be expressed and people can be vulnerable is not something that security services necessarily have an easy access into, so it is trying to give them that insight and knowledge.

Q160 Chair: But one example that we have heard of is a school reacting to two pupils discussing whether girls should or should not wear the hijab suggests that head teachers and teachers do not seem to have quite the right expertise either. They may know what is going on but they do not know what they should be reporting and what they should not.

Mr Tuddenham: There is some truth in that, that is absolutely right. I think DCFS are very aware of that and there has been some guidance to schools about learning together to be safe which is trying to give schools some knowledge to deal with these problems. We have done some training with all head teachers and with schools and school governors about this agenda on trying to understand *Prevent* and why it is important. I think there is an awareness raising issue.

Councillor Eaton: Can I just add to that that I think it is particularly important to hear from government why *Prevent* is important. It is a sensitive area but when it is expressed by government, the local authority can then be active without having the suspicion of being the instigators and I think that is an important element because then the communities know there is an issue and then the council members and officers can go in and design programmes and people are more readily accepting of what might be needed to be done in that way.

Q161 Alison Sebeck: Are you absolutely confident that local authorities have the capacity to pull all this together because there are so many strands. We have heard about education and community services earlier today, it is incredibly mixed, and some seem to be doing a lot better than others?

Councillor Eaton: That is always the case with all complex things.

Q162 Alison Sebeck: But you are sitting there saying we want to take this on, we can do this, but actually can you do this because it is a huge, huge ask?

Councillor Eaton: Of course it is but then everything local authorities do, pulling together all the strands of policy to deliver services, that is bread and butter to local authorities, and what I am saying is if you do not have local authorities engaging with communities in a productive and positive way in ways that have been mentioned I would think delivering *Prevent* would be almost impossible other than having some sort of

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dictatorial approach which I would think would be counter-productive and would *Prevent* the support of the elements of community that we need to be aware and supportive of what is trying to be done.

Mr Tuddenham: An example would be when you are dealing with a live arrest, a counter-terrorism arrest in your community and the resources and the challenges that creates for local communities and also local authorities. When you are picking up the pieces when it has gone wrong there is a real salutary lesson there.

Councillor Eaton: My own authority suffered badly from nothing to do with this particular agenda but really serious disturbances, and when there is the potential for things to erupt when there are issues around Iraq and sensitive issues for the community, the local authority plays a key role in finding where those pressures are, where things are likely to erupt and managing to steer positive activity rather than negative. There is some experience to show that these things are working. Nobody can ever say the thing is perfect, but I would say that we have got that capacity.

Q163 Mr Betts: One of the issues that was raised with us in our earlier discussions was whether government, whether it be national or local, has the capacity to identify who in the community they should be speaking to. They say that some of this *Prevent* strategy has amounted to a job creation industry for the great and the good who have been identified by those on high as the best means of communicating to ordinary members in the community. Do you think there is any justification for that?

Councillor Eaton: I do think we have all for some time lived under the misapprehension that there were “community leaders” and the more we see the more we realise, particularly amongst young people, they do not relate to those self-appointed community leaders, so I think it is an area where we need to be looking very carefully rather than appointing those who think themselves community leaders. That again can be helped by local authority elected members who know those communities, they know the individuals and they know people who really might have a lot of views to contribute that would be helpful but are not official community leaders as such.

Mr Tuddenham: Many local authorities have used funding to develop that kind of functioning amongst young people, for example, Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets as well, and that has been seen as an opportunity to address some of the gaps in engaging with some of our local communities.

Q164 Mr Betts: Where do you think the main gaps are? Is it trying to communicate with young people?

Mr Tuddenham: I think that is one. There have been issues about our engagement with women, particularly Muslim women, and involvement there. Also it is a constantly resource-intensive piece of work to refresh leadership within communities and it is very difficult not to get into the usual people upon whom you rely. I would not want to criticise some of these usual people because they are people who give up their own time who have an active role to play, but it is a constant effort to maintain a sense that they are really representing their communities and it is work

that has to be constantly refreshed all the time. You do not want to wait for a critical incident to be dealing with that. You want to develop that network of people very early on and constantly.

Q165 Mr Betts: There was also some criticism that to some extent the various programmes are self-selecting, that anyone who is perceived to have links or some involvement with what might be described as an extremist group is immediately cast on one side and it is thought inappropriate to have a dialogue with, yet are they not precisely some of the people who local authorities and others ought to be communicating with if this programme is going to be successful?

Mr Tuddenham: Absolutely. The police have actually invested in some counter-terrorism officers locally who have that community engagement role and have relied upon the knowledge and understanding of local authorities and local agencies to build links with some of those people. The Probation Service as well.

Q166 Mr Betts: It has also been said to us that as soon as a police officer arrives and somebody says to them “Are you a CTO?” and they say “Yes,” all trust is lost, not merely in that officer but in the rest of the programme and everyone associated with it because people are being criminalised.

Mr Tuddenham: There is an incredible thing about style and how people do that. We have a faith officer who is a police officer who has the ability to sit down with people and have a cup of tea and get to know people in communities and has built up an incredible personal knowledge of communities. It is that initial approach. It is how it is explained and the language that is used that is really important and also the skill of the police. The police have developed some really good skills in that but they need something for people to go on to.

Q167 Mr Betts: Are there any organisations then that local authorities should not be engaging with?

Mr Tuddenham: It is always difficult.

Councillor Eaton: That is a difficult one and I would not profess to be able to answer that question, not because I do not want to but because I do not think I am qualified to do so.

Mr Tuddenham: There was a national *Prevent* conference where we discussed the issue around premises and use of premises by certain groups. Again, you have to have a locally based approach to that. You have to be aware of the legal implications of action you take and you have to be aware of the risks of not taking action. I think that people will, quite rightly, have a different response to that. Some people will say these groups are going to be around and if they are going to hold a meeting we need to be there and engage in dialogue but others say they do not want them there, and I think we need to be listening to communities so sometimes, yes, but I think a locally based approach is the only way you can deal with it.

Q168 Dr Pugh: It has been suggested to us that it is actually quite difficult for local authorities to identify those who are at risk of becoming terrorist or

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terrorist-inclined, and I guess you could answer by saying the problem there for central government is worse for government but in terms of changing people's path, if you are able to identify them, one theme that has come across strongly in this inquiry so far is you need to persuade people to adopt a different ideology or rather not pick up an ideology that will lead them down the terrorist route. I heard your mention a few minutes ago a faith officer, but I think very few local authorities have got faith officers, and local authorities and municipal bodies are not normally equipped to change people's ideology or discuss foreign policy to any great extent. Is this a question mark against your competence not to identify somebody at risk of terrorism but changing their cast of mind so they no longer go down that road?

Councillor Eaton: A lot of local authorities do have faith forums which involve community members. Most of them, I do not know one that does not, have community faith forums where different faiths—

Q169 Dr Pugh: But not normally those people who have extreme views. I was speaking to somebody we were chatting to earlier who said that some of the people who have the most strong views that lend themselves to terrorism, certainly within the Islam faith, are very secretive about them. They do not show up at faith forums. People who turn up at faith forums tend to have bought into general values, do they not?

Councillor Eaton: But those people at the faith forum will often understand the nature of what the thinking is of some of their extreme members and they will know where their activity takes place and they may be able to help. It is diverting, it is not sitting somebody down and changing their view; it is getting somebody to live in society as we see it and experience it with a view that they are mainstream and part of it and that they can actually live contentedly here and be part of it. That is part of it. You cannot just focus on brain-washing somebody out of a situation. That is not what we are about and we could not be.

Q170 Dr Pugh: But you need to counteract minds, so what you are saying is that some people within a faith forum will be able to identify possibly within their own faith community those people who have a mind-set that is likely to lead to terrorism?

Councillor Eaton: Or the reasons why that mind-set has arisen and the kinds of issues that we as a society or a local authority need to be addressing to prevent more people going in that direction.

Q171 Dr Pugh: Are you aware of any examples of that being successfully implemented? In other words people have gone from faith forums back to their community, identified the people who are potential terrorists and changed their minds?

Councillor Eaton: There is a particular mosque in Bradford which has a very good reputation for forward-looking work and that community and that mosque is very heavily involved with others in trying to bring the attitude and approach of young people to be a positive one. That is bound to affect some people in other mosques.

Q172 Dr Pugh: Does the LGA, taking that example, play a role in spreading good practice!

Councillor Eaton: Most definitely, yes.

Mr Tuddenham: Both the LGA and also the Improvement Development Agency have a peer scheme which I am involved in which involves accredited peers who go to support other local authorities who are experiencing difficulties and working with members, officers and partners. This is not new for local government. We had the same discussion ten or 12 years ago about youth offending teams and preventing risk and changing attitudes and behaviours of young people at an earlier stage involved in youth crime. Local authorities have experience of working with people around behaviour and attitude change but also they are the providers of lots of interventions that you need to put into place. What the police clearly struggle with is they may develop skills for intervening with behaviours and thinking of an individual risk but they will not be packaging it with prevention. A person sleeping in a car that I might deal with who is expressing very worrying thoughts, the response to the potential mental health issues is not just about their attitudes and behaviour it is about accessing mental health interventions, it is about what is their housing need, and putting into place those interventions where local authorities and health and other providers are the only ones that can do that at a local level so it has to be joined into a seamless approach.

Councillor Eaton: There is a website developing good practice for people to access as well.

Q173 Chair: That is a person who is vulnerable who needs help. I do not see how that is part of combating violent extremism.

Mr Tuddenham: How else would you do that? Just addressing their thinking and behaviour in isolation? In the Probation Service, where I began my career, there was always a need to link the work you did around their cognitive distortions, their thinking, their behaviour and their offending with interventions which are going to reduce their risk.

Q174 Dr Pugh: To be fair, terrorist organisations are not stupid. They do not pick up people with cognitive disorders because they tend not to be very effective terrorists. Also people who are becoming effective terrorists need to be linked into the network so they can learn how to make bombs and use all their faculties to the maximum, so simply identifying vulnerable people out there in the community with cognitive disorders and strange sentiments is not going to combat terrorism, is it?

Mr Tuddenham: I think it is important to locate it in vulnerable people—

Q175 Dr Pugh: That is important as well.

Mr Tuddenham: Louise Richardson of Harvard has done some research on this and she says there are three things in place to make a terrorist. One is an ideology that is going to attract them. That is the first thing. The second thing is a community without, for whatever reason, the resilience to offer alternatives.

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And the third thing is the vulnerability and life experience of that individual. There are many individuals—

Chair: We do not dissent from that and we have had lots of evidence on that. The issue is not that. The issue is if you numbered all the people who fulfilled those three criteria that is a lot of people and the issue is whether it is appropriate to be using a counter-terrorism viewpoint -

Dr Pugh: And funds?

Q176 Chair: And funds, indeed, on that huge group of people which would meet those things and is that actually having any effect. Is it targeting sufficiently and would we be better actually using local authorities more to combat the obvious problems of deprivation and lack of housing, et cetera. That is the issue, I think.

Councillor Eaton: I just think we would think it is not either/or and the two are inter-linked in a way that really is essential.

Q177 Alison Sebeck: We have listened to a lot of people talking to us about the non-involvement in the various programmes of a number of groups either because they have not been brought into the loop by the local authority because they were not favoured groups—and central government have been accused of this as well; we bring people in who we feel comfortable with, and it is going back on this other point—but also that local authorities are not the best people to decide where that funding should go and it should be much more either third sector or grass roots up. What would be your view on that?

Councillor Eaton: What is more grass roots than an elected member who lives in the community? Democracy has an important part to play in this. As an elected member I would feel very affronted if I did not feel I was representing the grass roots in my

community, and the voluntary sector and working with them on all of these things. It is not one sector in isolation. Local authorities work all the time with the third sector, with community groups and with individuals so it is a combination of those things.

Q178 Alison Sebeck: Two very quick questions, one about whether or not money is being targeted in the right way. Should it be targeted on the basis of the size of the Muslim population or should the money be targeted in a wholly different way? Should it be taken to look across not just at Muslim organisations but other potentially difficult groups?

Mr Tuddenham: Firstly, the problem with doing it around the Muslim population is it is quite crude and it also does not take in the fact of wider forms of extremism, and we clearly have to address the wider forms of extremism. Secondly, there is a need to develop a kind of commissioning approach with other agencies. Local authorities do not do this in isolation. We do not just receive this money from government and then decide how to spend it in isolation. We are commissioning that work with the police, with the voluntary sector in partnership, and we are doing this together with them.

Q179 Alison Sebeck: How do you spread the message that this money is good for the whole community? Just because it is being targeted at the moment at one particular group obviously that in itself could be divisive, how do you spread the message that it is good for all?

Mr Tuddenham: An evidence-based approach is crucial. Many local authorities have done work to do mapping with their communities to understand the dynamics within the communities and to use the counter-terrorism local profiles, but I think that is still at a very early stage as a way of informing how money and how interventions may be delivered.

Chair: Right, thank you very much indeed.

Witnesses: **Ms Sheila Lock**, Chief Executive, Leicester City Council; **Ms Heather Wills**, Head of Community Cohesion & Equalities; and **Councillor Alan Rudge**, Cabinet Member, Equalities & Human Resources, Birmingham City Council, gave evidence.

Q180 Chair: Can I just ask each of you to say which council you are from, maybe starting over here.

Ms Wills: Heather Wills, I am Head of Community Cohesion & Equalities from Barking and Dagenham Council in London.

Ms Lock: I am Sheila Lock. I am the Chief Executive of Leicester City Council.

Councillor Rudge: Councillor Alan Rudge, Cabinet Member for Equalities & Human Resources, City of Birmingham.

Q181 Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We are interested obviously in exploring your specific experience rather than general principles, if we may, so if each of you could just explain what you think are the key issues that you have learned from dealing with violent extremism in your particular

area and whether there are aspects of your own local communities which have influenced the way in which you are approaching the issue?

Ms Wills: I think the importance of understanding *Prevent* from a local perspective is absolutely fundamental, which goes back to the point about the role of local authorities working as part of local strategic partnerships. We have each understood the issues and the challenges of *Prevent* as they affect our own local area and I am very conscious that the issues in Barking and Dagenham are very different from the issues that Robin has been facing in Waltham Forest or down the road in Tower Hamlets, and that is something about the levels of people in the population who are already radicalised or who are at risk of radicalisation. It is a real continuum and therefore the interventions that we have and the nature of our action plans will vary very much, so that is why it is very important

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for us to each understand the local context and develop our own action plans, albeit informed and supported by the learning that our colleagues elsewhere in the country are doing.

Q182 Chair: The answer I was hoping for was a specific example from Barking and Dagenham of what you believe in your borough are the key issues that you are focusing on, particularly given you have extreme right wing activity going on as well.

Ms Wills: For us the work that we do on *Prevent* is very much embedded within our wider approach to community cohesion and therefore we certainly would not see it as something separate. It is just as important that the wider population does not form a mistaken view that there is a problem with radicalised Muslims in our borough; there is not. What we have identified is there is a risk of radicalisation, risk of extremism and therefore it is appropriate that we put in place measures to prevent that happening in the future.

Q183 Chair: I am still having difficulty, pragmatically, specifically how do you do that?

Ms Wills: To give you an example, one of the focuses of the programme that John Denham has focused around is about improving and increasing the resilience of communities to deal with these issues themselves, so for example we are developing a community forum for Muslim communities as a subset of our local faith forum to build capacity in local community leaders so that they can take leadership and ownership of this and as they identify concerns in their communities we can support them rather than the local authority going in there and doing it to people, so it is about building capacity, confidence, understanding of the risks of the prevention agenda in local Muslim communities.

Q184 Chair: The same question obviously but in relation to Leicester?

Ms Lock: Leicester is a very diverse city, as members of the Committee probably know. Our approach generically has been one of partnership with the agencies including the police, probation, local prisons and with local community groupings. We are very much taking an approach that is unique to Leicester. I would not in any way suggest it is an approach that can be provided in other places for some of the reasons Heather has already said, but the main elements of our approach have been firstly to understand our communities better. That is because the nature of the way *Prevent* funding has come to us has made assumptions, I think, that the Muslim community is a homogenous group and our own experience has been that that is not the case, and therefore we have had an element which has been about social research, working with our local universities to understand our communities better and to understand our Muslim communities better. Secondly, to make sure that our approach is rooted in a sustainable strategy for cohesion which is about strong, resilient neighbourhoods which have an accountability democratically to local ward engagement processes. Thirdly, to focus on specific

work with groups that we know we need to work with on the *Prevent* agenda, so young people, women in particular, promoting the next generation of community leaders, specific mentoring support for vulnerable people are some examples of some of that specific work that we have undertaken.

Q185 Chair: I believe you have renamed the programme. Is that right?

Ms Lock: Yes, we do not talk about *Prevent* in Leicester. *Prevent* for us created a number of issue in terms of creating a barrier that we felt was unnecessary, so we retitled it and talk about moderation and the way in which we mainstream moderation as part of our community cohesion strategy.

Q186 Alison Seabeck: Is that programme just using *Prevent* money or are you drawing in funds from elsewhere?

Ms Lock: No, it uses a variety of funding coming together, so in effect what we create is a virtual pooled pot of funding which enables us locally to determine how best we set that against a set of priorities, so we use some of our money around neighbourhoods, we use some of our money that is delegated towards community meetings and democratic accountability but we also use some of the money that is available to us through *Prevent* resources. What we have tried to do is develop a coherent strategy that recognises that there is a continuum here that we are talking about building strong, resilient communities that can cope with all sorts of issues, through to dealing with those issues which are at the very far end which are, quite rightly, the jurisdiction of the police, those issues that are hard end, but also making sure that it is rooted in a strategy for tackling disadvantage and some of the reasons why people exhibit extremist behaviour perhaps because they are disenfranchised from the local systems of democracy.

Q187 Mr Betts: Just two follow-up points. First of all, have you any problems with the CLG or the Home Office approving funding being used in that way? Secondly, is the funding of those programmes available just for use within the Muslim community or within the wider community as well?

Ms Lock: In terms of the first question we had some difficulties initially, yes, and that probably will not come as a surprise. That was because the funding was so rigidly interpreted in relation to *Prevent* and was to some extent at odds with the approach that we wanted to take locally and that we wanted to take on the basis of consultation we have had with our community groups. We stuck to our guns really and felt that if we were going to make use of that money that a broader spectrum and a broader approach was necessary. To some extent that has been reinforced in the later guidance and in John Denham's speech in December. I think that was really important to us. In terms of the specificity of applying the funding to just Muslim groups, we wanted an approach in Leicester that enabled us to talk about building strong, resilient communities across the piece that

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made resilience have a resonance for our community groups, whether we were talking about Muslim extremism or the activities of the far right, and so talking about a virtual pooled budget approach around neighbourhoods enabled us very much to take that kind of approach where we could be more distributive in our allocation of funding across a broader spectrum of services to be available at local and community level.

Q188 Dr Pugh: Could I ask you about the word “resilience” and your use of it because it does intrigue me what exactly this word means. Is it possible to have a community becoming more resilient but less well integrated or cohesive with the wider society?

Ms Lock: I think that is possible. That is why what you have to have is an approach that is about building strong, healthy communities in the context of safety but also in the context of making sure that you have cross-community dialogue. I guess that is why we took that kind of broader approach in Leicester to thinking about what resilience actually meant. For us it meant working with communities to make them stronger to all sorts of issues but also making sure that across the city as a whole that there were opportunities for better cross-city dialogue between different communities. That was really important because the geography of Leicester is you have very settled patterns where communities have settled in the city. Just as you heard in the earlier evidence that no local authority is the same, I think it would be wrong to assume that every single neighbourhood is the same or indeed the needs of one group, particular faith or religious group in one area is the same as that particular group in another area of the city. They are hugely diverse.

Q189 Dr Pugh: So communities can be resilient but not lose any of their natural traits? I imagine that very orthodox Jewish communities that exist in parts of London and Manchester are incredibly resilient but inward looking to some extent and you are suggesting that part of resilience is ability to negotiate with the outside world?

Ms Lock: Absolutely and to be outward-looking not just inward-looking and to use that as a strength so that what you are doing is playing into a city like Leicester the strengths that some of those communities bring rather than looking at it from a deficit model.

Q190 Chair: Can we move on to Councillor Rudge from the Birmingham point of view.

Councillor Rudge: This was brought about because I was going to initiate something in my own right. We had Operation Gamble which was a police operation in Birmingham which caused considerable emotion in parts of the community as to the way it was carried out and the way it was operated, and the way information was leaked to the press and media. As a result of that I held various meetings in the Council House with people representing the communities and areas which were most affected.

Q191 Chair: What year was this?

Councillor Rudge: This was early 2007. Out of these meetings I tried to work out what were the areas that they most wished me to lead in activities to reduce the potential of upset and, you might say, to create more resilience in the communities and also reduce the chances of misinterpretation of what is taking place and also to look at the way in fact it tainted areas which just because they had someone who had some criminal intent it tended to taint the whole area where the criminals were located as if they were all part of the same thing. As a result of this five themes came out, which I put in my report to you. The things which came out were media, women, young people and projects which linked things together. They were the ones of maximum concern particularly the way the media had played it out and where they did not feel there was trust as to where the operation had taken place and it was maximising disturbance. As a result of these meetings I decided that it would be appropriate for me as leader of community cohesion as a separate thing to try and work out how we could deal with the issues they had mentioned. Fortunately, at the same time the Government said that they were interested in preventing violent extremism, so as a result of that it looked as though that funding would be very apposite in trying to achieve what I wanted to achieve, so we put forward a bid which was made up of 11 different parts under those headings. Fortunately, we were successful and we received £525,000 as a pathfinder project. We had a nine-month period and that would test out these different things. The important point was that we were allowed the topics we had chosen which we thought were the ones that would be effective, so we were allowed to proceed with the ones we had chosen and thought of, which is why obviously I was pleased to have the opportunity of that extra funding because otherwise I would not have been able to carry out all the projects; I would only have been able to carry out a few of them because we would not have extra funding. At no time have we overplayed the title. We had minimised the title. We did not go as far as Leicester but we tended to use the phrase “PVE” rather than “Preventing Violent Extremism” because it was not popular because of its misnotation, but nevertheless if you explained what we were trying to do and where we were coming from was the result of three big meetings in the Council House, they knew that what we were doing was what they wanted to have done so they tended to say so long as you did not pronounce it heavily and use “PVE” the issue went away. In the future I think that is something that needs to be looked at as to whether that is the appropriate phraseology to use for what we are talking about.

Q192 Chair: Have you had parts of the community that have not got involved because it is called *Prevent*?

Councillor Rudge: We must have had really though they would not have said that to me. Obviously the direction of the categories we are talking about in themselves, to satisfy the criteria of the PVE

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programme, meant they to be orientated towards people of the Muslim faith or deemed to be Muslim communities and that was a narrowly defined part of the original pathfinder.

Q193 Chair: So you have focused yours entirely on the Muslim community not the wider community?

Councillor Rudge: We were advised that was way to claim the money and those were the projects we did. Somewhat similar to the previous speaker, we have been attempting to broaden the scope of the use so that we can build up resilience in all areas which are affected by any forms of extremism which is of a nature which could lead to violence but not necessarily be of violence because obviously incitement can be as provocative as actually doing and of course it can encapture people into what they want to achieve, what they have incited which ends up in violence.

Q194 Alison Seabek: How comfortable are you as local authorities in terms of dealing with organisations in your individual areas who may be seen by others to be slightly more extreme or difficult? Would you embrace those organisations if they wanted to participate or if your Muslim communities felt they ought to be participating?

Councillor Rudge: I certainly do not think I would use the word “embrace”. What we are trying to do is prevent people from joining organisations that we might consider a threat to the stabilisation of our city and our country, and so therefore one would be very cautious if we were advised to do it and we would have to investigate it very carefully. People do get handles which perhaps they do not deserve sometimes.

Q195 Alison Seabek: How do you make a judgment? If you have a mosque for example which perhaps may not be signing up to the *Prevent* programme because they would rather do it their way, who feel that whilst they may not be directly be involved there are certain individuals who they think should be involved but you have concerns about them, how do you deal with them?

Councillor Rudge: It is very kind of you to give me an easy example. I would obviously include any mosque which wanted to enter into a dialogue or any organisation of that nature. If you are talking about a prescriptive group, I think I would—

Q196 Alison Seabek: No, I am not, I am talking about groups in the community who may well perhaps have sprung up fairly recently, that perhaps do not have a long-term history in the community and therefore it is quite difficult to judge precisely where they are coming from. People get a bit suspicious about new groups popping up but which may well have a lot of backing. It may be a group of young people. We know groups do appear. How would you engage with them?

Councillor Rudge: I would engage.

Q197 Alison Seabek: They are not somebody your local councillor knows.

Councillor Rudge: I would have engaged regardless of the PVE programme because it is part of my desire to create a city which is harmonious where people get on together. If you ignore groups you are creating problems for the success of what I am trying to achieve so they would have been engaged anyway. PVE fortunately gave me some funding which I could specialise in engaging in those areas. A perfect example is misplaced publicity was created about a mosque in our own city and it had a programme on the television. I have got very involved with that mosque and that mosque itself has now gone through our governance arrangements and has a very healthy democratic structure in its operation, of its own choice, with our help wherever they required our help, and they now are a major part in our community and are playing a major role in the success of our city.

Q198 Chair: Can I just ask on that, would you feel equally happy about interfering in a church or a Sikh temple that seemed to have a not terribly democratic mode of operation?

Councillor Rudge: The important thing is we do not interfere. I would not interfere in the first place but what we gave was options and opportunities and entered into a dialogue and said what we could offer.

Q199 Chair: Would you enter into a dialogue with a church?

Councillor Rudge: If they wanted help. I do enter into dialogue with all the faiths. I have set up a faith round table. In fact I am meeting next week in my faith round table and the important thing is to engage with them if they want assistance and ideas. We inform each other. I have got a list of things for my faith round table which includes faith auditing of the voluntary work they do and I would be more than pleased to embrace all the major faiths in our city which play an important role.

Q200 Chair: Ms Seabek’s question about the quality of engagement to the other two?

Ms Lock: I was just going to say the nature of local partnerships is critical to deal with the kind of issue that you are raising. As in Birmingham, Leicester also has a very active multi-faith group as well as a variety of community leadership groups that meet on a regular basis to talk about some of those issues around allocation of funding. However, I also think that the way in which you allocate money in itself is not the end of the process. It is also about the accountability that comes with funding received. I think there are challenges around how you measure whether the money is being used for the purposes for which it is being given. For me locally it has been one of the challenges around the use of some of the national indicator set and indicator 35 which is around preventing violent extremism. For me one of the indicators that is much more helpful in measuring impact at a local level is—and I am sounding very anoraky now—NI2 which is the one around sense of belonging locally because I think

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that gives you an indicator set that can give some very tangible outcomes and outputs that you expect and that you can then monitor the way in which funding is used as a contributory factor to that outcome set.

Q201 Alison Seabeck: Just to come back on that, do you have a sense that money going in through the programme is better targeted at that particular indicator than the other one?

Ms Lock: Yes,

Q202 Alison Seabeck: Because you are more likely with the other one, as we heard in previous sessions, that money just goes to odd little conferences with nice dinners and does not actually get down to the problems.

Ms Lock: For me at a local level being able to frame a set of outputs and outcomes that link to that sense of belonging indicator has been much more helpful in measuring whether giving funding has made a tangible difference.

Q203 Chair: Can you answer the original question?

Ms Wills: Yes I would certainly endorse that as well. For us national indicator number 1 is one part of our local area agreement.

Q204 Chair: Remind us what that one is.

Ms Wills: The percentage of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together, the community cohesion indicator. We saw that as a major priority. For us NI35 is a self-assessment, it is a check-list of are you putting things that are seen as the right inputs into the process. The outcomes, as my colleagues says, are in national indicators 1 and 2 in particular. That is why we took that decision in our local area.

Q205 Alison Seabeck: Finally a question that has again come out of other evidence is a lot of this is being seen to be top-down. Even at local authority level it is still seen to be top-down. What advice would you give to Muslim organisations about how they can best engage and participate and feel part of the programmes in your individual local authorities?

Ms Wills: Where we started at the very beginning when there was a suggestion that we would be a pathfinder authority is we brought together all of the community contacts we had and talked with them about how do we think together we can address this. So we have a steering group made up of community representatives, representatives of the council and the police, and together we work to pull together an action plan each year, so it is not about the council imposing actions, it is about the ideas and the engagement being very much from the community within the context of the *Prevent* objectives that are set for us.

Q206 Alison Seabeck: But all of you at some point say there is a gap in terms of women and young people here. Any advice to the wider public who are going to be reading this?

Ms Wills: We are fortunate in that we have two very strong community organisations for women in the Muslim sector locally and they are on our steering group. We have got some very good work with young people going on by a number of the organisations who are on our steering group as well, so we very much recognise it as a priority and it has been part of our action plan throughout.

Ms Lock: I would endorse the comments made by my colleague from Barking and Dagenham but I would also add that sometimes I think we make ourselves feel better by thinking that you go out there and you encourage people to apply and you somehow cover the spectrum, and it does not work like that. I think that you have to really work at the way in which you engage local communities, not just Muslim communities but the whole spectrum. I think that is why local authorities are in a good place to deal with these kinds of issues because you have that democratic accountability, but you also have lots of front-line services out there on the streets talking to people about all sorts of things. I think that in itself can act as a particular catalyst to try and make sure that you get that broader representation of engagement that is necessary.

Q207 Chair: Councillor Rudge?

Councillor Rudge: I agree with what Leicester said then. My own view is although you cannot be top-down you cannot automatically give the monies to organisations and obviate your responsibility to try and work out what really is going on. You have to go down to the very base level. What we have tried to do in a number of our youth inclusion projects and youth opportunity projects, for example, is to go right down to the workers who are delivering at the face with the youngsters and they produce programmes with us and we finance as they go along. We do not just give lump sums to people and then they do what they want with it. The point about it is we are at the very level of meeting the people who we want to build the resilience in, the ones who could easily be influenced to go in the wrong direction, the ones who we want to feel they are part of our city and are appreciated and reengage them if they are being disengaged into our city. The projects we are doing like that satisfy both criteria. They have sufficient confidence that we have clear accountability and we have sufficiently involved ourselves as the local authority, we are not just passing it on to someone else, and we are right down at the level where we are supposed to be dealing with people. I agree with Sheila that I think local authorities have the best opportunity being a democratically elected group who should have their feet on the ground in their communities to help deal with the situation in a basic way.

Q208 Mr Betts: Just following up this issue about how we can measure success in terms of this programme. I suppose at one level we do not end up with extremists who do things we would rather they did not do. I want to follow up on this idea that you can get a better measure in terms of sense of belonging, which I think Sheila Lock referred to, in

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terms of creating an atmosphere where extremism is reduced. First of all, I am not quite sure how you measure that. Perhaps you could advise me. Secondly, is it not quite possible that you can have a sense of belonging amongst the vast majority of the community but the ones who do not have that sense are the ones we ought to be worried about because they are still detached and alienated and we have not got to them?

Ms Lock: I think there is a validity in what you are saying around how do you make sure that in measuring the money it has made a difference to the very people you want to make a difference to. Of course, we do have with indicators 1 and 2 an opportunity through things like the Place Survey to measure in our surveys of local residents within our cities whether they feel part of the city, whether they feel engaged in what is happening in the city, and that whole process of democratic engagement in particular, but we also have other measures at a community level, and I think the complexity of what we are talking about here is that there is not one answer to many of these difficult problems that we face and you have to draw information and evidence about whether it is working from many sources and triangulate that. If you simply took NI1 NI2 and said we will measure that once a year or on a six-monthly basis, or however you decided to do that, and that will be our measure for judging success, that in itself would not be enough and I think that is why for us locally sitting some of this work within the context of what we are doing in our neighbourhoods and what we are trying to do in the city as a whole gave us a much broader set of things against which we could judge whether we were making a difference because this is a continuum from people becoming disaffected for all sorts of reasons at a local level, through poverty or education or all sorts of things, right through to those people who then take those grievances to the far extreme and become involved in activity that is not appropriate, so one solution on its own, one set of frameworks will not give you the kind of answers to the complex questions that you face.

Q209 Mr Betts: Does that mean we cannot measure success?

Ms Lock: We can measure success in terms of looking at whether the way in which at a local level we are working is making a difference to the way in which people feel about where they live, but on its own that will not be enough; we have to do other things. That includes doing some of the hard-edged stuff which our police colleagues are most actively involved in, which is identifying those individuals who are going to go on to be involved in violent extremism and dealing with that. I think that is quite rightly the territory of our colleagues within the police.

Q210 Mr Betts: Can I just follow that up. It is an issue that has come out from time to time that the police quite rightly have a community policing role which fits very well with some of the things you have just been describing, and clearly there has to be a

good working relationship with the police on these issues. The police also have that hard edge and counter-terrorism officers may approach things in a slightly different way. How do you ensure that when working with the police and recognising they have that hard-edged role (and sometimes local authorities may need to approach some problems in that way as well) you do not give a stigma to the whole of the programmes you are trying to debate because “you are only getting this funding because we think you are likely to be extremists”?

Ms Lock: Those kinds of challenges are the kinds of challenges that people in local government leadership face all the time about the way in which on the one hand you deliver services but sometimes you might deliver services that people do not want. We do that in a lot of circumstances. I think the dialogue that you have at a local level amongst partners is really critical, so if you are evaluating information that is available to you, you are making those kinds of judgments about when the line is reached at which the matter quite rightly becomes a matter that on a single agency colleagues need to deal with. For me and for Leicester on some of these issues around some of that very hard-edged set of risk factors that suggest that at a local level criminal activities are carried out, that is a police matter. My role as a local authority chief executive is very much about making sure that we have good strategies locally that encourage people to get on well together and live in our community safely and protected. I accept that in this current climate there are some individuals that quite rightly police colleagues have to deal with.

Q211 Chair: Can I just ask you on that, do you think it should be the police who should be leading *Prevent* or the local authority? I accept that both should be involved but who should be leading it?

Ms Lock: My view is that local authorities should be leading it and my view is based on the fact that this is really about us working to prevent radicalisation and to make sure that people do not reach that point where it becomes a criminal matter. I think that local authorities have a very good track record in delivering a whole range of preventative services at a local level and recognising where that line is and being able to pass that on when that is appropriate, but I think if we are talking about ways in which we work with our communities and ways in which we engage with our communities, the best people to have that local leadership role are local authorities in partnership with their LSPs at a local level.

Q212 Dr Pugh: You used the word “radicalisation” and I notice it was used earlier on, but in fact *Prevent* in terrorism is not about preventing radicalisation, it is about preventing violence. Is it the local authority’s job to inhibit people from holding radical opinions?

Councillor Rudge: I think it really depends what you mean by radical opinions. Most people are not quite sure what radical means most of the time.

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Q213 Dr Pugh: Let me give you an example. Obviously foreign affairs features in the radicalisation of some people anyway. If you have quite strong views on international affairs that differ markedly and radically from the rest of the population, is it the local authority's job to prevent them?

Councillor Rudge: If that person advocates certain steps to achieve the support of the aims which he is talking about and thereby encouraging people to take steps which would destabilise his community he lives in and his country—

Q214 Dr Pugh: So you are not against people in their communities holding radical views so long as they preface that or add to that the fact that they do not advocate violence?

Councillor Rudge: I think we have to accept that people are entitled to have different views but if the views threaten the actual structure of the society that the person is residing in then it has reached a stage where it is of concern to us. If you are trying to have a cohesive city and you have somebody who is breaking it up or fragmenting it, you have a worry.

Q215 Dr Pugh: In the case of Barking you have councillors who have some quite radical views, do you not? Is it your job to prevent people having radical views like that as a local authority? There might be a general view that people ought not to have those views and we combat them politically but is it the job of the statutory local authority to prevent people from having those views given that some of the elected members are elected on those views?

Ms Wills: Given that you are particularly referring to the Barking and Dagenham context, clearly there is an official opposition in the council made up of the British National Party which is a perfectly legal party and therefore it is legal.

Q216 Dr Pugh: Are their views radical?

Ms Wills: There are some people who would count them as that.

Q217 Dr Pugh: Do you count them as that?

Ms Wills: The distinction I would make is that the council has a responsibility where there is a risk of violence and, as Councillor Rudge says, where there is a risk to the stability and the community cohesion of the local authority.

Q218 Dr Pugh: Do the views of those elected members have that threat?

Ms Wills: On the majority of occasions the local members pursue their role as local councillors. Whether they be councillors or members of the public, if they were to get involved in a violent demo for example, then clearly our colleagues in the police and we would be concerned about that.

Q219 Dr Pugh: Can you though accept that there is distinction between preventing somebody from terrorist action, where they would need to take a

series of steps to find out about bombs and all that kind of thing, affiliate to a network and so on, and preventing people from adopting views which you and I would regard as radical and in some cases wholly unacceptable? There is a difference, is not there?

Ms Wills: The issue is that this is an agenda and set of the objectives that are about prevent. There is a continuum—

Q220 Dr Pugh: It is a preventing terrorism not preventing having radical views strategy, is it not?

Ms Lock: Yes. What we have to be aware of is that there is a continuum of views that will start with a number of risk factors and we need to be aware of those risk factors and have a range of interventions we can put in place when we see those risk factors rather than leaving it to a stage where people have become so radicalised that it is very difficult to make interventions.

Q221 Chair: We are actually getting somewhere here. To use the BNP prism, you could say that those individuals who are likely to go out and indulge in racist attacks are quite likely to have been radicalised through membership of the BNP expression of racist views, which is not to say that every member of the BNP is necessarily involved in violence. As part of the *Prevent* programme, and specifically as part of the *Channel* project, if you are looking at individuals who may be on the route towards violence, do you include in that individuals who are members of the BNP expressing racist views and suggesting everybody who is not white should be sent home again? Is that also a trigger?

Ms Wills: Can I be clear for the record the work that we are doing in Barking and Dagenham following the objectives of the *Prevent* programme are very specifically targeted at reducing the risk of violent extremism in the Muslim community.

Councillor Rudge: That is correct. The Government did say that. It did also say in the note that we should challenge extremist ideologies and support mainstream voices, which is quite clear as well. I think the whole point we are saying is if anyone who wants to disrupt what we are trying to do in community cohesion—the left, right or centre through violent extremist ideology—our job is to try and challenge it from the point of view of the community.

Q222 Dr Pugh: I may be a person who is against a degree of community cohesion, say for example a Muslim who would like to see Sharia law in a very strict form common throughout the whole of their particular community. That is quite a radical view in the UK and quite exceptional in the Muslim community. It does not follow from that necessarily that they are advocating a violent solution. It is the case that they have a radical view and it is the case that their view is counter to community cohesion but it is nothing to do with extremism per se, is it?

Councillor Rudge: It depends what you are talking about. If you are thinking it might engender extremism then you ought to consider it. For

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example, I have advised the Minister, and he has agreed, that we should tackle other areas and we should not stick narrowly to Muslim areas because other areas are affected by what you do. One criticism we frequently have is, “Why are you always putting funding in certain areas and ignoring other groups of people completely?” You have to get a balance to win your community over. If you want to look at it we are doing two other areas outside because we want to measure the effect of things that are being said on other communities and how they feel about it. If you are trying to prevent you are trying to get to a stage where you can prevent, not after the event. We are trying to be there at an early stage to build resilience and it needs to look at all communities. One of the things they could consider about the PVE programme is widening it, as the Secretary of State was saying, so it does not exclude looking at the issue which I have just mentioned.

Q223 Dr Pugh: So what you are saying is that funds which are allocated essentially for preventing violent extremism can also be deployed to discourage people from forming groups, affiliations, sets of beliefs and so on which would render them less cohesive with the rest of the community?

Councillor Rudge: I never said anything like that at all. What I did say was that people in other areas can be affected by what is occurring and we may need to consider what the effect is on that area and consider whether we can assist in this because we may need to prevent other issues arising as an effect and that is something we ought to consider because that is a knock-on. What we have actually said are there any initial things—the words are of course “preventing violent extremism”—and that could cover any form of problems. Other areas are affected by what you do. If you constantly put money into certain areas other people affected may well feel isolated themselves so we have to consider the big picture as well when we are doing this. I am sure many people in some of our communities and other ethnic communities feel the same. You have to think of the whole picture and Preventing Violent Extremism was narrow because at the time (and still) there was a prevalence in certain areas where we need to build up more resilience, but we cannot ignore other areas at the same time.

Q224 Chair: Ms Lock, on this issue of quite how far local authorities are going to get into policing thought.

Councillor Rudge: They do not do it at all.

Ms Lock: The local authority role is not to act as “thought” police very clearly but it does have a community responsibility to ensure that it has an

area which is safe which takes appropriate steps to actually keep people safe by talking with local people in a way that is partnership. I think the debate has just illustrated exactly why *Prevent* on its own cannot deliver the kind of safe communities that we are talking about and local authorities have got to see *Prevent* as part of a range of activities taking place at a local level to deliver safe communities. The assumption that somehow you have *Prevent* and you apply it to your Muslim population and it will be okay is nonsense because actually *Prevent* in itself is creating enormous tensions between sections of the Muslim community for some of the reasons that have been already highlighted in the question, because the way in which you can use that funding to help minimise the risk and create protective factors, which is what we are trying to build for some people who potentially might go down that extremism route, the money is a very finite pot anyway so it has to be targeted as appropriate.

Q225 Dr Pugh: Are we not muddying the waters a little bit here. You talked about safety. In my example, I would find it deeply regrettable and sad if a small section of the Muslim community who quite happily wished to pursue a style of life as in fact Orthodox Jewish communities have done in certain parts of the country which in a sense cuts them off from the wider community, which follows strict norms which they are very comfortable with themselves (although other people may not be) and it would make them, in your view, less resilient and less community cohesive but it certainly would not make them safe. It would also make their views more radical. I do not think you can use safety as a basis for actually discouraging all the things you wish to discourage.

Ms Lock: Resilience for me is not just about safety. It is about a whole set of community factors—

Q226 Dr Pugh: I am trying to figure out what.

Ms Lock:—which are part of a city and part of that democratic engagement and that democratic life. I think the way in which we have approached it in Leicester is very much to say *Prevent* is a stream of funding that comes in that is very much targeted at that Muslim community, but what a wasted opportunity that would be if we just saw it in that way. What we have tried to do is see it in a much broader kind of way that links to neighbourhood planning and community cohesion. I think that is legitimately within the realms of a local authority’s work.

Q227 Chair: Thank you all very much. If we could move on to the last set of witnesses.

Ms Lock: Thank you.

Witnesses: **Sir Norman Bettison QPM**, ACPO lead for *Prevent*, Association of Chief Police Officers; **Mr Jonathan Charlton**, Strategic Policy Adviser, *Prevent*, Association of Police Authorities; and **Councillor Paul Murphy**, Chairman, Greater Manchester Police Authority, representing the Association of Police Authorities, gave evidence.

Q228 Chair: We are squeezing you down slightly but we were getting into a very interesting line of questioning there and I think it probably suggests to you the lines we are going to want to be pursuing with you particularly. Can I start off really with asking if you could clarify from the point of view of the police firstly whether you think you are in charge or local authorities are in charge of the *Prevent* programme in each locality and, secondly, whether you think there is a tension between the police view of what *Prevent* should be doing, which may be the Government's view but we will leave that to one side, and local authorities' views of what *Prevent* is trying to achieve?

Sir Norman Bettison: I am Sir Norman Bettison, the Chair of the Association of Chief Police Officers and Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police. I am very clear that if *Prevent* were left to the police it would fail.

Q229 Chair: Could you explain why?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes, because the police have got to undertake the full gamut of the four Ps—Protect, Prepare and Pursue as well as Prevent. There is always the potential for those different responsibilities to be confused and misunderstood. The police have a reach into a community at a particular level. Wherever you get good neighbourhood policing that reach is greater. Wherever you get safer schools partnerships the reach is greater still but the reach can only go so far. At a local authority level through schools, through youth outreach, through community health, there is the opportunity for a much greater reach into the wider realms of the community. The police, relatively speaking, have this superficial reach and the other responsibilities that have to be undertaken in the police role, so if *Prevent* is left to the police it will be less effective and less optimal than if the local authority is very centrally involved. In my view, the local authorities is the appropriate agency to lead on *Prevent*.

Q230 Chair: And the other two on that point. If you agree just say you agree but if you have different points.

Councillor Murphy: I agree so I will not protract it.

Mr Charlton: Can I just add very briefly I think the notion of leadership is a moot point to some extent. It is about getting the arrangements in place that are right and work for all local partnerships and they differ from location to location. On the issue of police and local authority relationships, yes, I think there are tensions sometimes. I think certainly in the early days of *Prevent* two to three years ago there were very real tensions between what was seen as a community cohesion response, as you have discussed earlier and a security-based response, and I think certainly over the last three years we have matured and gone some way to developing partnerships that have resolved some of those differences.

Councillor Murphy: If I may just add to that. It is quite variable. It should not be taken that there is a consistency across the piece of police authorities and forces and those partnerships on *Prevent*. It is quite variable. There are areas that I think are exemplars of good practice and there are other areas where they do not think it affects them, which is always a cause of concern for us in the APA and of course in the forces.

Q231 Chair: I would quite like to pursue the points we were making at the end of the last session while they are still fresh in our minds because it is important to pursue it with you particularly I think in relation to the *Channel* project. The point that John Pugh was pursuing about where is the move within a democracy between the right to express radical views and the *Channel* programme, which in a sense is using the expression, amongst other things, of radical views as a trigger to then target those individuals with measures that prevent them from turning to violence—or allegedly prevent them turning to violence, particularly young people.

Sir Norman Bettison: Can I start with a story about Hasib Hussain. Hasib Hussain was a young man, a third generation Leeds-born individual. He went through the school system. He was the son of a foundry worker. His three siblings have done very well. Hussain was doing a business diploma course at a local college. He was a model student at Matthew Murray School in East Leeds. He went on at the age of 18 to strap a rucksack to his back and blew up the number 30 bus that we have all seen in the scenes that followed the 07/07 bombings. We started to unpick what was known about Hasib Hussain. He had never come to the notice of the police at any stage in his young life and therefore in terms of opportunities for the police to intervene to prevent what went on to occur, there were just no hooks there. However, what we did discover is that as a model student whilst at Matthew Murray School his exercise books were littered with references to Al-Qaeda, and the comments could not have been taken as other than supportive comments about Al-Qaeda. To write in one's exercise book is not criminal and would not come on the radar of the police, but the whole ethos, the heart of *Prevent* is the question for me of whether someone in society might have thought it appropriate to intervene. What do I mean by intervention? I do not mean kicking his door down at 6 o'clock in the morning and hauling him before the magistrates. I mean should someone have challenged that? They are the sorts of cases that get referred through the *Channel* scheme. It is not a question of having a scheme and targeting it on individuals but having a scheme that is capable that has the facility to actually provide intervention opportunities that might be a precursor or it might be some way up-stream from somebody's ideas and attitudes developing into violent extremism.

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Q232 Dr Pugh: At what point is that done? A lot of young men have quite radical opinions of one kind or another. It is about the only time in one's life when one does have radical opinions. Here you have a clear-cut case where somebody is advocating support for a known terrorist organisation which would give anybody outright cause for concern. Suppose that views were expressed about the Palestinian situation quite forcefully, would that also count? What would the threshold be and who would be the judge of where it was done appropriately and where it was done inappropriately?

Sir Norman Bettison: This is an incredibly moot point. I think it is a very case-by-case sensitive point. The important thing is that it is not law enforcement interventions so the interventions that are anticipated through the *Channel* scheme or through having a *Prevent* focus is that somebody feels that it is appropriate to challenge or to question or to mentor or to coach. All the interventions that have come through the 228 publicly stated cases of *Channel* intervention have been handled through that sort of mentorship or challenge and not through law enforcement.

Q233 Dr Pugh: Following that through, there is a lot of race hatred crime within the UK. Certainly as a former teacher I have observed both in written and other communications by pupils in schools some sentiments which are quite disturbing *a propos* racial issues. Would it be appropriate to subject them to the same parallel kind of process?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes.

Q234 Dr Pugh: It would not be preventing terrorism in this case but it would be preventing crime.

Sir Norman Bettison: What we have found with *Prevent* is that it is a useful model for addressing all sorts of violent attitudes; so violent in a broad construct of the term not necessarily physical confrontation but where people have violent attitudes the *Prevent* scheme in general and the *Channel* scheme in particular has been used to intervene with people who have expressed racist views and who have expressed views of wanting to kill who are not Muslims, and they are people that have come on to the radar because we have tried and tested and practised these interventions in the past.

Q235 Dr Pugh: What you are advocating is a more general link between the police system and the education system?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes I am. It is called safeguarding. We are tied by government policy and by legislation. We all have a responsibility to safeguard young people under the age of 21.

Q236 Alison Seabeck: You were sitting at the back and you will have heard concerns expressed by some of the witnesses that targeting purely the Muslim community was not necessarily very constructive.

Sir Norman Bettison: I agree.

Q237 Alison Seabeck: It would therefore make sense to take this out of this particular programme and apply it in a different way and that would ultimately have the same net result in terms of dealing with radicalisation or trying to identify radicalisation without it necessarily stigmatising one particular community.

Sir Norman Bettison: One of the best things that has come out of the work on *Prevent* is the joint funding into police and schools extending the reach of safer schools partnerships. Those safer schools partnerships are capable of focusing across the whole gamut of communities, of race, of faith, and of problems faced by those communities, but it has brought us together. We should not ignore the fact that the most significant threat to this country from terrorist activity is from Al-Qaeda inspired terrorism.

Q238 Alison Seabeck: At the moment.

Sir Norman Bettison: What we are dealing with when we look at our communities in the broad scope of race and faith and colour and ethnicity, what we actually see are vulnerabilities and it seems to me to be a fact that the young people who will be most vulnerable from Al-Qaeda-inspired rhetoric and inspiration are young Muslims, so it makes sense, in my view, not as a policeman but as an observer of society, to focus some activity if we are intent on stopping the Al-Qaeda-inspired rhetoric from landing and becoming embedded that we target our activity and our focus in the Muslim community.

Q239 Alison Seabeck: Would you not also accept that there is a risk of alienating young people by simply just focusing on that?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes.

Q240 Alison Seabeck: Which is why it was interesting to hear Leicester's experience in the earlier session that they decided to broaden it out.

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes.

Q241 Mr Betts: Can I follow that up. You are saying people other than Muslims had been referred through the *Channel* project. Do you know roughly what the breakdown was in the 228 cases? How many of these people were Muslim?

Sir Norman Bettison: The overwhelming majority have been young Muslim males. A minority, off the top of my head somewhere between ten and 20, have been non-Muslims.

Q242 Mr Betts: Any women?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes, there have been a handful of women but the overwhelming majority is young men under the age of 25 from Muslim communities.

Q243 Mr Betts: Given that the people who are closest in a whole variety of ways to young men who may be developing extremist views or thoughts or potential actions are likely to be closer to them in their community rather than to authority, how do you build up confidence so that people feel that it is the right thing to do to pass on information through

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the *Channel* project rather than being seen as what I suppose in the old colloquial phrase is “snitching” on their mates or the people they work with?

Sir Norman Bettison: For me the parallel, and it has all sorts of echoes with the early days which I sadly remember of dealing with other risks and harms such as drugs, what there was always when the police were first engaged on drugs enforcement was the tension between wanting to protect the vulnerable young people from the menace of addictive drugs and asking people within the community to, in a sense, report those who were experimenting or becoming seduced by drugs. The maturity of the relationship that we have with other partners now is such that actually the police are involved with treatment and education just as much as we are involved with enforcement, and it is because people have been able to see over the years that information or concern expressed to a third party can often be of benefit to young people in protecting them from a menace such as drug or other risks that particularly befall young people. This is a pretty new agenda but I am very optimistic that as long as we are sensitive, as long as it is not just a police initiative but one shared by other agencies within the community, I genuinely believe that it will become more and more trusted.

Q244 Dr Pugh: In terms of who reports the person with violent extremist tendencies—I think you said 228 cases—are the bulk of them reported by their own community or picked up via third party organisations?

Sir Norman Bettison: A real spread. I would not like to say majority/minority in one particular direction but it includes schools, it includes teachers, it includes the community themselves. In cases that I am aware of it includes parents who have raised concerns about the direction of travel that their son’s attention and friendships and attitudes have drifted into.

Q245 Chair: Would you be able to provide us with the numbers afterwards? Is it recorded?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes.

Chair: Because I think we would find very useful the actual breakdown of what sort of grouping has returned them.

Q246 Mr Betts: There have been some concerns expressed to us in a general sense about the *Prevent* agenda that it is a mixture of things that ought to get the community on side, community initiatives trying to engage people in a positive way, and at the other end of course some harder edge approaches to dealing with people who might be moving into extremism. Sometimes there has been a confusion over that and sometimes because of the links between the various elements of the project there has been a stigma attached to the whole project, “This is just an anti-Muslim agenda because we get community improvements of facilities because we are perceived to be a threat to the wider nation”. In the police do you have that same concern,

particularly that you have got the friendly neighbourhood bobby being engaged and linking with the community and on the other hand you have counter-terrorism officers clearly having a role to play as well?

Sir Norman Bettison: I would like to leave the Committee with a diagram if I may. I thought we might get into that so I have brought along a diagram and the diagram basically shows three interlocking circles. At the centre is neighbourhood policing. It inter-locks at one end with local authorities and other partners and it interlocks at the other end with the Counter-Terrorism Unit. I do not have any concern or worry that it is this sort of Janus-like operation that has to look both ways. As a Police Service that is built and is founded upon neighbourhood policing, we have to have local partnerships and local arrangements to help to support, to intervene, but because of who we are, we also have to have an overlay with our counter-terrorism colleagues and our national security colleagues in the security service and other agencies. For example where we came by information that suggested that someone was actively pursuing the idea of violence then that information could be shared with the Counter-Terrorism Unit.

Q247 Mr Betts: Just as an example, we were having an informal discussion earlier on and we were trying to talk about the best way to try and engage through *Prevent* (or whatever you call programmes) with people in the Muslim community. One example was given of police engagement where within a matter of a few minutes of it beginning it became obvious that the officer involved was a counter-terrorism officer and that really destroyed the rest of any meaningful engagement because there was a suspicion immediately that “we are perceived to be the bad guys; we have been criminalised from the beginning of this conversation”. Would you be happy about that approach? Do you see that counter-terrorism officers have a different role to the front-line of police engagement with the community through the *Prevent* agenda?

Sir Norman Bettison: We have in my police force area brought counter-terrorism officers into the community in order that they can explain what they do, but what they do is different to what the neighbourhood officer, John Smith and Jenny Brown, sees day in and day out as the community goes about its daily business. So there is a distinction but I have an honest and strongly held belief that the more open and transparent we are about what goes on in that spectrum, the Venn diagram that I have circulated, the better we will be positioned in terms of community understanding.

Councillor Murphy: Just to continue that, I hope what I am about to say informs you, Mr Betts. You have probably heard of the desktop Operation Nicole, and I do not know if you are aware of the details or not. We have run that in Greater Manchester for example for elected members throughout the whole of Greater Manchester. What that does in effect is reverses the role, if you like, where we accept and understand the concerns of the

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Muslim communities that we appear to be targeting them. When one reverses the role and says you take the decision that in fact the counter-terrorist police would have to take it really does begin to take on a different hue. It is a two-day process in this case. I personally found it very, very illuminating and I think members of my Muslim community and close friends of mine within Manchester City Council also found it interesting. What I also wanted to say is that the ACC responsible for counter-terrorism in Greater Manchester, it is the point that Norman has just made, was accountable at that meeting and answered the questions. I am driven by the concept of the need to inform rather than a need to know and that is generally the view of the APA. We have to start talking to people to explain to people why we do this. I agree with Dr Pugh that being radical is not an offence. If you are not radical when you are young you will never be radical. The step to violent extremism is the real issue. My submission would be, and we support as an APA absolutely, the neighbourhood policing model. I think the answer to some of the questions you ask is that where trust is built (and it takes time to do that) within those communities, with neighbourhood policing, then I believe that you can begin to build that trust that exists. The English Defence League, for example, is an organisation where wherever it appears there is violence. In Greater Manchester in partnership with all of our communities we attempted to ask the Home Secretary to ban a march. He did not. We asked on the basis that we knew there would be violence. Our biggest concern was that young Muslims would turn up to that march because these people are clearly anti-Muslim, an odious bunch, quite frankly. What we were able to do because of that neighbourhood partnership working that Norman has just alluded to is go out to our communities to speak to the imams, particularly in the Cheetham Hill Road area of Manchester, and speak to them and explain that the police had this under control. The Muslim community representatives, who were the elected members, were involved every step of the way in the Gold command process. As a result of that there was no violence. There were a number of arrests from the extreme right wing. There were maybe two arrests from the Muslim community. That gives you some idea of what neighbourhood policing in its better format contains.

Q248 Dr Pugh: Could I ask specifically about neighbourhood policing. I agree it is absolutely critical because obviously policing must be done sensitively in this case so that people do not get picked on because they have suddenly grown a beard or something like that. Clearly it takes time, given the makeup of the police force, to feel completely comfortable and au fait when policing a largely Muslim neighbourhood, as certainly would be the case in some parts certainly of Lancashire. Has there been any study made of the length of time and/or training that neighbourhood police have who are active in largely Muslim neighbourhoods? I am aware of the fact that neighbourhood policing is a

great thing but due to career development amongst the police neighbourhood policemen move around sometimes rather a lot and visit a lot of neighbourhoods and you really want a degree of real understanding here.

Councillor Murphy: I will give another example about Greater Manchester if I may. We are trying to settle people into those communities—and I believe it is the same in West Yorkshire—where neighbourhood policing now becomes the area in which people need to be if they are going to be promoted at all. The second thing is that the Chief Constable has communicated through the police authority that we would want to keep people in those communities much longer than we have previously done and we have set that as an agenda item and that is beginning to work. You are quite right. I do not know the answer about how long it takes. What I can say is that you will be aware that Greater Manchester Police have been involved in a number of exercises around the counter-terrorism area. Some have done very well and some I have probably been the worst critic of, if you like, which you would expect me to be. We hold the police to account and it is quite right that we do that, but, in the main, the direction of travel, if you forgive that awful cliché, is that people are beginning to trust the work that is going on because of neighbourhood policing. The final part of that is a question that you asked earlier which was a really good question from Mr Betts and that is how do we know what success looks like. There is a bigger question about the whole of the agenda of counter-terrorism, which is how do we know when we are winning? We are spending an awful lot of money on it.

Q249 Chair: Can I go back to the *Channel* programme and an issue that Sir Norman raised that it has to be done sensitively. Some of the anecdotes that we were given again in the session beforehand suggested that an Achilles heel of *Channel* may be the people not within the police necessarily but within schools or whatever, who are identifying the individuals who they believe may be at risk. There was an example given of two girls one discussing with the other why she should be wearing the hijab. I can see absolutely that drawing all over a book saying Al-Qaeda is good idea is at a completely different end of things, but that is an example, after all, where we all know that that individual did move on to violence. There is this difficulty, it seems to me, from an evidence point of view in the *Channel* programme that, by the nature of things, you cannot provide any evidence that it works. You cannot be sure that an individual who was identified as being directed to the *Channel* programme, you cannot say, as one of our local authority witnesses slipped up and said, you cannot be sure that that person would have committed violence, and therefore if at the end of the *Channel* programme they do not, you cannot say that that is success because it is not measurable. Is there an issue about the trigger point for identifying individuals? Who is exercising that? Is it

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teachers, head teachers, college lecturers across the piece, or is it a bit more rigid than that and is it the police who are saying whether that is enough or not?

Sir Norman Bettison: The place to which an individual is referred is a multi-agency panel. It is not a particular individual. So there is a multi-agency panel that considers the questions of referral. Some of those 228 referrals are simply “we will maintain a watching brief on that” and, in a sense, the concern dissipates. I think it depends on whether you see the interventions, whatever is contained under the description of that, as intrusive and for the benefit of society or whether you actually see them as supportive and for the benefit of the individual.

Q250 Chair: It is not a matter of whether we see them as that. It is a matter of whether the public and in particular those parts of the public that seem to be being targeted perceive them as targeting?

Sir Norman Bettison: In fairness, I think what is most important is the person that has that intervention. When I address it in terms of coaching, mentoring, challenging, supporting, actually you can begin to see that that is not necessarily a negative experience for the young man, the individual that is subject to that intervention. I think that good teachers have been doing this all my life. What they have been doing is noticing that there are issues of concern and doing something about it. That for me is on all fours with good *Prevent* interventions.

Mr Charlton: In some respects this is nothing new. Police and other partners have been operating interventions through referral processes for a decade or more, around drugs, around anti-social behaviour, around youth offending. There are a lot of different perspectives on *Prevent* and one of the really interesting ones that I heard about on *Channel* is that there is almost a moral imperative to work with young people in this way. If it prevents somebody from ruining their own life and the lives of many others there is a real moral imperative behind that to work with these young people. Just one final thing on *Channel*, I sit as a member of the national steering group and have done for the last year and it has matured significantly in that time, and the development of relationships between different partners—Children’s Services, the Probation Service, police—is very, very well developed now. There are some very healthy debates within that steering group that border on argument at times. A lot of that is predicated on the basis of *Channel* must start from the basis of protecting young people, addressing vulnerability and ensuring that safeguarding concerns are taken care of.

Q251 Chair: But you are not getting that message across because for example the UCU in universities have objected strenuously to the notion that they should be checking what their students are doing and then reporting them to the police. It is not just the Muslim community which is suspicious and feels they are all being put under surveillance. There are quite large sections of the rest of society that are suspicious about this programme and that do not accept it.

Sir Norman Bettison: The police have never asked the universities to monitor and report.

Q252 Chair: Do you think it is a good idea or not?

Sir Norman Bettison: There was an interesting article in the *Sunday Times* yesterday that suggested that actually good guardianship, not guardianship on behalf of society but guardianship of one’s students, means knowing what is happening on the university campus. If that raises concerns that need to be taken off the university campus then there are lots of agencies that can be referred to.

Q253 Dr Pugh: Would you accept that it is an extraordinarily tricky job and a very, very difficult and onerous job to pick out who is likely to be a future terrorist even from a group of people passed on and referred to you? What is not an equivocal matter or difficult matter or ambiguous matter is identifying people who are actually setting up terrorist networks, providing training, providing explosives and so on because none of these people identified as potential terrorists will ever become a genuine terrorist without the wherewithal and the backing they will get from an organised terrorist organisation, or very rarely would that be the case. Could it not be argued that the vast bulk of the more successful enterprises in terms of police time for the police is in stopping any person getting access to these sorts of networks rather than trying to identify the psychology of people who might wish to access these networks?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes, and that effort and that focus is very much in place. When you look at the diagram that I have circulated you will see that actually there is the opportunity through the closer engagement to pick up early indications of the bomb factory, of the training camps, of the meetings in the front room with the radical leader visiting from London. Neighbourhood policing is actually the place where those sorts of warning bells would be rung.

Councillor Murphy: May I just add to that, Mr Betts, if I may, because I would not want to leave this *Channel* debate on a negative. There are some very good examples. I will give you an example of GMP working with Connexions in Greater Manchester working with children and young children with learning difficulties aged 13 to 25. On measuring those outcomes, I think your question is still one that nobody is able to answer. It is a really good question and I do not know the answer, but I am just giving you an example here where the outcomes of the training that takes place—and the GMP are involved in that with Connexions—are that we are able to lift the ability for them to access work, because I do believe that people with learning difficulties are people that can be targeted. I disagree with Dr Pugh about a point he made earlier in relation to using people of reasonably high intelligence. The shooting in Northern Ireland recently, the executioner was a lad with learning difficulties. So they are recruited and radicalised in that way.

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Q254 Alison Seabeck: The Exeter bomber was as well.

Councillor Murphy: Absolutely. What I am saying is that we are trying to engage with the safeguarding of vulnerable young people, and we are supporting the training and in some cases facilitating that training. I wanted to give a positive message about some of the *Channel* work and the partnership work that goes on throughout Greater Manchester.

Sir Norman Bettison: If we are moving off *Channel*, because I think this is the sort of Committee that ought to hear me say this, I think it is time now for *Channel* to be mainstreamed and not be a separate project.

Q255 Chair: Mainstreamed in what sense?

Sir Norman Bettison: In terms of the vulnerability agenda and the safeguarding agenda. *Channel* predated the ACPO *Prevent* strategy. It was a Government scheme not long after the 2005 bombings, the realisation that there was not a conduit for information or for identifying vulnerability. Actually the *Prevent* strategy and *Prevent* implementation plan and all the other joint governmental and partnership work now means that there is a vocabulary and that there are connections that we can use without having to badge something separately as *Channel*.

Alison Seabeck: That comes back to the point we made earlier.

Q256 Chair: You do not mean mainstreaming by getting out of just focusing on the Muslim community?

Mr Charlton: It does not just focus there.

Councillor Murphy: The point I was making about for example the GMP scheme with Connexions does not focus just on the Muslim community. It focuses on 13 to 25-year-olds with learning difficulties.

Q257 Chair: I am not quite clear what Sir Norman meant by mainstreaming.

Sir Norman Bettison: I guess I was linking it to my earlier comments which is one of the greatest things to come out of *Prevent* is the better join up between schools and police, the safer schools partnerships et cetera, which has created not only the integration and the vocabulary but the willingness to actually work together in tackling vulnerability and harm.

Q258 Mr Betts: Can I just come back to the specific point. We have had a lot of evidence that different local authorities are probably, naturally, focusing in a different way on the *Prevent* agenda and are doing different things. In terms of the Police Service, the police authorities is there a coherent sameness about their approach or are there differences which can be highlighted? Are some police services getting it more right than others?

Mr Charlton: Do you mean difference between the Authority and the Service as such?

Q259 Mr Betts: Both.

Mr Charlton: In terms of that point, first of all, clearly different organisations have different responsibilities. The police authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure an effective and efficient Police Service within the force area. In that sense the police authorities add value within the *Prevent* agenda around providing a scrutiny and an oversight function of policing. Just to give you a very brief example of that in a positive context, there has been some controversy recently that you will no doubt be aware of around the impact of Terrorism Act stops on local communities. I guess to some extent here we are back to the *Prevent/Pursue* debate. Police authorities around the country monitor those impacts, the impacts of those stops, the numbers of them and the physical impact on local communities. It was found that some of those stops were disproportionately across minority ethnic communities, particularly Muslim communities, and that was fed back into the policing loop, and as a result a number of police forces, prominent among them the Metropolitan Police Service, adjusted their policy around Terrorism Act section 44 stops. That is one example there. Police authorities provide that scrutiny function. They provide some kind of assurance and accountability to the local communities that they represent and serve. In terms of our experience of implementation nationally, it is hugely variable and it is variable amongst police authorities because police authorities have different resource levels, they have different philosophical approaches to *Prevent*, and that is only right. That reflects itself across the country. It is hugely, hugely variable. In terms of the Police Service it is probably a question that Sir Norman could better answer than myself.

Sir Norman Bettison: I have lost track of the question!

Q260 Mr Betts: Is there a coherent sameness about the approach to these issues across all police services or would we see different approaches, different emphases on *Prevent* in different police services? Are we still learning and some forces getting it right and others learning from them?

Sir Norman Bettison: Yes to all three questions. Yes, there is an element of sameness and that is neighbourhood policing. Unless there is a foundation of neighbourhood policing you cannot simply pitch up within a community and do *Prevent*. It can only be built on a trusted relationship with the neighbourhood policing role. So, yes, there is the sameness in that respect that everything is built on neighbourhood policing. Differences are to do with the differences in our communities. Nothing gets my goat more than hearing or reading about the "Muslim community" because it does not exist. We have Muslim communities, we have very different, very diverse communities, and therefore the approaches, the level of trust that makes the relationship capable of being built upon is different, and so we will be doing in some areas more fundamental stuff around engagement and relationship-building whereas in other places that

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relationship and trust is so well established that it allows us to go even further and do things in shorthand and be quite progressive. I have been talking so long now I have forgotten the third element! The third element of your question was sameness, differences and some forces learning from others. Are we still at the learning stage? Yes, we are. We have a national element to our implementation programme which is a national *Prevent* delivery unit and part of their role is garnering best practice but also evaluating what is going on and that work is informing us all the time.

Councillor Murphy: Very briefly, just to add to that, there is also significant scrutiny. It is variable, I will acknowledge, but where it actually takes place in the big forces like West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester, we rigorously review the spend for example of counter-terrorism in Greater Manchester, as they do in West Yorkshire. We

rigorously review the way in which the *Prevent* agenda is beginning to evolve. What is factual, as Norman has just outlined, is it is very early. It is new and we are learning. I suspect when it was first introduced people were not quite sure what it meant. Nobody bothered to model it. They just said we will call it *Prevent*, one of the four Ps. It fitted in very nicely and then left it to police authorities, forces and local government to work out. We are beginning to work it out although I think the most important message in that working out is that the police should not just be allowed to be unfettered in the way in which (a) they go about their business or (b) the money they spend. We bring them to account on a regular basis. It is based on trust and transparency but I can assure the Committee that certainly in GMP and I know in West Yorkshire that occurs and I think it is important we say that.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed

Monday 18 January 2010

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Andrew George
Anne Main

Dr John Pugh
Alison Seabeck
Mr Andy Slaughter

Witnesses: **Mr Minhaz Khelya**, from Blackburn, **Mr Rob Clews**, from Gloucestershire, and **Ms Lisa Carroll**, from the East Midlands, Project Safe Space Steering Group, UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), gave evidence.

Q261 Chair: Can I welcome you to this afternoon's session on *Prevent*? I think we have agreed, exceptionally, that one of you or all three of you are you going to do a very brief presentation to start.

Mr Khelya: My name is Minhaz and I am from Blackburn with Darwen originally. Back in 2006–7, a group of young people from Blackburn with Darwen News Forum decided it would be good to have a conference in a lecture theatre involving young people around the idea of terrorism and violent extremism. From this, it evolved into a youth Muslim project, from which it was decided that there should definitely be safe spaces for young people and workers to talk about terrorism and violent extremism. I think this is because both the young people and workers in that project and fear genuinely that any discussion around terrorism or violent extremism would lead to an arrest or censorship by the police. As a result of this, UKYP together with the Association of Chief Police Officers with the Blackburn with Darwen News Forum were invited to the annual sitting in Glasgow. This is where young people from Blackburn with Darwen conducted consultation using a mypod. A mypod is basically interactive consulting equipment and we asked young people questions through a glass window so they felt they could say whatever they wanted. Moving on from that, Nottinghamshire Youth Service conducted a survey involving around 370 young people. Around 60 per cent of them felt that education was needed to raise awareness about terrorism. In July 2008, UKYP organised a survey around violent extremism. We found that the main finding from that was that nine out of ten young people felt they needed more opportunities to discuss terrorism and violent extremism.

Ms Carroll: The National Steering Group (NSG) was made up of a diverse group but this is important because terrorism and violent extremism do not just affect young Muslims; they affect all communities. With the NSG being such a diverse group, this encouraged other groups at the events to come along and talk about how it affects them as well. Community cohesion affects all young people. I am from a Gypsy background so necessarily some people would not think that would affect terrorism but, having all the different groups, it brought a different opinion to the table each time.

Mr Clews: I was just going to talk about three of our recommendations and findings which came from the report and relate that to a couple of points made by

Minnie and Lisa. The first was the point Lisa just made. It is quite disempowering as young people to see our report be completely ignored by government. For example, when it targets *Prevent* as a whole, it targets the Muslim community as a diverse range group of young people, we find it quite disempowering and disengaging to see that going on, especially when we are so diverse. We acknowledge that terrorism and violent extremism affect young people from every community and every background. For example, in the south west, you had three examples of Andrew Ibrahim, Nick Reilly and more recently with Abdulmutalab. Even though he did convert to Islam they are not just very typical terrorists. Also on Minnie's point, we create safe spaces for young people to talk about the issues of terrorism and violent extremism. One of the key findings from our report was that young people did not trust the police to run similar conferences. What we have found out from this work is that the police do intend over the next year to run a series of conferences around terrorism and violent extremism to consult with young people, basically doing what we have just done. That is quite shocking, as young people do not trust the police and there is no relationship there for them to work on. Thirdly, we made a constructive criticism to DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) on the terrorism toolkit, based on consultations with teachers and youth workers. From what we heard and in our opinion, it was not working and it was not being as effective as potentially it could have been. When we presented that view to them, it was completely shot down and ignored. That is really where we would like to finish and welcome your questions if you do have any.

Ms Carroll: The Department for Children, Schools and Families— we have been waiting six months for an answer on funding, which is leaving us disheartened as a national group but also all the other young people who are waiting for an answer to see if this project is going to be brought forward and carried on.

Q262 Chair: Have you largely engaged with the Department of Children, Schools and Families or with any other government departments?

Mr Clews: The project itself was funded by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Department for Children, Schools and Families and also the Home Office, so we have engaged with all three but primarily DCSF.

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Q263 Chair: Not with DCLG, which is our parent department?

Mr Clews: No.

Q264 Chair: We are slightly circumscribed as to the critique of other departments that we can get into, if I may say that to you. Obviously, we are particularly concerned about the programme that CLG is funding in communities through *Prevent*. Does the Youth Parliament have any view about the sorts of organisations that CLG is engaging with and funding in various places, including I imagine Blackburn, and whether young people in those areas are being properly involved and consulted?

Mr Khelya: We have heard of the Muslim Advisory Group. I think that is run by the DCLG. We were also invited by the DCSF to give a joint presentation on the report that we compiled in July. We thought that it was not fair because they were basically jumping on our bandwagon. We did this work and they wanted to take credit for it. That is as far as we know about the Muslim Advisory Group.

Mr Clews: From our findings, overwhelmingly young people have said that they do not approve of tokenistic youth organisations, especially because they have acknowledged themselves that it does affect young people through their different communities. Why is there a Young Muslim Advisory Group but not a Young Christian Advisory Group? Why is there not a Young Hindu Advisory Group? It seems to me that it is all tied to the one community when the problem is not exactly with that community.

Q265 Chair: Are you defending your own turf and suggesting that if the government wants to consult with young people it must do it through the Youth Parliament?

Mr Clews: I would not necessarily say that, no. I think what I am saying is that terrorism and violent extremism is an issue which affects young people from all communities and *Prevent* needs to be reflective of that. I do not want to score any own goals here today.

Q266 Alison Seabek: I want to ask you very quickly about sounding boards and the government's Muslim Advisory Group. You said why not have other groups involved. Do you think there is any value at all in having feedback from this particular group? Do you have any sense that this particular group is representative of young Muslims for example, because often we find we have a group of people who have their own agenda and purport to be representative. Would you say this group was representative of young Muslims, from your experience?

Mr Khelya: I would not say they were representative, as the UK Youth Parliament, to be honest and that is basically because members of the UK Youth Parliament are elected by their local young people.

Q267 Alison Seabek: How many Muslims are members of the UK Youth Parliament?

Mr Khelya: 18%.

Q268 Chair: I am not asking you personally but can the Youth Parliament maybe provide us afterwards with any data on the number of Muslim members of the Youth Parliament? I guess I would want to ask on that whether, when the issue was discussed—I accept this is not just an issue for young Muslims—was there a variety of Muslim viewpoints or did the Muslim members of the Youth Parliament tend to have rather similar views to each other? I am just asking how broad the debate was within the Youth Parliament.

Mr Clews: Do you mean with respect to the conferences?

Q269 Chair: Yes. With respect to the issue about terrorism and violent extremism.

Mr Clews: I am not sure I understand the question.

Q270 Chair: One of the issues that has been put by other witnesses in relation to the government's engagement with members of the Muslim community for example is whether it is only engaging with a relatively narrow band of opinion within the British Muslim community—that would apply to young British Muslims—or whether it is also engaging with the more radical fringes whom, it can be argued, are particularly important if the government is trying to engage and affect young people who might be drawn to more extreme views. I am simply seeking to understand whether, in the events that the Youth Parliament organised, the strength of Muslim opinion that was expressed was a wide one including what might be described as quite immoderate and extreme views, or whether it actually was fairly mainstream.

Mr Clews: The statistics are here in our report, which I am sure you have seen. At the back of it, it does outline the number of young Muslims. Obviously we have not gone into the details, whether they are Sunni or Shi'ite, but I am sure with further consultation we will be able to.

Chair: I was thinking more about the views expressed.

Q271 Anne Main: Can I put it a slightly different way? Are you a fairly self-selecting group? Therefore, Muslims within your group are fairly moderate in their views so all the views expressed to you are quite moderate? In the debate you had, were you confident that you yourselves were attracting people from a wide spectrum of Muslim views?

Mr Khelya: I would say it was variable in each region. I was at the north western regional conference and we invited loads of groups from different backgrounds and many from different Muslim backgrounds as well. We had quite a lot of people attending but obviously anyone could have come to that. It does not matter what kind of views they held. I think there were students from a mosque there as well. I would say they would not have the same moderate view as I would have as a Muslim who has been involved in the UK Youth Parliament for about four years.

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Q272 Anne Main: In my community there is a Muslim community of about 5,000. Some might say that radicalism happens for example in giving leaflets out at mosques or whatever. Does the Youth Parliament have representatives from the communities that may have been approached in that way to give you that sort of input? Are you confident that you have a broad enough input in the Youth Parliament?

Mr Khelya: The Youth Parliament is a base group but we do also have networks. For example in Lancashire, we have a network of the Lancashire Council of Mosques and things like that. I reckon that is what is really important because that is how we get our message across to different organisations and that is how we invited loads of young people to the conferences.

Q273 Anne Main: Do you feel that by the government going down the route of specifically asking Muslims they are actually going to get not a broad view like you have but maybe a slightly unrealistic view?

Mr Khelya: Some will have that view, yes.

Q274 Anne Main: Because it is targeting one group by faith, not even by country or background.

Mr Clews: On the representation of different communities with Project Safe Space, young people from a variety of different backgrounds were invited to the National Steering Group for Project Safe Space. It was not solely exclusive to the UK Youth Parliament. For example, we do have representatives from the Young Muslim Advisory Group. We also have representatives from loads of different organisations like the Advisory Helpline. It just shows that we were not targeting groups in particular. It was open to everyone and it was fair.

Q275 Anne Main: Of course community cohesion is a strong part of that, some people might say, by ignoring young white youths who might get involved potentially or, as Lisa was saying, Traveller youths who are disaffected because of potentially being stigmatised by communities. Would you say that your group has more views to offer than potentially one Muslim group?

Mr Clews: Yes.

Q276 Mr Betts: The evidence we have taken from a whole variety of groups is that one of the things that has come out from criticism is, by its very nature, when government engages in whatever form in whatever process, it tends to be what are called the usual suspects who get involved. In some ways, you are a bit like part of the establishment, are you not? You might feel it is a comfortable way for you to get your view across but those who do not see themselves conforming very much are probably not going to engage with you in this process. Is that a concern to you? Have you any ideas how we might—

Mr Clews: I see that as a criticism of you guys because there are not any opportunities for young people from those backgrounds to get involved in events like this and Project Safe Space. We did one

conference in Slough and the opinions we got there from the young people were very different from the opinions we got in the north east and the north west of England. They are not given the same opportunities as us because we are going into those communities but we are not getting the funding to continue doing that work, giving those young people youth leadership opportunities and stuff like that.

Q277 Mr Betts: One of the things I suppose we are trying to get at as well is whether you can necessarily get at people who may have some extremist views that could eventually turn those people into performing acts of terrorism and extremism and whether they will ever engage in these processes, or whether you do need things like the Channel Project, which you are probably aware of. If it becomes known to someone that there is an individual expressing extremist views that might give rise to concern, they should report that to authorities in various ways. Do you think the Channel Project should operate in parallel with what you are doing or is it something that you would be very worried about getting involved in at all because people might think you are just informants to the police? Have you any ideas about that?

Mr Khelya: It could lead to that. In the UKYP survey we did online, 60 per cent of 1,000 people said they would not attend the conference if the police were there, so obviously it means something if young people are running it for young people.

Q278 Alison Seabeck: On this Channel Project which is designed to identify young people who are at risk from a range of sources, how comfortable do you feel that for example teachers are looking at notebooks and looking for stories, comments, that could be potentially considered extreme? Clearly one of the bombers who came down from Leeds had made his views very clear in his school notebooks. Would you have concerns about that sort of intrusion or do you think that is appropriate if a teacher gets concerned?

Mr Clews: I am going to relate it to something. I went to the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and one of the comments coming from young people was that they did not want to have decisions being made about them without them. It seems to me that these questions are questions that should be targeted at teachers to gather their thoughts, rather than to us, because they are the ones who are meant to be participating in this project. I can give you my personal interpretation of Operation Channel and whether it is going to be working or not.

Q279 Anne Main: I would welcome your view.

Mr Clews: I do not think it is the right way of going about it. You should be openly challenging these ideologies and having a debate in a safe environment, which is what we advocated last year. Without that you are not going to get anywhere. I do not think teachers feel comfortable giving that kind of information to the police.

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Q280 Anne Main: All the evidence suggests that the evidence is not going to the police. Of the 220-odd people who have been highlighted, it has not gone to the police. It has been taken up and dealt with in house by teachers or taken to a slightly wider, more expert group to have that sort of debate. In that scenario, are you content because the evidence does suggest it is not actually going to the police. Would you be happy with that response if it is in house, dealt with by the teachers in school, or not?

Mr Clews: It is kind of going beyond what they are required to do. Teachers are there to teach young people. They are not there to snoop for the police and that is the way it is perceived by young people. It is the way it is perceived by youth workers. It is the way it is perceived by teachers. If that is the way it is perceived, then you need to address it rather than talking about who is it going to.

Q281 Chair: Some witnesses have put to us that this is a form of child protection. Just as for example a teacher who thought from evidence that was in a student's work that they might be at risk of sexual abuse would feel that it was their duty to act on that, the same sort of reasoning would apply if they were gaining the impression that the young person was

likely to be going off and blowing up other people and obviously blowing up themselves as well. Do you have any sympathy with that viewpoint? If you feel you cannot answer it, that is fair enough.

Mr Clews: I feel I can answer it. I just question the morals of Operation Channel when it does not tell the young people the reason why these teachers are going to be talking to them about their extremist ideology. It is not very moral.

Q282 Anne Main: Do you think maybe Channel is formalising something too much and that the *in loco parentis* role of a teacher already does? I used to teach. Many teachers would pick up on something that they were concerned about, whether it was even abuse of that child in their home, and take it through the appropriate channels. Do you consider that this is a formalisation of something and that is what is making you uncomfortable?

Mr Clews: I suppose so. It is a question for the teachers. I was in a room when a member of Avon and Somerset Police was talking about Operation Channel to teachers and youth workers and they were using language such as "a covert operation" and it makes me feel uncomfortable.

Chair: Thanks very much indeed. We have noted your views about the DCSF, as I am sure they have.

Witnesses: **Ms Nahid Majid**, Convenor of the Tackling Extremism Together Working Group on Regional and Local Strategies, and **Mr Arun Kundnani**, Editor, Institute of Race Relations, gave evidence.

Q283 Chair: Can I start off by focusing a few questions on where government has been getting its advice from on the development and delivery of *Prevent* and in particular the research evidence base? Can I ask each of you whether you think the government is getting its advice from the right people and whether you believe that all the important advice and research has been taken on board?

Ms Majid: Initially, when the Preventing Extremism Together Working Group was set up in 2005, we had a whole range of people, about 50-odd people, from seven working groups and there was a whole range of skills and knowledge base on an international level to domestic issues, to local issues. In that sense, I think it started off very much on a positive footing. Unfortunately, a year and a half later that it took to get to the *Prevent* strategy in 2007, I think there was not enough thought perhaps on why particular recommendations were taken up. There was not enough dialogue at the time between why particular groups of people and particular forms of ideology were taken forward, so why the other recommendations for example were not taken up. On the second part of the question in terms of evidence, the work that I have been doing in the last four or five years as a DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) senior official on evidence research has provided a number of researchers on labour market conditions, demographic, discrimination—there are a number of facts for example about demographics in the labour market, the fact that

2008 labour force market statistics show that there is about a 74 per cent employment rate. If you compare that to Pakistani and Bangladeshi people, it was around 54 per cent. If you look at demographics, the fact that there is a younger generation of Muslims, the average being 28 compared to 41; if you look at child poverty rates that have been researched by Lucinda Platt, that was commissioned. It looked at child poverty rates between particularly ethnic minority communities and that was saying something like 20 per cent of white children live in poverty compared to something like 70 per cent of Bangladeshi children and 60 per cent of Pakistani children. It goes on to discrimination. Testing DWP has recently done has seen discrimination testing in the summer of 2009 which provided clear evidence of discrimination. In terms of that research, I do not think we have taken that into account in terms of dealing with grievance issues.

Q284 Chair: The government would not dispute that there is discrimination. The issue is whether that discrimination is at all relevant to *Prevent*, which is a slightly different question.

Ms Majid: It is but it is looking at the causes. We have been looking at the symptoms rather than the causes.

Mr Kundnani: A lot of expertise based at both the national and at the local level has been bypassed. I agree with what Nahid has said about the value of that early part of the process, where a very wide range of views was expressed. I think what happened

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after that was that a particular, quite ideological interpretation of the problem took hold in government.

Q285 Chair: Where did that come from?

Mr Kundnani: Partly it was from particular think tanks.

Q286 Chair: Which ones?

Mr Kundnani: I think Policy Exchange played a significant role. I think it was the wider political climate in the media at that time that wanted to emphasise religion and religious ideology as the overwhelming factor, whereas the people who were I think more expert in these issues locally were talking about a much wider range of factors. The truth is, in terms of radicalisation in Britain, the number of people that we are talking about is quite small. A lot of people will tell you they know what radicalises people. The truth is no one really knows for sure. People have a lot of ideas. In that scenario, there is a value to having as wide a range of views to engage with and influencing policy, especially if you present *Prevent* as a policy that is meant to be driven by community engagement, bringing in and involving the community. You have to allow people in the community to bring their expertise to bear which certainly has not happened to the degree it should have happened.

Q287 Chair: Can I specifically ask you about whether you think government has a role at all in countering extremist religious ideology and, if so, how it should do it?

Mr Kundnani: I think government has a role in empowering communities to combat violent extremism in all its forms. If it takes a religious form, it obviously needs to be combated in that form as well. The emphasis on the religious element has been overdone. Certainly I do not think there is no need for some kind of *Prevent* like policy that empowers communities to combat violent extremism. The problem with the way it has been done is that it has focused entirely, up until recently, on Muslim populations of the UK. The definition of violent extremism has not been objective and clear. It has not empowered communities so much as, in my view, dictated a certain approach from central government that communities had to follow. That has kind of undermined the objective.

Q288 Mr Slaughter: In the light of the report which you wrote for the IRR, is it your finding there that quite a significant part of the *Prevent* programme has involved the soliciting of information from individuals of a general nature rather than specific offences by the police and other agencies? Is that right?

Mr Kundnani: One of the findings was that a part of *Prevent* was the identification of individuals who were considered to be at risk of extremism on the basis of their religious and political opinions and drawing in a range of agencies involved in *Prevent* to

be a part of that process of identification and that that information was then shared with local counterterrorism units of the police.

Q289 Mr Slaughter: We are not talking about passing information to the police or other authorities about somebody intending a specific illegal act. Are we talking about individuals who are already identified and trying to get information on them or are we talking about a more general fishing expedition?

Mr Kundnani: We are talking about a more general attempt to identify people on the basis of their opinions rather than on the basis of the likelihood of them being about to be involved in a criminal activity. For example, some of the cases that I have come across are of youth workers or teachers who have passed details of an individual to the local *Prevent* board, which would include the police, because that individual expressed a view about the legitimacy of using violence in the Middle East or the legitimacy of using violence in Afghanistan. I do not believe that holding those views crosses the line to the point where those people should be identified to the police as someone who is about to commit a crime.

Q290 Anne Main: Do you think that is a form of McCarthyism?

Mr Kundnani: No. I do not think that kind of historic analogy works specifically on this. I think there are elements of some of the things that are happening in Britain that can be compared to McCarthyism to some extent in relation to the war on terror. But I think it is a serious human rights issue that people are being identified to the police simply on the basis of expressing opinions that some of us are uncomfortable with, but which are legal opinions to hold. I think for that reason the Channel Project in particular is deeply flawed and should not be in existence in the way it is at the moment.

Q291 Mr Slaughter: To what extent do you think this is happening? First of all, you say people in authority are passing this on—youth workers or whoever—to the police. Is that because they have been specifically asked to do so and have agreed to do so, or is it simply that they believe it is part of their general responsibilities?

Mr Kundnani: In some cases it is one; in some cases it is the other. For example, one youth worker that I interviewed told me that the police had asked him to ask a series of questions to the young Muslims he worked with which were questions that were designed to test the opinions of these young people on a range of political issues. There, the police were directly soliciting this kind of information.

Q292 Mr Slaughter: You say that is a specific example. Is it your view that it is widespread—i.e. that this is almost endemic—or a built in part of the *Prevent* project?

Mr Kundnani: I think it is fairly widespread, yes. I interviewed around 32 people for this research who were involved in *Prevent* work and I had a focus

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group with around 24 people and stories like that were fairly common and familiar to most of those people. From all the conversations I have had since we published our research and with other youth workers who have come forward, this does seem to be fairly common. The police are putting pressure on people who are involved in working with young Muslims to pass this kind of information to them. It seems to be a lot of people's understanding that this is exactly what the Channel Project is meant to do.

Q293 Chair: Can you turn it round? What sort of thing do you think it would be legitimate for a youth worker or a teacher to report to the police as indicating somebody might be about to become involved in violence?

Mr Kundnani: If a youth worker or teacher thought that a student or young person that they were in contact with was about to commit a criminal act and that there was a clear picture there that that young person was preparing for some kind of act like that, of course that would be something that they would urgently need to talk to the police about. The law is defined quite widely in relation to terrorism so that the definition of a criminal act is actually very wide as it is. This is, to me, a different kettle of fish.

Q294 Mr Slaughter: Do you see it as inextricably linked with the *Prevent* programme which is either in the instructions that are going through from the police downwards or the perception that people who are involved in the *Prevent* projects that you do not get what might be the other benefits of *Prevent* unless you also have the element of surveillance and supervision?

Mr Kundnani: That is certainly the perception of some of the youth workers I have spoken to, that the surveillance element was tied to the other work they wanted to do and the funding was tied in that way.

Q295 Mr Slaughter: You say "perception" but is that because that is what they think or because that is what they have been told?

Mr Kundnani: It is obviously very hard to substantiate that as a clear cut thing. Certainly I have seen funding applications that have been submitted for example for a youth centre where this youth centre was targeted at young Muslims. The plan was for all of the computers to have some kind of surveillance built into them so that which websites young Muslims were looking at could be recorded. This intelligence gathering aspect of it was written into the funding application. That was an application to the Home Office. No doubt the response may well be that we never solicited that kind of project but it certainly seems to be commonplace in the way that people working on the *Prevent* project understand their work.

Q296 Mr Slaughter: Monitored by whom?

Mr Kundnani: The intention in the funding application was that that information would be available to the police.

Q297 Alison Seabeck: You clearly seem to have the view that some of the measures to more mainstreaming means and mechanisms for tackling or identifying extremism through local authorities you feel are a better use of public money, a more productive use of public money. Can you explain why you feel in your evidence that moving away from mainstreaming would be better in practice than the *Prevent* programme?

Ms Majid: In terms of clarity, in terms of *Prevent* and cohesion, one does not follow necessarily to the other. The government is right to deal with terrorism but perhaps it is something that the Home Office should be focusing on as opposed to CLG and CLG focusing on issues of extremism. Yes, in mainstreaming, I know that was a large part of the work that we did when I was in government about mainstreaming ethnic minority politicians within generation issues, within the empowerment agenda that Denham is pushing forward.

Q298 Alison Seabeck: Because it is broader based, it causes an outstanding variety of views.

Ms Majid: It does not single out any community.

Q299 Alison Seabeck: Some of the evidence we have received said we do not have enough detail about what makes up a Muslim community. Is it important we have that or should we disregard that on the basis of what you have just said and just treat them as an amorphous whole? The evidence we heard on our visit to Birmingham was that they are not an amorphous whole and therefore should not be treated as Muslims. Local authorities need to drill down more. Do you have a view on that?

Ms Majid: The issue of faith has become much stronger in terms of identity now and I think it is an important issue for local authorities to address. From my experience in terms of employment, we did a lot of work on Muslim women and perception in work for example and why women did or did not want to work. It discounted a lot of work at the time which said that actually Muslim women did want to work and parents did try to encourage them. I think there is this cultural factor that needs to be taken into account.

Mr Kundnani: One of the things that has happened is that, with the situation around community cohesion policy, there was a kind of critique of this idea that you can engage with a community through a small number of community leaders or gate keepers and that you hoped that they were as representative of that community as possible and then you would be okay. That would be your engagement. I think that was an important lesson that you cannot do that. You cannot have this small number of community gate keepers. But *Prevent* has brought that back because with *Prevent* local authorities suddenly say, "We need to make sure we have somebody reliable to talk to. We do not want to just throw the door open widely and bring in a lot of voices because we do not know who they are." You have fallen back to precisely what was problematic and what was critiqued by community cohesion.

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Ms Majid: I am a Muslim but I do not know everything I need to know about being a woman. In the DWP we have an ethnic minority employment advisory group and they are not all ethnic minorities. They are professors and a huge range of diverse people, from business to the voluntary sector, who gave excellent advice. I think that is something which should be accommodated into the model.

Q300 Mr Betts: On this issue of community cohesion and *Prevent*, the Secretary of State made a speech before Christmas when he tried to clarify what the government's thinking was. Do you think he did clarify it?

Mr Kundnani: No, I do not think he did. It is not an easy area. The problem is that at the early stages in relation to preventing violent extremism there were here and there some positive projects which thought that the way to deal with this is to try and build bridges between different communities and not just focus on Muslims alone. They were gradually put to one side and forgotten about as the thing unfolded and as it became clearer that to the government, this was all about Muslims. In a way, there was a bit of quite progressive and useful community cohesion thinking at that early stage in *Prevent*. That was lost. Gradually also, *Prevent* had become more and more about this idea of promoting shared values and Britishness, which borrows the worst part of the community cohesion agenda, because that part is incredibly alienating to people and is seen as a complete distraction from how you prevent violent extremism in practice on the ground.

Q301 Mr Betts: Why?

Mr Kundnani: Because, instead of focusing on a specific problem of individuals who may be on the path of violent extremism, you are trying to bring about a cultural shift across a whole community. That is what has happened in practice. Some of the government policy and language, more so under Hazel Blears, was about the idea that, in order to tackle the issue of terrorism and prevent terrorism, you need to bring about a complete cultural shift in the Muslim population, which was rightly seen by many Muslims as a distraction because that is a kind of attempt to change the whole population's behaviour when really you are focusing on a very small number of people.

Q302 Mr Betts: Should we be trying to separate out community cohesion and just say, "If these are good things we should be doing them", whichever community it happens to be, and if there is a need to pursue, identify and deal with certain individuals who may be at risk of becoming engaged in terrorism, that ought to be part of the *Pursue* strategy, not the *Prevent* strategy?

Mr Kundnani: I think that process of identifying people who may be on the path of violent extremism should be a part of *Pursue*. It should not cross over into anything that is about community development and cohesion.

Ms Majid: This is about roles and responsibilities and getting clarity of what *Prevent* is about. Is it about cohesion? Is it about extremism?

Q303 Chair: Can I just press you on that? What evidence have you that improving community cohesion would have any effect on the level of violent extremism at all? Ms Majid, it seemed to me in your earlier responses you were effectively suggesting that improving community cohesion—and none of us would argue against improving community cohesion—is an end in itself. You were effectively arguing, from saying that all the information you were giving about deprivation, that on attacking community cohesion, by improving community cohesion by reducing exclusion, you would prevent. What is the evidence?

Ms Majid: If we look at them, there have been various reports that we have done about inequality and deprivation with previous Secretaries of State looking at the link between inequality, poverty and crime in Northern Ireland for example. Indeed, we believe that work is the best form of community cohesion. If you look in America for example, when you have very strong procurement legislation and positive affirmation—

Q304 Chair: Violent extremism is not the same as criminality. It is a form of criminality but it is not the same as criminality or drug crime, or are you suggesting that they are all pretty interchangeable really?

Ms Majid: No, not at all.

Q305 Chair: Just focus on violent extremism. With respect, given that British society is very different from American, I am not sure you can easily extrapolate from one country to another. What evidence is there that improving community cohesion reduces violent extremism and therefore should be a part of *Prevent*?

Ms Majid: I do not know of any evidence that specifically relates to it. I know that what evidence we have about engagement in terms of work relates to better cohesion within communities.

Q306 Chair: That is a different answer.

Ms Majid: That is different to violent extremism, yes.

Mr Kundnani: The evidence that came out quite strongly in my research from youth workers in particular was that the root cause of violent extremism is quite complex and multi-faceted. No one thing is necessarily going to knock it out. But there does seem to be a strong view amongst a lot of people I have spoken to that a key part of it is a sense of political disempowerment and a sense that the British political system is pointless and does not listen to them. Therefore, violent alternatives become plausible. If that is even a part of the truth, then what youth work used to be more about, which is about empowering young people—particularly people on the margins of society—and giving them a sense of genuine engagement in our society's institutions is going to be incredibly useful as one

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part of preventing violent extremism. Unfortunately, too much of the way *Prevent* is thought about now is not about empowerment but about behaviour modification.

Q307 Dr Pugh: Just pressing you on this community cohesion point, which is very important to the inquiry, profiles that have been done of people who have engaged in violent extremism are quite detailed. We will know quite a bit about their background. On the evidence you have seen, does it suggest that people who become violent extremists come from less cohesive environments than people who simply crumble and get on with life, as it were?

Mr Kundnani: I think you would be hard pushed to find a clear cut picture such as that, where you can correlate—

Q308 Dr Pugh: You could put them up as a sub-group and you could set them against the average Muslim population of the country. You could say that what these people seem to like more than most is membership of a cohesive neighbourhood.

Mr Kundnani: I would be surprised if you could make that correlation in that way.

Q309 Dr Pugh: The link between cohesion and violent extremism is unproven then?

Mr Kundnani: If you put it like that but I think the argument I would make is that there are strong reasons for thinking that empowering young people is going to be an important part of preventing violent extremism. That is not something that you can statistically evidence in the way you are proposing because there are just not enough cases and there are not enough clear ideas of what empowerment should look like in our society in any case. I am not sure that you can evidence this in the way you are looking for, I am afraid.

Q310 Dr Pugh: There are many cases of terrorists, are there not, who come from environments which are very standard environments, probably more cohesive than other kinds of environments. You have young Muslims who come from westernised

homes. I would have thought that was a good counter example really and you would expect people from very entrenched homes where English is not their natural language to produce more terrorists if cohesion is a factor.

Mr Kundnani: As I think I have said already, the process of radicalisation is very complex and multi-faceted. I do not think you are going to be able to reduce it to the kinds of correlations that you are looking for in order to back up particular policy suggestions in that way.

Ms Majid: The socio-economic factor is not the factor; it is one of a whole range of factors. Of course some terrorists do come from quite well integrated backgrounds and so on but studies like the Home Office have done and I have done about pathways into terrorism and extremism show that people come from different sorts of pathways and backgrounds. People who are disenfranchised tend to become disengaged from mainstream societies, but I think that is why I am saying you have to not discount the evidence and the research that tries to determine the causes of that.

Q311 Chair: Do you think that the risk factors that are identified in CONTEST are the right ones, taking on board the fact that it is a complex constellation?

Mr Kundnani: The risk factors that are there in CONTEST over-emphasise religious ideology. The idea of a conveyor belt from particular forms of religious belief to terrorism I find does not stand up as a total picture of how people become radicalised. There is a lot of quite interesting argument for example from the French scholar of Islamism, Olivier Roy, who thinks that religion is totally irrelevant. It is a kind of window dressing on other things that are going on, whether they be psychological or political. As I was saying earlier, the point is that we are not going to find one model of radicalisation that is going to be the one we need to go with. We need to have a wide range and the problem with the way things are at the moment is that one particular ideologically motivated picture is being put forward as the only model.

Chair: Thanks very much indeed.

Witnesses: Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and Mr Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Communities and Local Government, gave evidence.

Q312 Chair: Can I start off, Secretary of State, by asking if you could explain as clearly and pragmatically as possible what difference you see being made in the *Prevent* programme as a result of your speech before Christmas?

Mr Denham: What I hope will happen—and I hope I can say at the beginning this does not mean this is not happening at all at the moment—is that it will strengthen at local level the understanding of *Prevent* partners about how the activities that they fund are intended to have an impact in the real world on the central objective of *Prevent*, which is to prevent people being drawn in to the type of

extremism that advocates the use of violence. In other words, it is understanding the cause and effect that is expected. *Prevent* will inevitably fund, as the Committee will have seen, a wide, very diverse range of projects up and down the country. What we wanted to do was to set out very clearly what we expected them to achieve. That is why the speech in December was intended to put the focus on preventing crime taking place. The second thing that I hoped would happen as a result of the speech in December was that a number of myths that may have hampered the involvement everybody would have liked in *Prevent* may be tackled with increasing

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success at local level. Two I have obviously highlighted. I am sure we will come on to these in discussions. One is the idea that there is a surreptitious, secret information gathering programme which has made people worried about participating. A second is that in some ways *Prevent* itself goes wider in challenging people's views of international affairs and things of that sort than it actually does. It comes back to the central point: it is about trying to ensure that crimes are not committed.

Chair: That does cover a load of questions we were intending to ask which is excellent. I am going to alter the order in which we were going to ask them as well. I would quite like to set to one side for the moment the big question of how exactly you prevent crime if that crime is violent extremism, which is what we are talking about at the moment, and just concentrate for the moment on the myths tackling bit. Andrew, could I ask you to deal with myths tackling as it relates to whether *Prevent* was just a cover for secret information gathering?

Q313 Mr Slaughter: We have just had the benefit of hearing from Mr Kundnani. You will be aware of his report that was published recently. There are certain perceptions and in some cases he says he has documented the reality that in many *Prevent* funded projects there is an attempt to elicit from a fishing expedition information which relates to political views and general views, and this might point in a generalised sense towards extremist views. That may be interpreted as leading to some form of violent behaviour. Is that your view and is it the intention of the programme that that should happen?

Mr Denham: No. That there is a perception or belief is obviously true in some quarters, not least because of reports like the one that you refer to. That is an issue that we acknowledge. It is not any part of the aim of *Prevent* projects to carry out generalised information gathering on the political views or other views of people involved in the *Prevent* programme. There is a legitimate aim, which I would say would be recognised in all sorts of crime prevention areas, of trying to identify particularly young people who may be in danger of being drawn into more serious crime. It is something that would be absolutely taken for granted if we were looking at gun and knife crime or other areas of crime. The attempt to identify those who are vulnerable and steer them in one way or another is a legitimate aim. In terms of that particular report, the response of these two ministers and also of the Home Secretary to the initial report was to say to the officials, "Check this out. This is quite a decentralised programme. Let us try to investigate those instances given in the report that can be tracked down to real places or real events." I have to say none of the claims was found to be founded. Not all of them were capable of that type of analysis because they were too vague to identify, but all the ones we could we identified. There were some areas of misunderstanding. It is the case in most—I am not sure I could say all—crime reduction partnerships at local level that there are information sharing protocols between different

organisations about people who might be vulnerable or be drawn into crime. What were sometimes presented as things specific to the *Prevent* programme were simply information sharing protocols which had been in place, in most cases, for many years before the *Prevent* programme had been established.

Q314 Chair: Are you saying that the instances that were given were not part of *Prevent* or that they did not happen or that you could not verify that they happened?

Mr Denham: All of the ones that were in the report, which I think were all *Prevent* cases that we can identify, were investigated and the claims were found not to be substantiated. I have to say that the view of the Home Secretary and myself was not to rubbish the report the first moment it came out and say, "This is completely wrong." We can never be entirely sure that things have not gone wrong out there somewhere and that is why we did ask officials to go and investigate, to check them out, and that was what was done.

Q315 Mr Betts: We have had examples given to us in the course of our evidence taking that youth workers have been asked as part of projects with *Prevent* money to ask certain specific questions to identify the views of young people. One particular example was given earlier today, that computers would be funded by the Home Office for a project involving young Muslims as long as there was a monitoring system to identify which websites they were looking at. There were specific examples given which certainly concerned us I think in terms of that very organised arrangement to monitor people's activities. Would it be possible now for officials to have a specific look at these allegations that have been made to us, because they are quite important?

Mr Denham: Of course we would look at any specific cases that have been made. I think there is a more fundamental point here which I made in the speech in Birmingham, which is that there should not be any information gathering exercise—as I said at the beginning, we are trying to identify young people who may be at risk; I do not know about this particular case you raise—and some of that work does involve real risks which are there from the internet. That is an issue where we have to tackle the risks that are there, but there should not be any information gathering processes which cannot be openly discussed. Part of our problem in this one is that there has not necessarily been a sharing of information about why information may be gathered, how *Prevent* operates, what the purposes of it are. We have said very clearly there is no reason for that to be in any way obscure or secret. It is the sort of thing that should be openly discussed with *Prevent* partners. To me, that principle of transparency seems to be the key principle to focus on going forwards.

Q316 Mr Slaughter: Those are examples, not answering the question, "Did they take place?" but answering the question, "Would these be suitable

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ways of information gathering for a *Prevent* project?" One, allowing computers provided they were used to monitor the websites used and, two, police officers were asking youth workers to pursue a line of questioning.

Mr Denham: I would be very uncomfortable—and we will check this out because I do not know if the case took place—about a secret project aimed at putting computers into people's hands to see where they went. That would seem to me to be setting up something for one purpose and doing another. We are all familiar with the idea that there are dangers in the internet of paedophilia and pornography. When we work with young people on IT projects, we raise awareness about them and we seek to keep young people safe. I think if you are doing an IT project with young people who may be targeted over the internet—and we have many documented cases of internet radicalisation—then building that into that programme is a perfectly reasonable thing to do. The crucial issue here is are we straightforward and transparent about how things are done.

Q317 Mr Slaughter: At the other end of the argument, we have heard from a number of witnesses who have worked with young people on *Prevent* projects who thought they were good projects and they need some funding but, because they are tainted by the idea that there is a surveillance or security or derogatory purpose as well, that devalues them, makes them suspicious and makes people rather intimidated. Do you think that is a problem and, if it is a problem, do you not feel that it would have been better to disaggregate those two aims?

Mr Denham: The difficulty is this: if you take *Prevent* projects with young people, they are funded because the government has an aim at the end of the day. That is to reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack taking place. That is why they are funded. They are not funded as general, youth work projects which happen to go to a particular community. There is an aim behind funding for *Prevent*. If you entirely separate out the reason you are funding them in the first place with the aim that you want to achieve, you might just as well take the sum of money and put it into mainstream youth work provision or things of that sort. What I think we are very used to is the idea that for example, in many urban areas, there are extensive projects aimed at dealing with youth gangs and guns and knife crime. None of us has the slightest reservation about saying, "We want to work with these young people because we think that in aggregate there is a risk—and a real risk to some of them—that they will get drawn into a more serious type of crime which could cost them their lives or the life of somebody else." We do youth work with them with a clear idea of diverting people away from that risk. It is not a perfect analogy and Mr Malik always tells me it is not a perfect analogy, but the analogy is there that a *Prevent* project has that aim of avoiding somebody being drawn into crime. The vast majority of people never would have been but that is the aim of it. The crucial thing is to have the honest discussion with those youth workers that says, "This

is actually why we are doing this. This is how we make you feel comfortable about your role. This is what we need to share with you and you need to understand." Where projects have been funded where that discussion has not taken place in such a straightforward way, we may be in a more difficult position.

Mr Malik: When the allegations were first made in *The Guardian*, shortly afterwards as John said we did not dismiss them. We wanted to explore them. Once we started to realise that we could not find anything to corroborate what was being said, I spent about half an hour on the Islam Channel. There are about 1,000 or so *Prevent* projects across the country. Obviously the Islam Channel is something up and down the country that will be in many homes and living rooms of Muslims and indeed non-Muslims as well. I said that if anybody has any information whatsoever, if anybody feels uncomfortable about something that has taken place, if they feel there is some kind of spying going on that ought not to be going on, then please come forward. I also said that I do not believe it is the role of the police to be asking youth workers to spy on young people. I also said that I had no evidence that that takes place. If there is any evidence, please come forward. I have been on at least half a dozen visits across the country and met many different people from many different projects and I always ask them the question: "Do you feel that *Prevent* is infringing on your rights? Is it about spying?" etc. Indeed, many people felt that the allegation had made their job much more difficult. There was a young chap in Bristol who was running a very, very successful *Prevent* project and he was extremely frustrated and angry because, all of a sudden, something that he had been doing which he felt was making a real difference to the community in Bristol was tainted.

Q318 Chair: We have had evidence across the piece even before the report came out that there were very significant numbers of groups within the Muslim community across Britain who would not participate, would not seek money from *Prevent*, because they felt that it was tainted in any case. Do you accept that and do you accept that the department needs to do more now to remove that taint, to make it clear what the purpose of the programme is?

Mr Denham: That was something we acknowledged quite early on in August, which is when Alan Johnson and I wrote saying, "If you are finding locally the use of the label 'preventing violent extremism' is a problem, then do not use it." In fact, in many places, people had already stopped using that as a label, so we entirely acknowledge the sensitivity of language and labelling and the need to be very open and transparent about the issues that we are talking about at the moment. I think we have moved things on and the impression I have is that those messages from central government have been recognised, although we have some way to go.

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Q319 Mr Betts: From what we heard in evidence from the Chief Executive of Leicester when we were in Birmingham, I think Leicester has moved along that line. They have abolished the labels and effectively they have a holistic programme where to some extent what they are doing is putting money into mainstream community activities, which a few minutes ago you said you were not quite sure was the right way to go. Is there some conflict around there because we see that very up-front and very successful policy not following what you are asking them to do?

Mr Denham: What you need to be able to do is to say how if you invest the money in this purpose you expect it to have an outcome that reduces the chances of people getting involved in this very serious crime. If people simply took the money and just devoted it to mainstream community or community cohesion activities those values might be of immense value in their own right but they might not be hitting the objectives of *Prevent*, of identifying and supporting vulnerable individuals, of enhancing the ability of communities to resist the ideas and arguments and organisation of those who would promote al-Qaeda-type terrorism in this country, so what we are saying to people is not that you should not absolutely do those organisations but you need to understand the connection between what you are investing in and the crime that you are attempting to prevent. We have tried to go some way to set out why *Prevent* and community cohesion are not identical. They are not interchangeable words. There is often an overlap between the two of them, and some activities will hit both objectives, but people need to be clear about what they are funding and why.

Q320 Mr Betts: We have heard the concern raised with us before that because of this confusion you have just been referring to it taints the programme and means that some very active groups of people will not apply for *Prevent* money when they could usefully use it for good purposes and that it might be better to take certain elements of the programme, particularly the *Channel* project, out of this whole arrangement and put it into the *Pursue* strand of the policy.

Mr Denham: You could always talk about where the boundaries lie. The *Channel* part of *Prevent* comes under those bits of *Prevent* which are led by the Home Office, and there is of course a spectrum here, but what would be a mistake, I think, would be to remove from *Prevent* those aspects of the programme which are designed at increasing the ability of communities to resist the dangerous ideas and to support not necessarily those young people who will get drawn directly into the *Channel* programme, who, by definition, will have been seen to have advanced quite a long way into the area of risk, but that broader group of young people who may be at risk of being drawn into this area. I think it would be a mistake to remove those key areas of the *Prevent* programme and say we will just call that “community cohesion” and not necessarily address

those issues or we will just have *Pursue* and *Channel*. That strategy would be leaving a big gap in the work of *Prevent* at the moment.

Q321 Mr Betts: You also drew an analogy a few minutes ago with programmes to deal with disaffected youths who might be engaging in some sort of criminal activities, and then you went on to say that your colleague Shahid Malik had sometimes cautioned you about drawing that analogy because it might not be quite the right one. Why was that caution around? Was it because there are some differences?

Mr Denham: Because what we have usually debated is that, in practice, there are differences between a type of crime which has at its heart a particular type of violent ideology and the nature of the crime which is involved in gun crime. That is the difference.

Mr Betts: Thank you.

Q322 Dr Pugh: Just before I get on to the subject of local authorities, which is my main theme, as it were, we spent some time in Birmingham last week and we were shown YouTube videos which apparently show to the background of rap music things like American troops being attacked by the Taliban and so on. Clearly there are cases where if a young man is actually visiting websites about bomb-making equipment he ought to be reported by any self-respecting youth worker, but if a young man was found to be looking at these YouTube videos, which are apparently quite common and easily available, should the youth worker report him?

Mr Denham: I think the *Channel* system operates on the basis of referring to people to decide what needs to be done. It is difficult to know, knowing so little about the hypothetical context, but I think what it does back is the investment that *Prevent* is making, and I have seen this myself in Tower Hamlets, in increasing the awareness of young people about what is on the internet.

Q323 Dr Pugh: The youth worker has to make a decision and what I want to know is if you were that youth worker and you understood what the strategy is meant to achieve, would you report it?

Mr Denham: Again, it is impossible to know without the circumstances. What I would hope, though, Dr Pugh—and this is a challenge for us—is that the youth worker first and foremost would have received some proper training in the dangers that are there on the internet and how to respond appropriately. My guess would be that in the vast majority of cases there would be absolutely no reason to think about reporting somebody. This is the same issue, if you think about what then happens, as pornography and paedophilia on the net. It is understanding what is out there, understanding the discussions and being confident enough in the issues to have a discussion. Youth workers deal with these issues all the time with young people in all sorts of different contexts. Difficult issues come up. That is why we have youth workers. I would honestly say that the real answer to your question is rather than have somebody who does not know what they are doing getting into a

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panic and saying, “I think I must rush off to the authorities,” let us make sure at local level, and I hope this happens, that *Prevent* partnerships have equipped youth workers with the skills necessary to deal with those circumstances. I would be pretty certain that that would do the trick in the vast, vast majority of cases. If you then have greater reasons for concern it might be different. I think what we have got to do is get ourselves out of this headline that the whole idea of the programme is some great vast pyramid where everybody gets reported up the system; this is about enabling people to deal with these issues confidently and effectively.

Q324 Dr Pugh: So you are expecting the youth worker to make a very nuanced decision to take account of the context and not just a particular episode?

Mr Denham: If a youth worker, for example, comes across a situation—and I deliberately choose a different context—where they are aware that a young woman in a youth club is getting involved in an internet conversation with somebody who might not be suitable, we expect youth workers to make a judgment. There would be circumstances where the judgment might be that you are going to deal with that as an individual conversation about what is sensible and what is not sensible and all the rest of it. There might be circumstances where the judgment would be: “I am very worried about this person’s vulnerability, somebody is talking about leaving home and I need to do something about it.” We are generally confident in the ability of our professional workers with young people to exercise those types of judgments. I do not see any reason why with the proper training and support we cannot have a similar confidence in this context as well. Therefore it is more nuanced but this is what professional youth workers do. I think we need to train them, support them and then have confidence in them to make the right judgments. That will be across the spectrum, I think.

Q325 Dr Pugh: You referred to the whole scheme as quite decentralised a few minutes ago. Suppose a local authority decides that they do not really know what to do in order to prevent, other than to persist with community cohesion initiatives which seem to be good initiatives in themselves; is there a problem there?

Mr Denham: If people have really looked at all of their circumstances locally, they have got to make the best judgments, and if people have absolutely established that there are no issues to be dealt with or whatever, that they are going to move towards the community cohesion end of things that may well be what happens but you would want to have sufficient challenge in there to say have we really looked at all of the possibilities. The issue that we have just been talking about, the possibly isolated group of young people who are not at risk from anybody locally because nobody locally is pushing dangerous extreme violent ideas but may be at risk on the

internet, is something that that sort of group might look at and say, “Have we covered all of the possibilities in this particular area?”

Q326 Dr Pugh: In terms of what local authorities are currently doing, looking at a range of programmes under your Department, where do you think the key gaps are at the moment?

Mr Malik: I think the reality is that there are some authorities that are quite advanced. They have been doing work for many, many years, work around diversity, work around community cohesion, and that means that they are well-placed to actually take work forward on *Prevent*. There are other authorities that have no real experience whatsoever. One of the reasons for having the national conference on 8 December where some 1,200 people turned out to Birmingham was really to try to share some of the good practice. There are some local authorities which are doing some extraordinarily good work. Some of the projects they have invested in are being well-utilised and effective. There are others that are learning. There are authorities that are at different levels and the gap probably is to try to ensure that the good practice that does exist is disseminated as far as possible right across the spectrum thereby giving people the opportunity to learn from others.

Q327 Dr Pugh: You mentioned authorities but organisations within authorities have different experiences and one of the things we got from our Birmingham visit was the allegation that some organisations are very good at bidding for whatever pot of money was around at the time, and therefore could quite easily buy into the *Prevent* agenda, or whatever agenda was there, and other organisations who might be capable of doing better work simply did not know how to get those funds or did not want those funds in the first place or did not see how those funds applied to their work. How do you deal with that phenomenon?

Mr Malik: I used to be one of those organisations so I know exactly what you mean! Listen, I think unfortunately it is always going to be the case that you have local authorities who are perhaps risk averse and they go to what you might term the “usual suspects” who they know have got all the finance and administration side of things in place where there are not too many risks with the resources, and they are broadly good eggs, and they run with them. I do think, however, that the whole point of *Prevent* funding to an extent is to think outside of the box. It is quite clear that there will be some people who are doing good work that has a positive impact in terms of the *Prevent* agenda. If you look at some of the work that we have done centrally, we have looked at areas where there are gaps, so young people and women where there are big gaps, and at a national level we have got the Muslim Women’s Advisory Group and the Young People’s Advisory Group. If you look at a local level a lot of *Prevent* partnerships now are starting to develop things around young people and women because traditionally those are the stakeholders

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within that community that really have not been enfranchised. I think some of the national stuff we are doing links with some of that local work. There is no excuse really. We have got guidance as well at the end of the day. You asked a question about if an organisation is not too clear, there is this national guidance that they can turn to. They have got the Regional Government Offices. Within each Regional Government Office there are people who have expertise in this area, who work with local authorities, so there is a field of expertise out there that can support them and there is not really, I do not suppose, an excuse for local authorities not to be spreading some of the resources perhaps a bit wider, only for the sake of increasing the effectiveness because at the end of the day this is not about making people happy.

Q328 Dr Pugh: It is interesting you said about women's projects. One of our witnesses in Birmingham made the obvious point that all young terrorist males have mums, and in a sense to set yourself out on a terrorist route is to somehow turn your back on the family environment, and there needs to be, therefore, some thought about how the family environment deals with the situation. If you looked at all the local authority projects and you decided that actually the most effective way to spend money combating terrorism in this country was to give it to another department of government, because obviously cultural factors are a big element in encouraging extremism of one kind or another, and you decided that local authorities just did not know how to do the job, would you own up to that or are you already owning up to that?

Mr Denham: I am never particularly defensive about the boundaries of the Department, Dr Pugh, but the difficulty would be, I think, that if you say your local authorities are not capable of leadership in this area as a permanent state of affairs, you have then got to say who else is likely to be at a local level? There is really only one national agency which I think would come forward as an alternative and that would be the Police Service. I think there are real issues, as everyone has recognised in all of the questions, and there is a spectrum of activity here from areas which are clearly in the *Pursue* area, which is people who are already involved in this crime who need to be tracked down, stopped and all the rest of it, through to those who are really on the verges of it, that is the *Channel* project, to those who may be at risk, to the issues you do in the communities that may be about resilience, like the work for example with mothers, which is a key part of quite a number of local *Prevent* projects up and down the country. I believe that currently that work is best done within my Department and the leadership of that work is best led by local authorities because they are better placed to have the level of community engagement that is necessary. There is a caveat there. This is a real challenge for most people in local authorities to whom, as for most of the rest of us, these issues were entirely new just a very short period of time ago. We have expected local authorities to move very, very quickly to understand perhaps more than they did

before about the dynamics of communities because it was only a few years before the London bombings that we were dealing with community cohesion issues which were new to many local authorities to address. We have also not just asked people to understand the dynamics of communities but the particular modalities of people who are trying to promote terrorism. The answer is, as Shahid Malik has just said, there are some local authorities who have done extraordinarily well very, very quickly. There are others that are not as fast at the moment. I really come back to the point—if you take local authority leadership out of the question—I do not think you have an appropriate agency that exists with national support that operates locally that can lead on the broader areas of the *Prevent* strategy.

Q329 Alison Seabeck: We have heard powerful evidence from young people, the Youth Parliament as well as individuals in Birmingham, that the *Prevent* strategy is distrusted. Part of that is borne out in the evidence we have heard today, but it is in part clearly because of the involvement of the police. Given that you have success with knife crime and other things where the police are involved with young people, is there a different aspect to this? Is it because you are purely focusing on Muslims because again our evidence across this investigation has repeatedly come back to us and said it is too tightly focused on Muslims and why does the Secretary of State not open it out to other forms of potential extremism?

Mr Denham: There are two parts to that question. I am very well aware of the real dangers in the perception which has been there that the only dialogue of importance that takes place between the Government and the Muslim community is around terrorism and violent extremism. The point that was acknowledged by the Home Secretary and myself in August, and we have to continue to repeat it, is that it has to be clear that we see the bigger, broader and indeed more important relationship between the Government and the Muslim communities of this country as they are with all other communities. The issues, firstly, that are of general interest—jobs, housing, educational success, and all of those issues—and, secondly, issues specific to that community, in case of the Muslim communities the religious discrimination legislation, the Sharia finance instruments, all of those sorts of things that we have done. Is there still a risk that this is perceived both within government and outside government, in the media and in the community as a one-dimensional conversation? Yes, that risk is there, and until we challenge that successfully, which we must keep at all the time, then you will continue to hear those sorts of concerns. The second part of the question was other forms of extremism. We have this year developed both a much more explicit message and organisational focus on other forms of extremism, particularly the dangers of white racist extremism. The *Connecting Communities* programme will shortly reach well over 100 communities where we are trying to undercut the roots of that extremism too. It was really a choice of

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whether to run that as a separate programme or as a single pot of money. The view that we have taken is that there are quite significant differences, the differences between the actual circumstances of an international ideology promoted in the way that al-Qaeda does and the way that operates, and the roots of white racist extremism, which we are trying to address in part of the *Connecting Communities* message, and it was better as we developed the programme to develop them as separate programmes nationally. However, we are very clear that we would want people at local level to know what their strategy was to deal with extremism, using their mainstream money, any engagement they may have with *Connecting Communities* or their engagement with *Prevent*. There is an equally important message here that we are opposed to extremism wherever it comes from. In terms of sheer ambition to create destruction and death, it is still the case that al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism is the single biggest threat and we just have to recognise that but that does not mean that we are not going to be actively opposed to all types of extremism.

Q330 Alison Seabeck: What more can be done to reassure Muslims that the community as a whole is not potentially at risk of potential radicalisation, because huge distrust has been voiced during the course of this investigation?

Mr Denham: In part I think it has to be that we just keep repeating these same messages over and over again. We engage other parts of government. We constantly tell the story of the issues that we have dealt with. Last week in a different part of my job I was talking about the transformation of the educational achievements of young British Pakistani and young British Bangladeshi boys, one of the great educational success stories of the last ten years, addressing an issue of real concern in communities and in families, and we have got to keep saying we are doing those things, we are making real differences, and we will continue to do that.

Q331 Alison Seabeck: I hear what you are saying about the message and that is terrific but one of the other criticisms we have had, and it is not necessarily just in this section in your Department, is that because of the lack of continuity in officials, relationships between the Department and people on the ground chop and change and vary and people feel that they need a sense of continuity, they need to have a senior person to go to who has a long understanding of the issues that they are facing, and at the moment that is a genuine worry. It is to do with the way the Civil Service career structure works actually but it does not help.

Mr Denham: Yes, I am afraid we have probably both faced that problem in every single department and responsibility we have ever been in. What we have to do is to make sure the sorts of messages that we have been trying to give today and over the last few months sufficiently enter into—it is a jargon term these days—the DNA of the system so they are what we say all the time. If we do not do that and the

message fluctuates month by month or personality by personality then we will not be successful; that is undoubtedly true.

Q332 Alison Seabeck: Are you looking at all at the way the formula is put together in terms of how *Prevent* is allocated and the way in which it looks at the size of a Muslim population in an area?

Mr Denham: We are quite open to looking at that. It is hard in absolute terms to justify the way that it is done at the moment other than it is hard, on the basis of our knowledge, to come up with a different system of funding allocation. When one has an ideal situation in mind it would be something that was more clearly risk-based and something that was able to take a coherent view at a local level on the relative needs of cohesion funding and *Prevent* funding, which, as you know, currently go out separately. That would be the ideal. There are two real obstacles to that at the moment, but I do not think they are absolute and forever. One is that risk-based funding clearly has a problem in that you are indicating somebody's assessment of risk and that has both a presentational and practical problem.

Chair: Who would do the risk assessment?

Q333 Alison Seabeck: That is the second one.

Mr Denham: The difficulty with it is if you did a risk assessment that was informed by for example the police or other agencies, it is probably something you would not want to share in public as part of your funding formula. The problem with the formula we have got—and I think we would both say the same as Ministers—is it is pretty hard to defend until you come to trying to actually construct a workable formula based on other information. I am being perfectly honest with the Committee. We would both like to move the funding formula on to a different basis. If it were possible to have an approach that at least was able to reflect at local level the relative needs of cohesion and *Prevent* rather than being separate exercises, I think there would be some advantages in that. Dr Pugh's question earlier highlighted the fact that the balance between community cohesion need and *Prevent* need may well vary from one area to another. At the moment we do not have a funding system for the two that reflects that. Technically that is much harder to do than to sit here and talk about it. I am not absolutely wedded to this and I do not think there is an issue of principle that I could defend behind what we do at the moment.

Q334 Andrew George: How much has *Prevent* prevented?

Mr Malik: I am happy to have a go. Let me just say that 2007–08 was the first year we had the pathfinder.

Q335 Andrew George: Of course.

Mr Malik: It is a very, very new programme. We have commissioned some national evaluation very recently. We have also had the Audit Commission do some work. If you were to ask me how many bomb plots has it prevented, *Prevent* is one element of the counter-terrorism strategy that we have. We know of

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at least 12 plots that have been thwarted. We also know that some 228 people have been convicted in the last eight years.

Q336 Chair: I want to try and get this a bit more specific because we have had enormous quantities of evidence about what one might call the theoretical underpinning of *Prevent* and *Pursue* and, to be blunt, I really do not want to go over again, which some of our earlier witnesses were doing, just re-quoting the academic evidence we have got for things. If I may Mr Malik—and this becomes a slight critique of the question—we all know that the point of this exercise is to stop terrorist events and we can all say that, thankfully, the number of terrorist events that has occurred in this country has been relatively small. With respect, I do not believe it is possible for you or anybody else to demonstrate that there is any cause and effect (well, maybe some of the stuff the police have done) in what *Prevent* is doing that you can relate to a reduction in crime.

Mr Malik: I beg to differ, Chairman, simply, for this reason—and I always welcome the Chairman intervening and criticising the questions!

Q337 Chair: It is the Chair's prerogative!

Mr Malik: It does not happen often enough! Just to say I think, broadly speaking, of course you are in comfortable territory when you say that, but without any shadow of a doubt whatsoever I can confidently and comfortably say that we know what some of the triggers are and we also know some of the elements that can help to reduce the propensity of individuals to engage in violent extremism. A lot of the *Prevent* work that we do for example focuses on enabling people to challenge violent ideologies. I think it stands to reason. It is probably commonsense that if you can persuade people using Islam itself that a violent ideology that they are flirting with is not the way of Islam, I think the propensity of those individuals to engage in such acts is much diminished. That is why we have funded a *Radical Middle Way* project which has helped about 50,000 young people in this country and they have benefited from that. We actually also believe that not muzzling and stifling debate is a really healthy thing. I was in East London where they were saying should we be debating about jihad for example and it means. My view was that if we are not in the mainstream debating what jihad means then tucked somewhere else you have al-Muhajiroun debating what jihad means in a way that mainstream Islam could not understand. *Prevent* is doing a lot of work but it is hard to quantify. I think you are right there, when you get down to the quantifiables it is hard to say what it has achieved, but I think we all know from a commonsense perspective, from an instinctive perspective that there is good work taking place.

Q338 Andrew George: I do understand what the Home Office is doing in terms of the hard infrastructure and the intelligence, *et cetera*, but what we have been talking about is softer community development processes. Really I

suppose what I was asking and I thought was really contained in quite a deliberately short question (because I thought that was welcomed here!) is if you can give examples, perhaps confidentially to the Committee outside this evidence, of how the work that you have been talking about has contributed to the 12 plots being foiled which you mentioned as part of your answer earlier.

Mr Denham: It would be extremely difficult to link the vast majority of the *Prevent* programme or even individual instances within those plots to a track back from a *Prevent*-funded programme. This is about developing resilience of communities. We know that in the case of the young man in Bristol whose name now escapes me—

Mr Malik: Andrew Ibrahim.

Mr Denham: Andrew Ibrahim. He was reported to the police by members of the mosque. You cannot say whether it was something about the *Prevent* programme that led a mosque to say, "We have got concerns about this individual, we are going to report them," because in the nature of this programme looking at that direct causal trail is not going to be easy. The second thing is that there have been since 2005, as I am sure the Quilliam Foundation said to you, big ideological shifts within the world of radical Islamism with many more people, including former supporters of al-Qaeda, contesting the al-Qaeda ideology. It is quite hard to distinguish those international ideological events from things we have done here. This may be too vague for you but I was the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee when we did an inquiry in 2005-06. At that time we got huge amounts of evidence that said that there was not a problem. The bulk of the evidence said lots of people have been arrested, no-one has been convicted, this is all got up by the Government and the security services. That debate that there is not an issue has been silenced over the last few years. There is a debate still about what you best do about it but almost no-one comes forward now and says, "This is in the imagination of the security services or the Government who are out to get us." It has changed partly because of the arrests and convictions and partly because of what has actually happened including the London bombings. *Prevent* has helped. *Prevent* has not had to go out and change the minds of most people but where people wanted the confidence to say we are in a position to deal with that, I think we have been able to. There is support for the independent MINAB (The Mosques and Imams Advisory Board) on mosque management which has helped to strengthen the management of many mosques to give people more confidence about ensuring they are run in ways where they are not likely to be taken advantage of by extremist groups. Again, you cannot honestly say, "And we can plot this in this particular location and the cause and effect was so on and so on." If you say what did we set out to do—which was to strengthen community institutions to have activities which can divert people away from trouble and so on—we have funded a lot of those activities and it will be some time before you can look back and say, "And therefore the following happened."

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Q339 Chair: Secretary of State, can I follow up on that and feed back some of the evidence that we have been collecting during our inquiry. You said that it would be necessary for local authorities to understand the connection between the projects that they are putting forward and their effect on *Prevent*. We were given ample evidence of, as people described them, “Mickey Mouse” projects and “nice dinners” that had been funded by the *Prevent* programme in various places. Presumably those local authorities genuinely felt that they were somehow related to *Prevent*. What we would be interested in knowing is how rigorous the Department is being in challenging those, given that, as you said at the beginning, we are all on a discovery path here. It is not that local authorities are being deliberately obstreperous but they may genuinely not know what they should be doing in their local community to prevent.

Mr Denham: That is a fair point, Chairman, and it is one that we touched on again in the speech to the Birmingham conference in December. I think in the coming year we now have sufficient knowledge of practice up and down the country and the particular stuff (although we cannot be absolutely certain) that appears to be working well that we can be more proactive in promoting good practice, really pushing things, not imposing a narrow template on every community, because I do not think that would work, but actually saying these are the areas of risk that people have identified in various places; have you looked at these here? These are the types of activities that seem to be particularly successful at engaging people. There is a lot more in the way of good practice and there is the promotion through the regional Government Office Network that Shahid was talking about earlier. I think over the next year—and I have said this to the officials in the *Prevent* team—we need to have much more proactive promotion of good practice where we find it and of challenge to those areas where we cannot work out what people are doing and they cannot either.

Q340 Chair: How do you identify what is good practice when we would all agree that you cannot do the usual rigorous accounting of saying, “There were this many likely terrorists last year and there are that many this year”? How do you assess whether a project is working or not?

Mr Denham: Let me give you an example, Chairman, of one project that I visited, which I mentioned earlier, which is a Tower Hamlets project aimed at increasing young people’s understanding of the internet. It is very difficult to say therefore five potential terrorists decided not to become terrorists, but in terms of having a group of young people whose understanding and ability to discuss what gets put on the internet, how propaganda is used, what might be motivating people, how to respond to it, is undoubtedly it is a real educational success within that community. When we have tried to produce good practice, the good practice guidance that was produced before Christmas, I think ten projects, are marked by the fact that they were not, “Here is a

project and people did so-and-so”. There is an analysis. It is like a school experiment in a way, “This is what we set out to achieve; this is what we did; this is how we assessed what worked.” It is that quite rigorous, analytical view of what projects are about that we as a Department are trying to promote in the work that we put out amongst the *Prevent* partners and that is what we will continue to do.

Q341 Mr Betts: Can I follow up with an issue, and I think local authorities do find this very, very difficult to deal with, as to whether there is any good practice around that you can disseminate which might be very helpful. It was interesting what you were saying about the mosques previously and how they have come forward and identified someone who might be a potential threat. Some young Muslims came to see me from not just my constituency but from around Sheffield. They were in their 20s and 30s and said they were really worried about young people getting an extremist message and being indoctrinated with it. When the authorities in general look at who to talk to they go to the mosque and talk to elders. What happens when it is the mosque which is the place where this extremism is being perpetrated and they are doing nothing about it and the radicals are using it as their base to actually contact these young people?

Mr Malik: I have got to say from my own experience seldom is the mosque the hub of this type of activity. It is extremely rare although there are some notable exceptions—Finsbury Park, et cetera. I personally do not recognise that. Everywhere I have been they have really gone out of their way to not exclude almost the first generation, if you will, but to definitely include younger people and indeed women as well, recognising that those are two groups, as I said earlier, that have, for various reasons, been excluded, and so I do not actually recognise that. What I would recognise is the point that was made earlier about local authorities quite often going to delivery agents that are the delivery agent of choice, if you will. I think that is more prevalent than anything to do with a mosque as such. We are constantly looking at our guidance. Our Government Offices are constantly in contact with local projects and initiatives, constantly trying to share some of this good practice. Of course there are going to be cases where it is less than perfect but we just hope that we will persevere and get beyond some of that. This funding in the grand scheme of things is Mickey Mouse. In the grand scheme of public sector funding where you are talking about billions of pounds, it is very, very small. The real challenge is to make sure that the mainstream funding and the way that mainstream programmes operate for the longer term actually take stock of a duty to deal with issues of extremism, whether it is extremism in the name of Islam, or white supremacy, or whatever it might be.

Q342 Alison Seabeck: Picking up both those points in a sense, you have already talked about local authorities relying on people they trust, the good eggs and so on, but, equally, we have heard evidence that some of those good eggs are running courses

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which are superficial, where there is no feedback, as a result of whatever has happened, and so people turn up, there is a lot of enthusiasm and interest and they get nothing and do not know where it is going and do not know whether their views are being passed on, or what the government response might be. How are you working with local authorities to ensure that they are not just making assumptions about the work being done because the people they are using are people they know?

Mr Denham: I would say two things. We have certainly published very clear guidance to local authorities on how to evaluate what they are doing. I am sure the Committee has copies of that. We have tried to produce the guidance that enables people to assess what they are doing. The second thing I think we need to say, Chairman, is neither of us have come here to say that every single *Prevent*-funded project is exactly the way we would like it to be. I do believe that huge numbers of projects are very, very good. It is very important not to rubbish the whole programme because we can all find cases where it is not working in the way that we would like it to do. What I hope the Committee would accept is what I have said, which is over the next year we very clearly have said as Ministers, after a period of time in which because everyone is feeling their way we have allowed a great variety of activities to develop and for people to choose what seems to be best at local level, we now really need to be looking much harder at what appears to be working and what risks need to be covered and how we deal with those. If I could take Mr Betts' point, if there really is a case where you have a group of young Muslims coming forward saying, "We have a voice, we are part of it," and there is no space for them within a local *Prevent* strategy to hear that voice come through, something needs to be addressed at a local level because you would not wish to waste the contribution that people are wanting to make and the insight they have.

Q343 Mr Betts: We have addressed the issue of it should not just be the usual suspects and we should try and reach out to a wider range of people, but how far do you take that wider range of people? Do you take it to the point where there should be active engagement with people who may not be advocating blowing people or buildings up but who are flirting with the edges of extremism and extremist views. Should we try to engage with those people as part of the strategy or simply refuse to talk to anyone who is not unambiguously against violence?

Mr Denham: Unambiguous opposition to the use of terrorist violence and the breaking of British laws has to be an absolute on the *Prevent* programme. Beyond that, there will be people who take very different views, say, to the British Government on international affairs or people who would be labelled as socially conservative that people may have other disagreements with, but the test is are they very unambiguous on their opposition to al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism. That cannot be negotiable, in our view, for the *Prevent* programme. Beyond that though there would be a wide range of opinion with which you would expect people to engage locally

because there will be people who might disagree with some aspect of British foreign policy but who in terms of their own young people and their own community will be absolutely unambiguously opposed to violence and are therefore allies in the key aim which is of preventing crime.

Q344 Mr Betts: That view was challenged by a quite interesting presentation we had in Birmingham with a young man there who had been engaged with and presented a different view about his role as a Muslim in British society and the history of how Muslims historically had fought in the British Army in two World Wars, a young man who we were told was actually flirting on the edge of supporting violence and indeed thinking of going out to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban and had had his views changed by being engaged with in a process. If we took the view that we should not talk to people like that are we not in danger of letting them go off in their own way?

Mr Denham: If people or individuals are in that position there are parts of *Prevent*, and the *Channel* programme indeed, that are designed for them as individuals, but I think probably to bring in an organisation that was actually flirting with promoting al-Qaeda-type violence here in the hope of winning some converts out of the debate, there is a point at which you cannot go across that path, so parts of the *Prevent* programme are undoubtedly designed to help those types of individuals but we have been very clear that organisations that would promote al-Qaeda-type terrorism cannot be part of the *Prevent* programme.

Q345 Mr Betts: There is a distinction there between giving organisations which are advocating violence money as part of the *Prevent* programme and a programme trying to deal with disaffected young people who may have extremist views as individuals and trying to actually engage with them and stop them getting into violence itself?

Mr Denham: If we went to a different area, because there is a crucial issue here, Mr Betts, about funding, when I was in my previous job at Innovation, Universities and Skills we produced the guidance on *Prevent* issues and higher education. There we did say that a proper role for universities is to provide a forum in which difficult and uncomfortable ideas are properly analysed, debated and discussed, so there would be circumstances where that might provide a forum for discussion of some of these issues. We drew a very clear distinction between people who would abuse the space that is offered by universities to promote illegal activities behind the scenes. There is, though, still a crucial issue about funding of organisations that would be beyond the pale as far as we are concerned and we are absolutely clear that cannot be one of the things that is funded by *Prevent*.

Q346 Mr Betts: What do you do then with the Youth Parliament's evidence that we had earlier where they were saying that because they were perceived not to be part of a framework where any views that were expressed as part of their strategy of having a

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number of meetings up and down the country with young people, that they were not part of an organisation which could pass any concerns directly on to the police, that young people felt the freedom to come forward and express their views and have a genuine dialogue. They thought they got far more out of that and young people who might not have engaged with any sort of process before were confident to come forward into that sort of environment?

Mr Denham: No-one is trying to prevent people doing particular types of activity or provide forums for properly structured debate. The original question, as I interpreted it, was who would *Prevent* actually fund and under what circumstance and we have to have some lines there. I would be fairly cautious about some of the extremist organisations that are out there obviously such as Islam4UK, which is now being proscribed, and having a conscious strategy of drawing them into a polite *Prevent* debate. There are many people who are out there who can discuss these issues in a way without involving those people.

Q347 Mr Betts: I am still trying to get at whether it is not funding organisations that promote violence or allowing an organisation to have a strategy of trying to engage with individuals who might be on the point of getting into violent activity that might be drawn back from them by allowing that space and opportunity to be influenced and to have a discussion.

Mr Denham: Perhaps I have not made myself clear. A part of *Prevent* is about being able to engage with those young people who may be flirting with these ideas. There is a range of activities, including the *Channel* programme, which is aimed at working with those young people and giving them an alternative view of the world, so it is not about a refusal to engage with young people who might be putting those views forward. There is a distinction between that and engaging with organisations whose rationale is to provide the ideological basis even if they are not actually organising themselves on an ideological basis for terrorism.

Q348 Chair: Can we just get on the record, Secretary of State, what the current understanding in your Department is about the risk factors for radicalisation and, in particular, the mix of religious factors, socio-economic factors and anything else?

Mr Denham: Yes, I will probably refer you, if I may, Chairman, to the formal evidence that we put in which we listed those risk factors. I am fairly certain it is there and if not I will follow that up with a letter. In round terms, although one does tend to have a combination, it is individuals who may be vulnerable for some reason, a group of people who are actively propagating the ideas, an apparently attractive narrative about why this is the solution to a particular problem, and an environment in which those ideas are not actively challenged. I hope that is a reasonably accurate summary of what we put in our evidence to you.

Q349 Chair: You have talked briefly about university campuses but prisons are the other place where there seems to be very ample evidence that many young people are recruited to extremism. Is work there entirely within the purview of the Home Office or is that partly CLG as well?

Mr Denham: The Home Office leads on the work within prisons and the *Prevent* part of the strategy there.

Mr Malik: As a former Prisons Minister-type bloke I am perhaps best-placed to respond to that. The MoJ (Ministry of Justice) has an Extremism Unit. Every single one of our prisons has at least one Muslim chaplain, if not two. In terms of the quantum of the challenge in prisons, I am not sure whether we have actually got an accurate picture of that. It is sometimes exaggerated in the media, it has to be said, but we are very conscious and the MoJ is obviously very conscious that it is a challenge. We have prison officers who are trained and imams who are trained. I spoke to many of them who have actually got engaged in de-radicalisation, if you will, not of people who became extremists within prison but were convicted under terror legislation. It is an area of concern. I would tend to say that sometimes perhaps it is exaggerated in the media. I do not think anybody underestimates the challenge that exists but there is training in place. There are Muslim chaplains in every one of these prisons. The MoJ has an Extremism Unit that works very closely with the Home Office, so it is something that is being addressed.

Mr Denham: The Department does have a broader responsibility in a variety of situations for work with chaplains which will include imams working in public institutions including in prison, so that is an area of responsibility for us. It is an area on which we are actively working to ensure that we can support the highest possible standards of work. I am not in a position to say too much more about that because the work is not completed at the moment, but we will certainly let you know if there are any further developments.

Q350 Chair: Just finally on the contribution of socio-economic factors to radicalisation, would you accept that they do contribute?

Mr Denham: My understanding of the evidence is that there has been little evidence *per se* of socio-economic factors having a direct contribution to radicalisation. To the extent that either in this country or around the world Muslims are perceived as being economically disadvantaged, that may be something that is exploited in the story that is told by those who wish to push the most radical and violent ideologies, but my understanding, and again I will come back to you Chairman if I get this wrong, is that the linear link that had been assumed perhaps in the early days of this exercise between individual poverty and radicalisation has not been backed up by the evidence.

Q351 Chair: From the evidence that we have been given I would agree with you. It is not necessarily individual deprivation but a perception that the

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community to which they belong is deprived and excluded. I want to press you when you talk about community cohesion and its contribution towards *Prevent*, are you talking, effectively, about tackling exclusion and disadvantage or are you talking about getting different communities talking to each other and feeling nicer about each other?

Mr Denham: I think we have to be talking about tackling that whole set of issues that was identified in the Cantle Report after the riots in 2001. It is worth making the point that even if there had been no al-Qaeda, no 9/11, no London bombings, the issues in that report would still have been there to tackle, and nobody has suggested that those issues were really the cause of any of the problems we have had. What do they identify? They identified a whole set of issues—of class, deprivation, faith, race and geographical separation of communities. Tackling community cohesion means not reducing community cohesion to any one of those issues. The

biggest danger in the community cohesion debate, in my experience, is people who say, “It’s all about race though, isn’t it” or “it’s actually all about faith, isn’t it” or “it’s all about poverty”. Actually it is the way that they work together that creates the challenges for community cohesion. When I am talking about community cohesion I am talking about strategies that deal with all of those issues, and that is what is necessary. Promoting shared values and a sense of belonging is an enormously important part of that but you have to deal with all of those issues. We have to do *Prevent* because of the risk of the damage that could be done by a relatively small number of people. For our society community cohesion is actually the broader and more ambitious and more long term and important challenge which we will have to deal with.

Q352 Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr Denham: Thank you very much indeed.

Tuesday 19 January 2010

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Alison Seabeck

Mr Andy Slaughter

Witness: **Mr Charles Farr**, Director-General of the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism, gave evidence.

Q353 Chair: Good morning, Mr Farr. As you will be aware, this is coming right at the end of our investigation so we have rehearsed a great many of the issues with previous witnesses and yesterday had a session with the Secretary of State and Mr Malik. We want to concentrate on the areas which are particularly within your expertise rather than ranging over the whole piece. I would like your comments initially about your understanding of the rationale of the *Prevent* part of the counter-terrorism programme and, in particular, whether it is aimed at the whole Muslim community or whether it is targeted.

Mr Farr: The rationale for our *Prevent* strategy is, in a sense, a very simple one. We do not believe that we can, as previous Home Secretaries have put it, arrest our way out of the terrorist threat we face, and nor do we think we can protect ourselves physically to the point where the threat is mitigated entirely. We believe that we need a strategy to stop people becoming terrorists in the first place. That is the fundamental rationale for it which is one, I think, in my experience shared by most other countries in Europe and, of course, by the United Nations reflected in the United Nations' own counter-terrorist strategy.

Q354 Chair: I think the difficulty we have got is what evidence there is that it works, that the *Prevent* bit works.

Mr Farr: Shall I answer the second part of your first question on who it is aimed at?

Q355 Chair: Yes.

Mr Farr: I think *Prevent*, so far as CONTEST is concerned, is clearly aimed at al-Qaeda related terrorism. That is what it is aimed at. That is the problem we face. I do not think it is aimed really at Muslim communities or parts of Muslim communities, that is not our starting point, our starting point is the threat. The threat we face at the moment clearly comes principally from al-Qaeda inspired terrorism and it is that, and the activities of people associated with al-Qaeda, that we wish to disrupt. It is a simple statement of fact that al-Qaeda tends to focus for its recruitment operations on people in Muslim communities of a variety of different kinds and, of course, not just in this country but in every other country in Europe and across the world. Inevitably, if you start with al-Qaeda you tend to begin to look at the constituencies that they focus on, and that means Muslim communities. One has to qualify that immediately by saying that it does

not imply that Muslim communities are somehow universally vulnerable to al-Qaeda because clearly they are not. Muslim communities, like any other community in this country, are clearly and explicitly opposed to al-Qaeda and what it stands for.

Q356 Chair: Can I just clarify. CONTEST is essentially focusing on al-Qaeda related terrorism, but who is focusing on the other sorts of terrorism?

Mr Farr: CONTEST is, and has been since the Government set it up in 2003, focused on international terrorism. It does not, as the published guide of March 2009 states, focus on domestic terrorism or Irish terrorism, which are the subjects of separate government strategies. Within CONTEST we believe that al-Qaeda terrorism, associated terrorism, is the key threat we face and statistically that is the case. It is not the only threat we face and I certainly would not want to suggest that al-Qaeda is the only organisation that we focus on. CONTEST, however, is a strategy about international terrorism.

Q357 Chair: Is there not a tension there with what the Secretary of State said yesterday where he seemed to be suggesting that the *Prevent* part of CONTEST could also be applied to other forms of extremism, particularly Far Right extremism?

Mr Farr: CONTEST is not a strategy about Far Right terrorism.

Q358 Chair: The second issue is, is there any evidence that is what being done under *Prevent* has actually reduced al-Qaeda related terrorism in the UK?

Mr Farr: I am satisfied that in a number of key areas, even within the relatively short length of time that we have been working on a revised *Prevent* strategy, ie a little over two years, we can already see that we have identified and reduced the threat of international terrorism in this country, yes.

Q359 Chair: Can you be slightly more specific than that?

Mr Farr: I think I would take as the clearest example the third objective of the *Prevent* strategy which, as you know, is about supporting vulnerable individuals, although I think one can make a claim for the other objectives too. The work on vulnerable individuals, which is owned by the Home Office and, therefore, by OCST, for which I am responsible, has led to us creating support networks, for want of a better term, which can identify people who look as

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though they are being drawn into the world of violent extremism and providing them with some sort of intervention which would discourage them from doing so. I think as of today there are over 200 people in one of those programmes. I am not for one moment suggesting that had we not intervened with those 200 individuals they would necessarily have engaged in terrorism, but what I am saying is that those 200 people were at risk of doing so and, therefore, the interventions that we are conducting are already, even at this early stage, reducing that risk. That is merely one part of one objective. There are plausible claims that can be made for our work in prisons, our work in schools, our work on challenging ideology through a number of organisations and, indeed, our work, primarily CLG's work of course, under the fourth objective of the *Prevent* strategy which is very much about building up community resilience.

Q360 Alison Seabeck: You talked about a group of around 200 that you have identified and are working with, but what percentage of those are Muslim?

Mr Farr: I do not have that off the top of my head. Channel is an exception to the norm that I referred to because Channel does have people on it people who are getting drawn into the world of Right-Wing terrorism, as you may know. However, that is not the majority. I can give you the exact statistics and break down.

Q361 Mr Betts: I want to get down to specifics so we can get a feel for how things actually work. We have been given the figure of 200 and presumably they are individuals in different circumstances to a degree. Can you give us a feel for how individuals might typically be drawn to your attention, how you then might make contact and how you then might engage and support in a framework with them?

Mr Farr: I would say that we are about to publish some Channel guidance to local authorities and local police who are, of course, the primary owners of this programme which I hope will answer your question in more detail. You may have seen this document¹ which does answer some of the questions you have, but in the meantime let me try and explain. First of all, the Home Office is not involved in the referral process. This is run and managed at a local level using a template which we provide from the centre. We suggest what the organisations should look like and local authorities with their police colleagues will put that into action in the light of the specific circumstances in their own area. Typically you would have a range of what I would call referral organisations. From my point it is important that it is as wide as possible and it will involve statutory partners and non-governmental organisations. They will meet regularly to consider possible areas, sectors if you like, where there may be vulnerability. An

obvious example might be recent asyumees arriving in this country. They will then make it their business to identify potential people from some of those areas in the course of the normal business who will then be referred to—I cannot remember the exact name we give it but it is in the literature—a Channel referrals panel at which point the individuals will be looked at in more detail to ensure that we are not sucking into the Channel programme people who are entirely inappropriate for it. I am sure you will have seen discussions about whether people of too young an age are being drawn into Channel. I do not think those allegations are correct but it is the sort of concern that we might have and which we want to guard against. Having looked at the people in the Channel referral programme that programme will then be responsible for identifying a support network which might help that specific individual. The nature of the support and the provider of the support will vary very much depending on the type of person and the sorts of issues that they are coming to terms with. If the person concerned, for example, is looking at or grappling with an issue of theology or ideology then it may be appropriate for a local partner organisation working in one of those areas, typically a mosque, to offer some support. If, on the other hand, the issues that someone is grappling with, an asyumees may be an example, are much more social and ideological then the support might come from someone else. You have a data capture process, a referral process and an identification of support process strung together owned by local authorities with the local police.

Q362 Chair: Before we explore this a bit further can I just go back to what you were saying in answer to the question about whether it worked or not and the numbers of vulnerable individuals that you have got on the Channel programme. Do you appreciate that is a bit of a circular argument? You are essentially suggesting that because you have identified those individuals and they are on a support programme, and presumably none of them have actually moved on to violent terrorism, that demonstrates the programme is working, but you cannot possibly know that any of them would have indulged in violent terrorism anyway.

Mr Farr: Indeed not. It requires a much longer period of time with much closer work, which is ongoing. We have a whole team of social scientists working on the Channel programme to evaluate the quality of the interventions and the outcomes. I do not think it is easy to evaluate the *Prevent* programme as a whole in the space of two years. It is a very challenging area and a very challenging range of programmes. I simply pick that out because to me it is a good example of something very tangible and practical that is already happening: 200 people identified and put through a support network. I entirely take your point that we do not yet know quite what the long-term outcome is going to be and we do not know quite what would have happened had we not intervened. I have focused on a very

¹ Mr Farr was referring to the 2009 Prevent Local Delivery Brochure available at <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/updated-guide-for-local-partners.html>

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specific issue but I am very happy to talk about the wider way in which we are trying to evaluate the programme as a whole if that would be helpful to you. I gave that as a very specific example.

Q363 Chair: I think it would, yes, and then we will come back to some of the other issues that have been raised.

Mr Farr: I would start by saying that every country in Europe that has a *Prevent* programme, which is the vast majority of course, is grappling with the issue of measurement. We compare notes regularly at the EU Working Group on this issue and we are in as good a position as any, but I would not claim for one moment that anyone has got the complete solution. I think I would start by saying we evaluate the performance at a number of different layers. At the local authority level we have what we call, as you know, N.I. 35, which is fundamentally in my judgment an output-based series of measures. In other words, it evaluates performance in terms of knowledge of engagement with Muslim communities, knowledge of engagement with the *Prevent* programme, the quality of actions and the *Prevent* interventions that are being proposed. Given the timing, that is we drafted N.I. 35 at the very beginning of our programme, it does not look yet at outcomes. I have got no doubt that as we develop N.I. 35, if we can, that is where we will go. There is a separate set of measures for police performance which relate to N.I. 35 and to some extent incorporate N.I. 35 but go beyond it too. We are happy to share those measures with you if that is of interest to the Committee. N.I. 35 and the measures to evaluate the progress of police *Prevent* work feed into the work we do on PSA26, which is the PSA which governs counter-terrorism run by OSCT in the Home Office. It is a new PSA, we have never had a PSA on counter-terrorism before, and it is only two years old. We have some details about it. It is a classified PSA, inevitably, given in the back of CONTEST, and you may have had a look at that. It has got a number of indicators on which we measure our performance across counter-terrorism as a whole on *Pursue, Protect, Prepare* and, of course, on *Prevent*. There are four main indicators on *Prevent*.² The first is, are we changing community attitudes and how are communities responding. The second is about the work we do in prisons and are we making an impact in prisons, are we reducing radicalisation in prisons. *****³. The fourth is about our *Prevent* work overseas. I am happy to go into the detail on any of those. I do not want to waste your time. I would say broadly that we have teams of people, social scientists—I referred to those earlier—and colleagues from other government departments working on how and where we measure the quality of the progress we are making within each of those four areas. I can only say by way of conclusion at this point that I think a

huge amount of work is going into this and the Treasury themselves, of course, would demand that even if the Home Secretary responsible for the whole programme was not demanding it too.

Chair: That gives us lots of issues to explore. Can we first go back to the issue about identifying vulnerable individuals because this is an issue that has been raised with us by a great many witnesses and what they feel are the negative side effects of it.

Q364 Alison Sebeck: Coming back to that, and particularly young people, we have had a lot of evidence from the Youth Parliament and others who have a perception that all this is very much police driven, they do not get a sense that it is community driven and it certainly is not being driven by young people in any way, shape or form. As a result, therefore, they do not trust projects and places which are identified with *Prevent*. In your view, what could be done to allay those concerns particularly?

Mr Farr: You are talking now about *Prevent* as a whole rather than Channel in particular?

Q365 Alison Sebeck: *Prevent* as a whole, yes.

Mr Farr: I recognise the concern, and of course it has been expressed to us directly and to the police. As your evidence may have indicated, the police recognise it as well. I think my starting point would be that neither we nor the police want the police to have ownership of the *Prevent* programme. It is very important. It nowhere says that in the strategy. We think policing has a key role to play, but it is a role alongside a number of other authorities who I think the police would say, and I would certainly say, need to be in the lead. I do accept, and the police will accept, that has not always happened and in the first two years of *Prevent* I have no doubt at all that the police, who are experts on rapid delivery, have gripped this problem and have made a lot of progress, but the price of that has sometimes been that they have become, as it were, the shop front of *Prevent* to a greater extent than they would like, or than we would like or, I suspect, our colleagues in CLG would like.

Q366 Alison Sebeck: Certainly in Birmingham they had a police officer heading it up and that immediately would have an impact.

Mr Farr: That is right. I would say if I go round police forces, and I do a lot in all capacities, a regular theme is that they do not want ownership of *Prevent* and local authorities must do more to assume the role that we expect of them.

Q367 Alison Sebeck: Can I come back to the relationship between the police and local authorities before coming to Channel because there is a contradiction between some of the Channel criticisms and the local authorities. Local authorities are saying, "Police will not share enough critical information with us". How would you respond to that? Have local authorities lobbied you, for example, to say, "These are the pieces of information we aren't getting and on which, therefore, we can't act"? Has that come across to you?

² There are three main indicators on *Prevent*. These are about building: resilience in domestic communities; sectors and services; and overseas priority countries.

³ This sentence has been redacted by OCST and the CLG Committee

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Mr Farr: When we started the revised *Prevent* strategy at the end of 2007 one of the most frequent concerns was the one that you have just described: local authorities saying, “Well, you are approaching us to deal with *Prevent* but you aren’t telling us really what the problem is, you are telling us what you think the solution should be”. We have spoken extensively to the police and the security service about this issue and we have come up with a range of written report products which as a matter of course should now go to local authorities and, as far as I am concerned, are going to local authorities. We call these reports a variety of names but most of them are referred to as Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles—CTLPs for short. They are drafted by local police with input from the security agencies and are intended to inform local authority people on the context in which *Prevent* needs to be delivered. I do not have any doubt that the early iterations of those products—and it is quite an ambitious undertaking because, after all, there are over 30 boroughs in London alone and we are doing one for each borough—are not always entirely right, although the feedback I have from local authority colleagues in many areas—Luton is the one that springs to mind—is that they have already transformed the way they are doing *Prevent*. I have said to local authorities that we will completely support the requirements and demands they are placing on their police and security colleagues to produce further iterations of the CTLP in the future. That is one of the key things about this entire programme.

Q368 Alison Seabek: If you then go to the bottom-up you have got an awful lot of local authority based employees who are being expected to manage and look at the Channel programme. It is a range of organisations but certainly the local authorities can more easily do that and unless they are getting some clear messages in that way which do not make them feel—this is the feedback we have had from youth workers and all sorts of people—that they are being asked to spy, because that in turn filters down to the people in the wider community, there is a real tension there. It is about communicating from top to bottom, is it not, so that the Channel programme is not perceived by local authority workers, community workers and women that they are being asked to spy on friends and family?

Mr Farr: Perhaps I can answer that question in general and then in the context of Channel in particular. The CTLPs that I referred to earlier are about providing information to community partners. They are not about sucking information out of community partners. The allegations about spying—I know the Communities Secretary dealt with this yesterday—are completely unfounded and we have looked at them in some detail. I am happy to share a report with you which explains exactly what conclusions we have reached about those allegations. In fact, the truth is almost entirely the opposite. The direction of the information, intelligence if you will, regarding the *Prevent* programme is from the police and from the security agencies into local authorities. That is how we have

configured it and that is how it must be. The Channel programme is clearly inherently sensitive and the process that I described earlier would illustrate that. You are asking statutory partners to look at vulnerable individuals, named individuals at a certain point of the process, to consider what are at some point intensely personal details about those individuals and to consider whether support should be provided to them. We take our responsibilities for the protection of personal data which is exchanged in that process incredibly seriously. We are governed by the Data Protection Act and we are governed by information sharing protocols that apply to other areas of crime prevention in local authorities and policing and we have built upon those protocols. I am completely sure in my own mind that the law prevents us doing what some organisations think we are doing. Channel is not a mechanism for spying. We do not need a mechanism for spying of that kind, and it is the last thing the security or police services would want to do.

Alison Seabek: There are lots of organisations which are outside of the *Prevent* programme and have chosen to stay outside the *Prevent* programme. We spoke to a number of people in those bodies in Birmingham privately and pressed them and said, “If you saw a burglar outside your building you would say something. If you knew somebody was being assaulted outside your building you would say something. You are not in the *Prevent* programme but would you pass on information if you felt that a fellow Muslim specifically was giving cause for concern?” The worrying answer I got on two separate occasions—only two admittedly—was “no”. It is very difficult because they have chosen not to be part of *Prevent* because they see it as being very police based and they certainly would not want to go to the Channel programme. How do you cope with that?

Q369 Chair: Actually one of the organisations had taken *Prevent* money and still was not going to pass the information on.

Mr Farr: There is a range of issues there. I recognise the scenarios that you have described. I try and spend as much time as I can talking to people who want nothing to do with the *Prevent* programme, which seems to me as important as talking to people who want to engage with it. I have to say that an awful lot of time I find the reasons for their not wanting to engage are rooted in the misrepresentations which *Prevent* suffered from notably in the articles that the *Guardian* ran, to some degree based on the IRR report by Kundnani, who I think you took evidence from yesterday. We provided a point by point rebuttal of every allegation in the *Guardian* and every allegation in the IRR report. I might add that we have had a reply from neither of those two organisations. When we talk to people who do not want anything to do with *Prevent* I find that they do not want anything to do with a mythical construct of *Prevent* which does not exist and is not part of the strategy. Frankly, if I ask, “Have you read anything about *Prevent*?” usually the response is that they have read something in the

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Guardian. They have not read this⁴ and, understandably, they have not read the ten pages in here. We have, therefore, a major communications challenge which it would be silly for us to deny. I am sure other people who have given evidence have not denied it either. That is why we are trying to put more and more weight on direct communication often, I have to say, at personal meetings between senior officials responsible for the programme who can rebut some of the wilder allegations made against it. I find that when we do this, when we demonstrate, when we provide the evidence, with most organisations we can find common ground, which is what we are trying to do after all. They still might not want to take *Prevent* money, and I can often understand the reasons for that, they may think it ties them to government in a way that they do not want and they would not take government money whatever it was called.

Q370 Alison Seabek: There is value in the money going down this stream rather than mainstreaming some of these into different services?

Mr Farr: I do not have any doubt whatever about the value of the money we are spending on *Prevent*. It is a very, very small percentage of the total CT spend. You could put a very credible case for saying we should spend more rather than less but, of course, we cannot at the moment because we do not yet know what the outcomes of the work are, which goes back to the Chairman's earlier question.

Q371 Andy Slaughter: I am hearing your frustration but the surveillance issue, if I can put it like that, has been a major theme of the evidence we have heard and clearly that is something we will have to consider in our report and, therefore, it is important we understand that, whether it is the reality or a perception. Are you saying that surveillance or intelligence gathering, ie proactively, does not form part of the *Prevent* programme?

Mr Farr: It does not really matter what I say, I think ministers have made that point absolutely clear. I have got copies here of the point by point rebuttals of all these allegations and I am very happy to share them with you. For the avoidance of doubt, surveillance is not part of the *Prevent* programme and intelligence gathering is not a feature of the *Prevent* programme. It does not say so in the strategy and does not say so in our guidance documents. What we have said is what you get.

Q372 Andy Slaughter: On the other hand, you did talk about building resilience and Channel as part of it could throw up intelligence.

Mr Farr: It is not the purpose of the programme.

Q373 Chair: Supposing you have got this mythical youth worker who is getting a bit disturbed by what some of the young men are saying and the websites they are tapping into, does that youth worker then

report it to the Channel working party or whatever it is called locally? That surely is surveillance and passing on information.

Mr Farr: I am not quite sure I recognise that. No, I do not believe it is that. Let me try and make a distinction here. If someone involved in *Prevent* or, I would hope, a member of the public not involved in *Prevent* comes across someone who is engaged in illegal activity, we would hope that those people are reported to the police, and action is considered against them. That might happen in any context, *Prevent* or not, it does not mean that it is the purpose of the *Prevent* programme. If it happened during the *Prevent* programme we would hope that the Channel services were open to enable them to do so. It is not why we are doing *Prevent*.

Q374 Andy Slaughter: I do not think we are talking about that. There may well be people who do not think that even those sorts of allegations or suspicions should be passed on, but I think there will be a general understanding that if anybody comes across in any circumstances people who are engaged either in criminal activity or conspiring in what could be criminal activity that should be passed on. What we are talking about is perhaps what Alison Seabek referred to earlier where there is loose talk, perhaps worrying things are said, but it does not amount to criminal activity or even point towards criminal activity, but raises alarm or concern amongst people who hear it. People who have given evidence to us believe there is an expectation that that is information that would be gathered and passed on.

Mr Farr: Clearly if someone is involved in activity which suggests they are being drawn into the world of violent extremism, such as the Chairman's point about browsing a chat room or operating in a chat room, which is clearly one of those which encourages violent extremism, if that activity stops short of something which is illegal under the Terrorism Acts, notably TACT 2006, that is the sort of person we would expect to get referred to Channel, not to criminalise them but precisely to avoid them criminalising themselves. That process by any reasonable definition of the term "spying" and certainly by the definition in UK law does not amount to spying. Spying defined by the Security Service Act makes it absolutely clear who does covert operations. Channel enables the referral by people for the purposes of crime prevention to a group comprising of local authority and police members. That person is not then, as it were, subject to surveillance, they are provided with support which is precisely intended—I repeat—to stop them being, as it were, drawn into violent extremism and thence into the criminal justice system.

Q375 Andy Slaughter: Perhaps not "spying", but honey trap would be the word in the sense that an environment is being created using public funds to encourage people, particularly Muslims, to participate in something which may draw out

⁴ Mr Farr was referring to the Government's CONTEST strategy—<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/HO—Contest—strategy/index.html>

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information which can then used to refer them to Channel or possibly later into the criminal justice system.

Mr Farr: I have two points to make. First of all, as I said in answer to the earlier question, it is not just about Muslim communities, Channel operates on Right-Wing communities. We will give you, if we can, a breakdown of the 200 people I spoke about earlier and the balance between the two. I continue to consider that the term “spying” is a misnomer for what is a crime prevention programme of a kind that operates in rather different worlds: drugs, guns and gangs and, indeed, in domestic violence.

Q376 Andy Slaughter: Going back to Alison’s point, you say that the emphasis should be on local authorities fulfilling this role rather than the Police Service.

Mr Farr: Yes.

Q377 Andy Slaughter: Do you think they are (a) qualified and (b) feel comfortable with that role?

Mr Farr: Those are very important questions. I think my answer would be on (a) not always and (b) not always. It is part of the *Prevent* programme to certainly provide local authorities, and it goes back to the earlier question, with the information and expertise to enable them to do the role and to address some of the concerns which they have, like others, about the nature of this programme, and I hope to put their minds at rest about some of the articles and allegations that they have read.

Q378 Andy Slaughter: I appreciate that for the best of motives you are putting a lot of professional effort into it but you have got the people who should be delivering the service uncomfortable or not qualified to do it and the people for whom the services are being delivered at the very least with substantial misapprehensions about it. Is that not a fatal flaw of the Channel programme?

Mr Farr: I do not recognise your characterisation of the Channel programme. From memory, I think Channel operates across 12 police forces around the country and there are over 200 people through the system. I do not have any doubt that some people in some communities and local authorities will have reservations about Channel. I hope we can address those and resolve them, and where we cannot I hope we can learn from them. It is not the case that the Channel programme is paralysed by concern amongst its delivery agencies.

Q379 Andy Slaughter: There does seem to be confusion nevertheless, and it may be that you are doing your absolute best to avoid that, between what the aims and, indeed, the procedures used in *Prevent* are. Were you starting again now, would you do it differently? Would you be more explicit about the more active parts of it even if it is simply challenging and building resilience as opposed to perhaps the softer side of it which is simply community engagement and supporting communities through sums of money going into capacity building?

Mr Farr: With the benefit of hindsight we would have wanted to be even clearer than we were about the very complex relationship between *Prevent* and cohesion, which is dealt with at some length on page 84 of the CONTEST strategy which defines those terms very precisely and explains to local authorities how we think the distinction between programmes under cohesion and *Prevent* should be constructed. However, few people read this document, I am realistic about that, and few people, if they read it, remember it. Therefore, I think we underestimated the degree to which we had to constantly make key points about the relationship between the two complex policy areas. There are a host of other learning points that one could point to, but that is the one I would highlight in relation to the particular questions that you are asking.

Q380 Mr Betts: I am still trying to get my head round what actually happens in practice. I can see that there may be vulnerable individuals who are expressing views that are concerning, and it might be in mosques, and we will come to that point later on, or local authorities through their arrangements or projects or dealing with issues of social deprivation. Amongst those 200 people that you referred to before there must be some individuals who give you such cause for concern that they are subject to surveillance. There cannot be one group of people who are dealt with in *Prevent* and another group who the security services are monitoring.

Mr Farr: That is precisely the case.

Q381 Mr Betts: So there are no individuals who are dealt with by both?

Mr Farr: No. We would never get ourselves into a situation—let me be completely clear about this—where someone was put forward and agreed and nominated on to a *Prevent* programme whilst they were being subject to surveillance by the security authorities. To do so would be completely improper, precisely not what we want to achieve with *Prevent*. We need, and this happens at the Channel referral process, to understand the individuals being referred. If it is clear that they are engaged in activity which is right on the edge of legality, ie are associated with people who may be engaged in terrorist activity, then it would be wrong to put them on any sort of *Prevent* programme.

Q382 Mr Betts: So if they are getting near to the point where they may start to get engaged in illegal acts they would not be part of *Prevent*, they would be referred for surveillance?

Mr Farr: That is correct.⁵

Q383 Mr Betts: How do you exchange information with local authorities? This was one of the issues that came up in our discussions because clearly some of the activities you might then be involved in in terms of surveillance are very sensitive, very private. If the

⁵ Clarification: such people would be referred to a Police Counter Terrorist Unit who would take whatever appropriate action was required, this may or may not include surveillance.

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local authority has someone on their *Prevent* programme, do you simply tell them they are off it now and explain why?

Mr Farr: I understand the question. That would be a matter for the local police, which is why the relationship between counter-terrorist policing, particularly in the big hubs, and I know you have been to Birmingham, and local authorities is absolutely key. In making the points I made earlier about the relative balance between the two, we should not lose sight of the fact that they need to be talking very closely together. This is an example of why. Clearly you cannot have one bit of a local authority, say a housing department, referring someone up to a Channel programme because they have noticed they are engaged in illegal activity and for that person to be put on the Channel programme only to discover that another bit of the apparatus—the police—has them under surveillance⁶. Clearly we do not want that to happen. To be precise, people will not get referred on to a Channel programme if in the judgment of local partners, predominantly local authority and the counter-terrorist police, they are so far down the line that they need to be the subject of an investigation for possible breach of the law.

Q384 Mr Betts: Local authority officers would know that?

Mr Farr: Local authorities would be told something and it would be up to the counter-terrorist police to work out what it is wise to tell them.

Q385 Mr Betts: There was another point made to us, and I think it was made in Birmingham but elsewhere also, that because of that approach there are some young people who may hold very extreme views and may be on the point of tipping over into illegal activities, maybe going to training camps in Afghanistan or even thinking of fighting the Taliban, who are then given up on in terms of any attempt to dissuade them from that course and presenting alternative role models, say, of British Muslims and Muslims who have fought with our Armed Services and we ought to be engaging with them even if at the same time somebody ought to be watching what they are doing.

Mr Farr: That is a real challenge and it would be silly to deny it. I do think the solution to that challenge has to be local. We recognise it, but it is for local partners, the local counter-terrorist police, to evaluate how close this person is to illegality, if indeed they are not already involved in illegal action, and therefore whether the focus should be on a *Pursue* type intervention or a *Prevent* type intervention. We all recognise, and it has now become part of the jargon on counter-terrorism, that there is what we call an overlap between *Pursue* and *Prevent*, and what you are really talking about is what we do at that point of overlap. We understand it, we try to scope it out, we have written memoranda about it, the police have looked at it extensively and we have talked to local authorities about it. I do not

think there are easy solutions but I would want to emphasise that it is a problem of which we are well aware.

Q386 Chair: Can I just pick up on this issue about sharing information with local authorities. I am not talking about sharing information about specific individuals at this point. One of the questions that we asked the Secretary of State yesterday was whether it was sensible that the funding was dished out simply in relation to the number of Muslims. The transcript is not available yet.

Mr Farr: I have seen some notes.

Q387 Chair: Essentially, if I can paraphrase, he said, “No, it is not a terribly good way of doing it, but if we did it in relation to risk assessment we would have to say what the risk assessment is and we do not really want to make that public”. I think most of us can understand that. However, if we are talking about local authorities being key partners in the *Prevent* part of CONTEST then it is presumably essential that individual local authorities, particularly in areas where there has been assessed to be a very high risk for whatever reason or at least somebody within those local authorities has an understanding that their particular local authority area is a hotspot or a high risk area and what the nature of that risk is, whether it is one or two key individuals or something to do with the demography, socioeconomic set-up in their area, otherwise they are not going to be able to play a positive role in *Prevent*, are they?

Mr Farr: I completely agree, which is why we introduced the Counter-Terrorism Local Profile system and why every chief executive in areas receiving significant *Prevent* funding has already got one. The CTLP will not yet be in its final form but the intelligence product—it is not just intelligence, some of it is just overt information—will improve over the next year. I absolutely agree, and so do ministers clearly, that chief executives and elected councillors, wherever possible, need to have that information otherwise when we show up saying, “We would like you to do the following *Prevent* type work”, they will turn round to us and say, “Why?”

Q388 Chair: Just to push that to the ultimate, in a place like Barking and Dagenham, for example, would that be shared with all the councillors?

Mr Farr: No.

Q389 Chair: Whose decision would it be who it was shared with?

Mr Farr: A combination of police, depending on the sensitivity of the material, the chief executive and possibly the senior elected councillor, if I can put it in those terms. I think what we have said, and certainly what ministers in the Home Office have said, and David Hanson in particular has been very clear on this, is the default must be to push it as far as we can through elected councillors, and that is what we want to do. I would add, if I may, that not all elected councillors want anything to do with this information, so it is not just a question of push, there

⁶ Clarification: If someone is engaged in illegal activity they should be referred to the police.

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is a bit of a pull issue as well. In principle, we want to refine CTLPs over the next year, we want to improve the quality of information, we want to improve its use for local authorities and we want to extend its distribution at least a little bit wider than it is at the moment.

Q390 Alison Seabeck: Can I ask what reasons are local councillors giving for not wanting to have this information?

Mr Farr: I think it goes back a little bit to the earlier question. The engagement of elected councillors with *Prevent* is patchy. That is indisputable. In my view there is a raft of reasons for that. Some of it is unfamiliarity, some of it is because people do not think there is a problem in their local area, and some of it is about the political controversy that has been created around *Prevent*. I think elected councillors are absolutely vital to the successful delivery of the programme.

Q391 Chair: Can I pick up on another two points you made at the beginning and cover them one by one. You did mention about theology and this brings in interaction with mosques and whatnot. Can I start off by asking do you think it is proper for government to get involved in the theological discussions? Would we do it in any other case than Islam?

Mr Farr: My starting point is what causes radicalisation. We have set out in some detail what we think is driving radicalisation in this country and we have said that ideology, though not the only driver, is clearly one driver amongst many. In my experience, looking at people who have been convicted for terrorist offences in this country since 9/11—over 200—ideology is always an influence. Therefore, when we come to construct a *Prevent* strategy designed to stop radicalisation we need to do something to challenge the ideology, and we sometimes call it the single narrative, that terrorist organisations deploy around the world in a variety of different media forms to influence people and to try to recruit them to their cause. That is our starting point. It does not follow from that that the challenging of the ideology should be done by government and in many areas it is clearly unwise to do that, and this Government has made that clear, particularly when matters of theology are at stake. What this Government has tried to do is to accept that challenging the ideology needs to happen, but to encourage other organisations to be doing that challenging for themselves and sometimes, but not always, providing them with the funding to enable them to better do so. That is where I think the solution to this lies. I would only add that looking at how the ideology of violent extremism gets circulated and where it comes from, it seems to me that this is not a UK issue, it is an international issue. The influences on communities in this country are not very often people based here, they are people based in many other countries around the world—it is probably not necessary to name them—and, therefore, this has to be an international effort with other governments and international organisations and international community organisations.

Q392 Mr Betts: Some individuals came to see me a few months ago, young Muslim men in their twenties and thirties, saying they were really worried about the growth of extremist ideas amongst some of their peers and they did not think they had the wherewithal to challenge some of what they were being taught. Some of that teaching was actually linked to one of the mosques so the challenge was not going to come from the mosque. We are talking about Hizb al-Tahrir here. How is that going to be dealt with as part of this programme? I suppose you could say if they were people following Islam4UK they are now illegal so you would deal with them in that particular way, but Hizb al-Tahrir are not illegal although they have probably got some ideas that most people would feel uncomfortable with.

Mr Farr: We have just had a long conversation which I characterised as being about the overlap between *Pursue* and *Prevent*, and in a different way I think you are on the same issue. There is a bit of the *Prevent* strategy set out in the document which is about law enforcement activity in the very traditional sense of the term. Some organisations are undoubtedly glorifying violence, which is a criminal offence under the Terrorism Act 2006. Where that is the case they are clearly having an adverse impact in *Prevent* terms and the solution is law enforcement activity to stop them and to prosecute them wherever we can. My first question faced with a scenario of the kind that you have described is has a criminal offence been committed, have the police looked at what has been said. The history of Hizb al-Tahrir in this country and our considerations and ministers' considerations and government considerations about whether to proscribe it are well-known and it is our view at the moment there are no grounds to proscribe Hizb al-Tahrir.

Q393 Chair: There are or there are not?

Mr Farr: There are no grounds to proscribe Hizb al-Tahrir, at least under the existing legislation. However, of course, one needs to look at the scenario you have described in much more detail: what are the individuals saying? That is my starting point. Faced with the scenario you have described, my second question is what organisations exist to promote an alternative message, who is out there at the moment, do those organisations need support and what sort of support. Is it support that we can provide, is it support that another community organisation can provide, or is it support that can come from an international partner. I think I recognise the scenario and it is about, if you like, the overlap between *Prevent* and *Pursue* and I hope that the strategies and programmes we have in place enable us to answer that sort of challenge. If they do not then, to be blunt, the programme is not right.

Q394 Chair: Who would be the international partners in that sort of scenario as opposed to the international players who are thumping out unhelpful propaganda?

Mr Farr: There are some community based organisations that are emerging in the States and Europe which have an international reach, or could

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reach out to other organisations in this country. We are very interested in facilitating that wherever we can. I do not want to overstate it, this is in its infancy and it is a minority of the organisations that obviously have an impact on *Prevent* in this country.

Q395 Chair: Do you think that the role of religion has been overplayed as many of our witnesses have suggested?

Mr Farr: I do not know exactly what they have said to you. I come back to our starting assumption that it is very dangerous to reduce the causes of radicalisation to single issues, be they religion or foreign policy. The truth is much more complex than that. Radicalisation happens for a range of reasons varying from country to country and almost city to city in some areas, but it is never just a matter of religion, no, and it is never just a matter of foreign policy either by the way. It is not a matter just of ideology.

Q396 Chair: Is one of the factors socioeconomic and/or alienation?

Mr Farr: Definitely alienation. Whether that alienation has been driven by socioeconomic is another matter. The direct correlation between people in prison for TACT offences in this country—terrorism offences—and deprivation is not strong. There is no direct correlation which would really show out in a particularly pronounced way. However, I think the situation is a little bit more complicated than that. Deprivation can be a driver for radicalisation amongst those who are not themselves deprived. In other words, people do tend to look around the world and can get motivated towards radicalisation by a perception of the treatment that Muslim communities are receiving. It is a rather more complex nuanced interpretation of socioeconomic as a driver. My only other point, and I said it was complex, is I think what I have said might not apply if you went to Afghanistan or Iraq or Somalia or possibly Yemen where socioeconomic can be a much more direct driver of radicalisation into extremist organisations.

Q397 Chair: Just to return to this country, your view would be that those *Prevent* projects which are effectively tackling exclusion and deprivation do contribute to the aims of *Prevent* or not?

Mr Farr: I think that *Prevent* projects which deal with exclusion and alienation, which can happen after all for reasons other than socioeconomic, are very, very important. Tackling deprivation as such is not what *Prevent* is about.

Q398 Mr Betts: In terms of exclusion and alienation, one of the things that was said to us in Birmingham was that there was concern that if people came forward with very strong views, say, about the Middle East and the right of the Palestinians to fight against the Israeli occupation, then immediately they would be characterised as people that you cannot have anything to do with. When we had discussions with people in the Youth Parliament yesterday they were saying that having an inclusive

arrangement where people could come and speak openly without fear of being reported anywhere was what they thought made their sounding board process a success and they had got young people who would not engage with them willing to come forward. How do you deal with that?

Mr Farr: I have heard the allegation that people—I am thinking of something that was in the *Guardian* or IRR report—who expressed views in support of Palestine, Hamas, Gaza, are somehow excluded from the *Prevent* programme and even, of course, put under investigation. I have yet to see any evidence for that. It is not part of the strategy. I would be very surprised if it was happening and if it is no-one has proven it to us. The fact is we want to encourage this debate for precisely the reasons that you have said and a key part of *Prevent* is to do precisely that which is why the Foreign Office is going round this country in a way that it never has before using its ambassadors overseas and its high commissioners to have community meetings, to explain what our policy is, to address some of the concerns people have about it, and to debate it. That is part of *Prevent*. So far from excluding people because of the views they hold, part of the purpose of *Prevent* is to bring them into these programmes and allow them to express those views in the way that they would want.

Q399 Mr Betts: How do we deal with the university campus situation? We all agree that universities are about young people expressing views and developing ideas and engaging in debates as well as a place of learning, but obviously there have been some concerns expressed to us about the way some of that debate amongst some young Muslims is going at university and they are actually feeding each other some very extreme views. How do you fit that into the programme?

Mr Farr: The work that is being done in higher and further education is driven by BIS. I am not sure whether you have taken any evidence from them. We work very closely with them in developing *Prevent* strategies in higher and further education. I think in very simple terms what we need to do in higher and further education is three things. Firstly, we need to sensitise people to issues about radicalisation in the same way as bits of government sensitise higher and further education to issues about other forms of criminality as well. Radicalisation is potentially another form of criminality; it leads to another form of criminality. We want to talk about it and we want to enable university authorities to understand what we are on about and what we have written about. Secondly, we want to make it clear that the law in this country prohibits the glorification of violence and terrorism and whatever one's commitment to free speech it does not presumably extend to permitting the glorification of violence in a way that is contrary to the Terrorism Act. We see that is a very clear headline and there is not much ambiguity about the outer perimeter and, therefore, we hope that people seeing or observing glorification of terrorism as defined in the Act will report it. The third point is that for activity which stops short of criminality, and

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we have referred to that more than once in this session, we would like there to be specific support networks in higher and further education to which students can turn, should they wish, for advice and support. There are some really good projects around which are already operating. I do not know whether you have come across the Muslim Youth Helpline, which is an outstanding bit of work, an outstanding programme run by deeply committed people. One's only concern about it is that it is not big enough. That is an example of a support programme to which people can turn if they find themselves in difficulty, if they see someone else in difficulty, and we would like to see something like that available in higher and further education establishments across the country.

Q400 Mr Betts: How do you find out that these groups of young Muslims, who may not be proselytising out on the main campus but may be having small meetings, are engaged in discussions with views that some people may not hold but others would that are criminal, and others in that group start to get into the glorification? How do you find out about them?

Mr Farr: I think it is for the police working with the universities to ensure they are aware of activity which is illegal on a campus. There will be different ways of doing that in different places and it is not really my job to judge how best it can be done. It is for universities and student unions in particular to construct the sort of support networks which allow interventions to support students who are engaged in something short of that criminal activity.

Q401 Mr Betts: That was what was at the back of the question I asked before where you get this grey area where you can have some people engaged in discussions in groups who you would want to be helping and supporting and engaging with and others who may be on the fringe of criminality.

Mr Farr: I do not see any way to eliminate the grey area, it is a reality of the world in which we work. We have now identified things that occupy that grey area. There is a bit of Channel which is in that grey area and there is a bit of universities' work which is in that grey area. I think and hope that the police are sensitive to this overlap and that universities and higher and further education are aware of it too and it will be addressed by regular dialogue between the two.

Q402 Chair: Can I take you back to something you said at the beginning when we were talking about measuring the effectiveness of *Prevent*. You said that one of the questions would be are we changing communities' attitudes. Can you be more slightly more specific? What do you mean by changing communities' attitudes?

Mr Farr: Let me correct my earlier wording and say are communities' attitudes changing because clearly there will be a number of drivers for evaluation of communities' attitudes to violent extremism and what government does is only one of those. It seems

to me right, and this is a CLG issue rather than my issue, that if you are thinking about measuring the outcome of *Prevent* at some point you have to look at what people think about violent extremism and how that is evolving. If, for the sake of example, we determined that people were turning more and more to violent extremism, self-evidently that would indicate that the *Prevent* programme was not working.

Q403 Chair: If you are looking at the attitudes of people as opposed to numbers actually involved in violent extremism, are we talking about people who would express the view that certain forms of violent extremism in this country are acceptable?

Mr Farr: Correct.

Q404 Chair: Not people's views about political situations abroad necessarily?

Mr Farr: We have absolutely no interest in that, so there would be no purpose in us asking that.

Q405 Alison Seabeck: My question is about the use and circulation of YouTube and various other bits and pieces. We spoke to people in Birmingham who had been identified because they were busy showing friends although clearly there were not averse to what they were seeing in these pictures, beheadings and various other things. How easy is it for you to monitor the production of those types of films? Is there much evidence that any of these are being produced in the UK rather than overseas and being brought back here?

Mr Farr: Some starting observations from me. The internet is a factor in almost all that we do on *Prevent* and arguably almost all that we do on counter-terrorism more broadly. It has changed the counter-terrorism landscape and has particularly changed the way in which radicalisation is happening and, of course, the number of people to whom it might happen. Therefore, any coherent counter-terrorist strategy and *Prevent* strategy has to have a very coherent strategy for working on the internet. Unfortunately, that is much easier said than done. I think we have got and are working on an internet programme which has a number of components and perhaps I could highlight one or two of those. It is really important that violent extremist networks are not unchallenged on the net itself. It is sometimes easy to get the impression they are the only thing that is out there and we need to correct that impression. We want to do that by encouraging other organisations to operate on the net too. I hope that is partly what organisations might use government funding to do. I hasten to add, it is not the role of government, and ministers have said this, to design their websites, but it is the role of government to encourage them to contest this space so that violent extremist groups do not go unopposed. There are 4,500 plus or minus violent extremist websites operating in or around this country and, to answer your question, very few of them based here. We need to challenge them more than has been the case. That is part of our programme.

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Q406 Chair: How many of those 4,500 are funded by foreign governments?

Mr Farr: I am not aware that any are. The second thing we have got to do, which is exciting if we can pull it off, is challenge the content on the violent extremist websites themselves. There are two ways that you can do that. You can actually intervene on the sites or you can intervene with what we call communication service providers if the content of that site is either illegal or otherwise undesirable. I think it is partly government's job to intervene where we see illegal content, but we want to encourage community organisations also to do some of that challenging. We are setting up a process which we hope will facilitate that. We had quite a large meeting in the middle of last year, speaking from memory, with a range of community organisations to discuss how it might work. In short, if you look at the internet you need to contest the internet space, promote websites from organisations, ie the majority of organisations in this country, who are challenging violent extremism, and you then need to challenge the context on violent extremism websites themselves through a variety of ways, and we are working our way through that.

Q407 Mr Betts: I suppose this whole programme depends on a lot on the working together of a number of organisations, but what happens where you get a local authority that says, "We don't really buy into all this end objective of *Prevent*. There is a lot of government money there, we can have it for some good community projects", and that is what they go off and do and the rest of it is left as a void. How do you deal with that sort of situation, or have you experienced it?

Mr Farr: First of all we would want to know it was happening, of course, which is an issue in itself. I hope that the relationships we have with regional offices, government offices in the regions and local authorities would enable us to understand where that is happening. Secondly, we would want to go and talk to the officials who are concerned about *Prevent*. Thirdly, we would want to go and look at the projects which are being funded using *Prevent* money. I hope and believe that if at the end of that process we found that *Prevent* money was simply being used for community cohesion projects we would do our utmost to stop that because that is not the purpose of *Prevent* funding allocated by Communities and Local Government or any other government department.

Mr Betts: What would you do to fill the vacuum?

Q408 Chair: Given that it is not actually ring-fenced, how would you stop it being spent then because in the end it is a grant?

Mr Farr: That is a task—I do not wish to pass the buck—for Communities and Local Government in their discussion with that local authority. We hope that we would come to agreement on the purposes of *Prevent*, which are very clearly set out in this

guide, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners*, which sets the parameters for programmes which we think should be funded and if the funding is being used for something else, and particularly if it is being used for something else but still being badged as *Prevent*, that is a mistake. I do not have any doubt that has happened in a number of cases and we are trying to correct that.

Q409 Mr Betts: How would you deal with the void if the local authority still does not want to engage?

Mr Farr: A void left on *Prevent*?

Q410 Mr Betts: Yes.

Mr Farr: I would hope that by a process of discussion, a sharing of the CTLP, a sharing of our risk assessment, our explanation of why we really think this work is necessary for the future stability and safety of people living in that region that we would come to an agreement that we could move ahead.

Q411 Mr Betts: And if you do not?

Mr Farr: That then is a matter for CLG.

Q412 Alison Seabeck: How comfortable are you with local authorities who choose to take the money, use it in a *Prevent* way but do not brand it as *Prevent*? Are you relaxed about that?

Mr Farr: I am entirely relaxed about that so long as your qualification applies, in other words that in not calling it *Prevent* it is specifically geared towards the objectives of *Prevent* and does not drop into a much wider set of work which is vital on community cohesion.

Q413 Andy Slaughter: You mentioned prisons as one of your areas.

Mr Farr: Yes.

Q414 Andy Slaughter: Is there anything discrete about the work that is going on in prisons and how successful is the work you are doing there?

Mr Farr: Around the world prisons are a radicalisation problem, there is nothing particular to the issues that we identify in the UK. They have become a problem because countries around the world have arrested and convicted in varying numbers people for terrorist related offences and most countries put those people into prisons where they mix with other inmates. We are all engaged in understanding how, firstly, to control that process and, secondly, of course, to try to talk to the people convicted and ensure that when they are eventually released from prison, and of course some people are released quite quickly for some terrorist offences, they do not recommit when they return to the community. I think NOMS, who lead on this within the Ministry of Justice—the National Offender Management Service—have done a great deal of work and we have funded them to do so. They have recently begun to produce rather expert work on de-radicalisation initiatives inside prison and we think that work stands comparison with any internationally. It is based on discussion with

19 January 2010 Mr Charles Farr

colleagues overseas. We are beginning to wheel that programme out. We do not yet have a programme entirely in place of the kind that we would want and that does not seem to me to be surprising, and it is certainly not meant to be a criticism, it is a reflection of the relatively short time on which we have been focusing on this.

Q415 Andy Slaughter: Do you think that in areas which are more targeted or demarcated, whether it be prisons or higher education institutions—it probably makes it more difficult—it is easier to formulate what you are going to do than in communities generally?

Mr Farr: Yes, undoubtedly. Prisons should be the easiest of all to the extent that you are dealing with a defined population in an institution under government control where you have whatever powers you want. However, I would say against that that you are also dealing with offenders who are almost by definition completely committed to the cause of violent extremism and, therefore, whilst your access may be much easier, the interaction you are going to have is often very much more challenging. In communities the reverse is often the case. Your fundamental assumption is right.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Written evidence

Memorandum from the Federation of Muslim Organisations (FMO) (PVE 02)

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The Federation of Muslim Organisations (FMO) is an elected umbrella body in existence for over 26 years. It is the effective voice of the Muslim community and currently holds an affiliate membership of 186 Mosques and Muslim bodies across the sectarian divide. I serve as the Public Relations Officer and as the co-ordinator/trainer on “Prevent”.

My own experience in Leicester includes liaising closely with a dedicated police officer responsible for faith/cultural issues as they arise in the community. I also observe police during the training I provide, developing an understanding of central Muslim institutions within the communities they would be working with. I am fully aware that Terrorism is one main issue that can divide our communities. As a country I understand that we do face many challenges.

I know that the Muslim community has always fully supported the underlying principle that terrorism is something that is not to be tolerated and that Islam has no support for any act that brings about human suffering and is committed in supporting the fight against terrorism anywhere in the world.

I would like to reinforce my communities’ commitment in contributing on this critical and important issue and to thank you for giving us an opportunity to comment.

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

The label “Prevent” has become a barrier in some parts of the country because of its connotations and links with one faith community (Muslims). The recent arrest and conviction of the far right terrorist did not receive the same attention yet far right activity is on the rise. There are also many comments made within other faith communities that Muslims are benefiting from the fund at the expense of others.

2. *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

There has previously been a neglect of foreign policy when assessing the impact domestically. The last example being Gaza which I believe has put the Prevent strategy back a few years. However, I recognise the good work which the UK is doing not least foreign aid but the message is being lost.

3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is — or should be — aimed?*

This is a highly problematic area for a number of reasons:

Advisors to Government tend to come from one particular school of thought

Organisations not rooted in local communities and which have not got a track record of local delivery, seem to be funded and contracts awarded without thorough assessment of outcomes and credibility.

There is a tendency to only speak to those who are London based and/or media friendly.

There is a fear that a change of Government will lead to a new direction for the strategy.

4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

This would depend on the depth of knowledge of the local authorities.

We understand that this evaluated through National Indicator 35 (Building Resilience to Violent Extremism).

5. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

In our experience of training and advising prison officers, probation, police, government office and council staff, there is a lack of knowledge and grasping of the agenda. Policies are formulated for communities with whom they have little or no effective contact with.

Understanding of Islam, Muslim schools of thought and the single narrative is very poor amongst statutory organisations.

6. *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?*

In some cases yes but more work needed to identify key influencers and responsible voices.

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

It would always be difficult to measure success due to the nature of the potential subject.

Good value for money, concern on future funding/continuation.

Reactions to the programme in our opinion not been sufficiently measured.

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

No, still a lot of confusion between the Prevent and Community Cohesion/Integration agenda, clear guidelines are needed to avoid tensions between faith communities that have surfaced.

One issue that has always appeared prominence during our many conversation with the community is a belief that radicalisation is strongly linked with international events and foreign policy. Also in particular, the ways the media portray some events often trigger a line of enquiry that often germinates into a more radical political outlook. Extreme views become more attractive and young minds and will inevitably become more susceptible to extreme and radical opinions. This is of course does not mean that such people go on to commit atrocities.

In June, I took part in a weekend residential titled "Operation Nicole" I was really inspired by the concept and I deeply felt that it may be worth replicating something similar in more cities.

I know that we would have to extremely cautious and sensitive in the way that this is presented to the community. This event would have to be run independently because of the need to attract delegates from across the community. I want to make sure that we can create a "safe" place where people can ventilate their feelings and views. In order to achieve this I feel that we may need to present this programme as a mixed programme covering other issues such as:

- Public speaking
- Presentation skills
- Understanding the terrorism legislation
- Citizenship
- CONTEST/PREVENT

I am also aware that the Act NOW! exercise exists and would be extremely useful for groups. This can be tailored for local audience instead of having consultants parachuted in from elsewhere. Based on the soundings that I have taken I am confident that a local programme created at a local level is more likely to succeed.

I am involved in this area of work and delivering training around the PREVENT strategy in Leicester to police officers and other stakeholders. I am concerned at the way the CONTEST strategy is been rolled out; besides senior police officers and chief executives of local authorities we must have input from the community. This is important when deciding if an individual needs intervention at an early stage.

September 2009

Memorandum from the Board of Deputies of British Jews (PVE 03)

SUMMARY

- This submission is made by the relevant bodies of the Jewish community which have particular concerns about violent extremism and the Government's strategy to defeat it.
- The understanding across Government of the contemporary factors that lead people to become terrorists is improving, but remains incomplete and patchy, in particular the understanding of Islamism's ideologies, long term strategies and the differences and similarities between those that advance this cause primarily through political means, and those that do so primarily through violence.
- Local authorities seldom have sufficient expertise to determine who is extremist and who is not.
- Evaluation processes are insufficiently robust to ascertain if Prevent schemes provide value for money.
- There is insufficient clarity over the Prevent programme, and its purpose, and other closely related policy frameworks.
- There should be a wider discussion around the notion of government engagement with those Islamists who promote a divisive message that disparages the liberal democratic values that underpin British society.

INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is made by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the representative body of the Jewish community in the UK, and the Community Security Trust, which provides defence and security services and advice to the Jewish community.

We have made joint submissions to several inquiries concerned with counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism legislation in the past.

2. The Jewish community has a particular concern over terrorism, in the UK and elsewhere. Our community is threatened as citizens in the same manner as other citizens, but we face an additional threat, as Jews. The threat comes from different directions: from Al Qaeda and the Global Jihad Movement; Iran and its surrogates, notably Hizbollah, and from extreme right activists.

3. Space does not permit us to explain the continuing threat to Jewish communities at greater length, but it is sufficient to note recent specific threats to Jews (and not Israel and its institutions in Israel or abroad) by: Ayman al Zawahiri on 24 March 2008 and again on 2 April 2008; by Sheikh Yousef al Qaradawi on 9 January 2009.

It could be argued that Al Qaeda now has little capacity to initiate, plan and fund terror attacks in the West, but the wider Global Jihad Movement, which articulates the same *Salafi Jihadi* ideology, has proven on many occasions that it has absorbed the ideology and has a continuing capacity to stage successful attacks against a range of targets.

Successful anti Jewish attacks resulting in loss of life have recently been made against Nariman House (Chabad Centre) in Mumbai in November 2008 by Al Qaeda associate Lashkar e Toiba and plots were discovered against a Jewish community centre near Madrid in March 2004 (as a sequel to the Atocha railway bombings), against Jewish institutions (as part of the wider plot against the Bluewater shopping centre and night clubs) by the Crevice conspirators, and against a Jewish community leader (as a consequence of his friendship with the Prime Minister). These plots underscore the serious and continuing terror threat to Jewish communities, including in the United Kingdom.

4. Counter terrorism and the Prevent strategy are not static initiatives. They need to evolve continuously as the government learns from its experiences in what is a “high stakes” and novel environment. We acknowledge that the Government seeks to enhance its knowledge, and that it is willing to consult knowledgeable and responsible non governmental organisations.

We acknowledge that the revised approach is cross departmental, multi disciplinary and avoids the pitfalls of the previous “silo” approach, where information was not shared willingly between departments and agencies.

5. The Government’s pioneering and thoughtful approach was recently summarised as follows:

“the United Kingdom has established the most diversified and energetic official outreach program to Muslims, largely reflecting concern about home grown terrorism since the July 2005 London attacks British police have made a conscious decision to seek the co-operation of non-violent radicals even while political authorities have encouraged former radicals and Sufis to speak out against hardline political Islam.”

(Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence, Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 12 February 2009).

6. At the same time it must be recognised that both the US and our own government considers that a substantial current terrorist threat comes from radicalised British citizens of Pakistani or other origin who are able to enter the USA under the visa” with either our, or their, security services.

Similarly both the USA and the UK security services recognise the potential threat from the large numbers of Somali and other African asylum seekers in the UK.

Both the US and British services have foiled terrorist plots by Somalis who have returned to Somalia, or Sudan, for terrorist training.

ANALYSIS OF THE RADICALISATION PROCESS

7. Radical Islamist groups have common origins. The founders and followers of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat e Islami sought both a return to the beliefs and practices of the early followers of the Prophet as they perceived them, and reacted against the development, and perceived failures, of the political movements in the post First World War era. In doing so they necessarily were attracted to and adopted core aspects of the totalitarian ideologies of the time; communism, fascism and Nazism. Their proposals were not democratic as it was and is understood in the West, but focussed on the concept of religious belief and practice as the only form of governance for a modern Muslim state (*Sharia*). While there have been modernising trends in Islamism’s core beliefs, adherents still believe that *Sharia* is ultimately the only form of governance, although opinions differ within Islamism about how this can or should be applied.

8. The difference between followers of Islamist parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat e Islami, and *Salafi Jihadists*, is their attitude to violence. The former believe that they will prevail through long term political work, although there are many examples of followers of these two parties using violence in certain circumstances; the latter believe their aims can only be achieved through violent insurrection and violence against exterior forces, initially against those perceived to be occupying Muslim lands.

9. In the immediate aftermath of the London bombings, the Government sought to work through Muslim umbrella groups, such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain, which are led by radical Islamists. It appointed leading members of these and other Muslim groups to a set of working groups with the task of finding solutions themselves under the rubric of “Preventing Extremism Together” (PET). Various working groups were established but disbanded after reporting amid some criticism by both sides. The Muslims who were involved with the groups charged the government with failing to do enough; the government responded that it was up to Muslims themselves to take forward their own recommendations.

10. Although not all the people appointed to the PET groups were Islamists, there appeared to be an effort to use non-violent Islamists to act as a bulwark against those who openly advocate violence. The failure of the PET working groups led the government to recognise what many external observers had pointed out; that it had been naive to use radical Islamists to undermine the terrorists’ message, when their political narrative, expressed grievances and end game were too similar.

11. The government was therefore correct to switch the focus of Prevent towards Extremism. Violent Extremism is an outcome of the radicalisation process that leads people to become violent extremists and it is the earlier stage that needs to be addressed if the latter is to be defeated.

12. The government therefore adopted a new approach, which focussed resources of Prevent on strengthening the views of the moderate majority while isolating and undermining the minority of extremists. This necessarily involved dealing direct with local Muslim groups rather than approaching them via umbrella groups, which in fact represent Islamist ideologies.

Any future engagement with umbrella groups such as the Muslim Council of Britain must be contingent on them representing a greater range of views than those of the Islamists, and firmly rejecting violence in all circumstances, including in overseas conflicts; especially those that involve British forces in peacekeeping or other roles.

Those groups and individuals who, in certain circumstances, support and promote the idea and practice of violent jihad overseas, cannot be reliable partners in tackling the impact of violent jihad here in Britain. Individuals from the Muslim Council of Britain, North London Central Mosque and East London Mosque all signed the Istanbul Declaration, which contained within it implicit threats of violence against the Royal Navy or warships of UK allies, against Israel and against British Jews in the UK. There is no long-term value in building partnerships with those whose attitude towards violent jihad is contingent upon circumstance.

13. The government can only support a world outlook which the majority of British citizens can accept, rather than the narrow one offered by Islamist controlled or influenced bodies.

14. The government however has yet to deal robustly with the gateway organisations which promote extremist views and, which evidence indicates, often provide the route into terrorism. The majority of British born jihadist terrorists have followed this route. The government has also failed to provide a consistent message, and gateway groups which have been banned have merely waited 12 months and then reappeared under a different name.

15. The government should aim to address local Muslim grievances, rather than attempt to address global grievances. Many of these are beyond the Government’s capacity to address, and are a form of escapism from the real, day-to-day problems of Muslim communities. It is not for a minority of British citizens to determine foreign policy, however strongly they may feel.

Foreign policy must be determined in the interests of the United Kingdom as a whole.

16. The emphasis on grievances as a measure of community cohesion and a factor in government policy encourages different communities to compete for patronage by each emphasising their own grievances. This divides communities, sets them against one another and encourages polarisation around the more extreme positions within each community.

17. The United Kingdom continues to be criticised by our allies for failing to deal adequately with bodies that raise funds for foreign terrorist groups.

This is inconsistent with Government’s professed strategies and our responsibilities under international agreements.

GOVERNMENT’S STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT

18. Local authorities to whom this has been devolved will be able to respond to this in a more knowledgeable fashion, but there is evidence that while they may know what is going on in their local areas, they may not have the expertise to determine the religio-political ideology of applicants for funding, and thereby assess whether they are capable of helping combat violent extremism, or assist in building community cohesion.

COMMUNICATING PREVENT

19. *The Prevent Strategy: A guide for Local Partners in England* and *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery* explain the government's latest strategy effectively. Taken together with previously published guidance, which seek to explain the government's purpose such as *The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism (March 2009)*, *Preventing Violent Extremism Learning and Development Exercise (October 2008)* they provide an adequate explanation of the government's evolving strategy on counter radicalisation.

20. We have concerns that recent immigrant and asylum seeker communities may not be adequately targeted and addressed by the Prevent agenda.

21. We understand that RICU has been evaluating the Government's revised messaging and the effect that it is having on both those likely to be radicalised and those who seek to prevent it. We look forward to the publication of this evaluation.

ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF PREVENT

22. However what appears to be missing is an assessment of how effectively the strategies are being communicated to target audiences. We are unaware of any published evaluation of how effective the messaging has been at grassroots levels, although we understand that the OSCT is examining this with a view to providing regular assessments.

Regular polling and other mass assessment evaluations, which should be of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, might address this gap.

23. We are aware that government representatives have visited other countries to observe and evaluate their counter terrorism and de-radicalisation programmes. We are also aware of the considerable international exchange of information and cross fertilisation. This process must be maintained so that the Government has access to the latest and most effective advice from a variety of sources governmental and non governmental.

EVALUATING PREVENT

24. We are unaware of published evaluations and it may still be too early to properly evaluate the effectiveness of Prevent. It is to be assumed that local authorities, who are responsible for providing grants under the Pathfinder scheme, are undertaking local regular value for money assessments. However they may not have the necessary expertise to determine if local applicants are suitable recipients of funding, or whether they in fact promote radical, violent or divisive ideas alongside their other work.

Accordingly we believe that there should be a central government evaluation facility for both making grants and evaluating the effective use of the money.

25. This need not necessarily preclude imaginative initiatives aimed at young people and women's groups, which are intended to broadcast their messages in modern and appropriate fashion.

PREVENT, COHESION AND INTEGRATION

26. There is insufficient differentiation between the de-radicalisation (Prevent), cohesion and integration policy frameworks. Indeed we believe that there may well be confusion in the minds of many over what each entails.

The primary purpose of Prevent is to confront violent extremism. It does not necessarily follow that integration and a propensity for violent extremism are inversely proportional.

Many Muslims may not be integrated, and may promote ideas that are antithetical to community cohesion, but are non-violent and are repelled by Islamism and *Salafi Jihadism*. It is well to remember that the lead members of the 7/7 and Operation Crevice conspiracies came from well integrated backgrounds.

Neither is speaking English or wearing the veil the real issue. The issue is confronting an extremist and alien political ideology which promotes the supremacy of Islam over other faiths and democratic political systems, a core belief in antisemitism and the use of violence to achieve its ends.

There are examples of groups or individuals who promote a divisive message, for instance one that is highly disparaging of liberal democratic values, secular society or individual freedoms, but who have been used as partners in tackling violent extremism. A clear discussion needs to be had about whether this is an acceptable strategy, or whether in tackling the immediate problem of violent extremism, it is storing up more long-term problems of communal and social division.

Memorandum from the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) (PVE 04)

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This submission is made on behalf of the Sikh community by the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO), Britain's largest representative body of Sikhs

SUMMARY

- The Prevent Strategy is seriously flawed as it does not address the root causes of religious conflict and extremism.
- The government's engagement with religious communities is badly skewed by over-focussing on Islamic extremism. This has produced a sense of unfair targeting within the Muslim community, and a corresponding sense of marginalisation among those of other faiths. Sikhs are particularly conscious of the negative rebound of Islamic extremism on many turban wearing Sikhs and our places of worship.
- The old story about "crisis in theatre-government to act", has now been replaced by "crisis in religion-government starts preaching". Government and local government are not experts on religion and should avoid the temptation to lead and direct the faith agenda. This leading is currently being done by the deployment of government and local government funding to favoured projects and groups on the basis of questionable criteria. *The role of both government and local government should be confined to ensuring all communities are given equitable treatment on the provision of goods and services and that all people of different faiths and cultures respect the norms of civilised society.*

DETAILED CONCERNS

1. *Skewed Consequences of Prevent*

1.1 Sikhs are extremely concerned that the "Prevent" strategy and similar well-meaning government initiatives aimed at reducing violent extremism are based on a highly questionable premise: that funding initiatives aimed at general community cohesion will address deeper underlying causes of extremism. These initiatives, aimed at the Islamic community, rather than tackling underlying issues are producing a sense of "victimisation among Muslims and a growing sense of resentment and marginalisation in other religious communities.

1.2 While the Prevent Agenda and similar initiatives aimed at the Muslim community are designed to assist it to combat extremism, these are interpreted by many Muslims as their faith being singled out and blamed as the source of all extremism, and evidence of widespread Islamophobia. This sense of alienation, however misplaced, plays into the hands of those in the Muslim community with an extremist agenda. Importantly, it also feeds and gives cause to right wing extremists in a way that can lead to a measure of civic unrest.

2. *Root Causes of Religious Extremism*

2.1 The view of the UK Sikhs is that extremism, religious or otherwise, arises from a desire of those involved to push their beliefs onto others, even by threat of force; the rationale behind this being that their views carry unique truth and legitimacy. An added reason for religious extremism is an arrogant assumption that "this is what God wants us to do".

3. *Combating Bigotry*

3.1 What commonly passes for religion is a mix of ethical teachings mixed, often beyond recognition, in questionable culture and superstition. In most faith groupings, Sikhs included, perverse cultural practice that inhibits community cohesion is sometimes given more importance than ethical teaching.

3.2 Those seeking power in religious communities often misrepresent or distort religious teachings and blur the distinction between cultural practices and ethical teachings to suit their own ideological agenda. A true "Prevent Agenda" should tackle such distortions with the active involvement of religious leaders. The experience to date is that most Muslim leaders, other than providing occasional lip service, have done little in this direction. They, and their counterparts in other faiths, should actively condemn attempts by zealots to push their views onto others. We all have the right to believe what we want, but any attempt to push our views on others seriously undermines the cause of true community cohesion. This is particularly serious on university campuses, where, despite Sikh, Jewish and Hindu concerns being relayed to government ministers, extreme Islamic proselytising, including the crude denigration of other faiths, continues unabated.

3.3 It is more than a year since the publication of the government's "Preventing Violent Extremism" which correctly recognized that "*violent extremism is most likely to occur where extremists can act uncontested, away from mainstream voices and competing ideas. This can apply both to prisons, universities...*". The evidence to date is that little has been done on university campuses to combat increasing

radicalisation and extremism and, despite a vast increase in funding, it is the view of the Prison Chaplaincy, including the Muslim Adviser, the situation in prisons has become worse with aggressive and intimidating behaviour being shown to those of other faiths.

4. Conclusion

While a small measure of superficial community cohesion can be gained by funding initiatives to reduce disadvantage and encourage different faiths to meet together in social and cultural activities, underlying tensions can only be dissipated by open and honest dialogue to show the essential beliefs and aspirations of different communities have much in common. Focussing on such commonalities while at the same time addressing root causes of extremism will add considerable strength to the Prevent Agenda.

September 2009

Memorandum from Iqbal Wahhab (PVE 05)

- PVE has got off to a good start
- Important to understand links between urban deprivation and radicalisation
- PVE units need greater powers to achieve their goals
- More communication needed with Muslim communities

1. I am a restaurateur in London who undertakes a number of non commercial activities. Among those of relevance here are that I chair the DWP's Ethnic Minority Advisory Group and I also sit on the board of The Prince of Wales's charity Mosaic which focuses on British Muslims. For Mosaic I am leading a project on Muslim prisoners. This submission is presented, however, in a personal capacity.

2. The Government has rightly placed funds and personnel into tackling violent extremism and it is timely for this initiative to be reviewed. It is a hugely complicated arena and it would have been unrealistic to get the project 100% right from the outset.

3. From my experience with the DWP, we can clearly see that British Muslims are amongst the most significant economically disenfranchised communities in the UK. Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of society, two thirds of Muslim children in Tower Hamlets live in poverty. These are undoubtedly contributing factors in the alarming statistic that 11% of all inmates in British prisons are of declared Muslim faith.

4. Government has been reluctant to see a link between urban deprivation and extremism but it is only a small step away from recognising a causal relationship between economic inactivity and social cohesion. It is unacceptable to point at the profile of an active terrorist as being lower middle class and likely to be in work as a legitimatisation for not accepting it has to bear part of the responsibility for the rise of violent extremism. To point at Pakistan and Afghanistan cynically diverts attention away from some closer home truths.

5. If British society and the British economy were played out on an even field, we would certainly not be in the position we are today. In the USA, where they have for decades had affirmative action policies in place to minimise the ethnic penalties we see here, American Muslims have more of a buy-in to the country that houses them. The country that leads on the bombing of Iraq and Afghanistan does not see its Muslim citizens plot to bomb its major cities.

6. The work of PVE is to be applauded and would have more effect if ministers would have the courage to admit that for successive governments to have failed its ethnic minority citizens and in this case its Muslim citizens, they are partly to blame for where we are today. By admitting to and recognising this fact, we will go a long way in strengthening PVE's work in the future.

7. I would like to see PVE have a stronger role to play in the field of education. I know of one university where there is rampant recruitment of moderate Muslim students towards radicalisation and extremism and where the local PVE unit has been in to brief the university's leading members on the severity of the situation only to come across fierce resistance from teaching unions who fear that by assisting PVE work they will be conspiring against Muslim students.

8. The issues at stake here—namely the security of the country—have to be our primary concern. This may be well meaning on the part of the teachers but is ultimately misguided and dangerous. PVE units should be enabled with greater powers to overcome this kind of resistance. Schools, colleges and universities are currently easy prey for radical Islamists and this needs to be stopped.

9. I am unaware of how PVE messages are being presently communicated to British Muslim communities. My impression is that the work to date has concentrated on institutions and organisations. If this is correct, my recommendation for the next phase of this work would be to extend its reach. Like many others, I am sceptical of following the obvious routes of engaging with mosques or the majority of Muslim organisations.

10. I cannot admit to knowing what the best routes of communication would be and if those appropriate channels do not currently exist, they can be created. This is how Mosaic was formed; a group successful business people and professionals who happened to be of Muslim origin were invited to join a programme to mentor young British Muslims who weren't faring so well in life as we had. The project is about a year old and is already very successful. Part of its success is that it engaged people who had little official connection with British Muslim organisations.

11. On the wider political and social agenda, cohesion and integration need to be addressed within the context of this debate. From Bradford to Brick Lane, British Muslims can go days, weeks, months without ever talking to a single white person. This is unhealthy for our social fabric. It is within these pockets of isolation, where our radar is inevitably weak, that radicalisation and extremism have a happy home. It is no good for our claim of multi-culturalism and now increasingly, it is no good for our safety.

September 2009

Memorandum from the Islamic Human Rights Commission (PVE 07)

SUMMARY

- The Prevent strategy is doomed to fail in its objectives of preventing violent extremism unless and until it solves a number of inherent flaws.
- Firstly, its entire premise is that all Muslims are potential terrorists. Such an Islamophobic assumption serves to legitimise and validate the views of the Far Right and other Islamophobes.
- Secondly, the Prevent agenda unhelpfully conflates the issues of community cohesion and community services delivery with issues of intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism. By doing so, the Government adopts a position that the British Muslim community can only be viewed through the single prism of counter-terrorism efforts.
- Thirdly, the Prevent strategy fails to sufficiently engage with the primary motivations behind the actions of terrorists—an unjust and oppressive foreign policy and instead, it focuses on periphery, if not irrelevant, issues of democratic participation, education, and the role of women in the community.
- Fourthly, the Prevent strategy documents fail to define emotive and loaded terms such as “violent extremism”, “extremism”, and “radicalisation”. Such failures when coupled with intensive pressure on local authorities to produce results of projects designed to have tackled these concepts, have resulted in these concepts being defined at the whim of individuals within councils, with their biases, prejudices and lack of understanding. This has manifested itself in a McCarthyite spying culture being implemented in councils, university campuses and even primary schools, as part of the mainstreaming of Prevent.
- Fifthly, the terminology of “violent extremism” completely ignores the very real and dangerous threats and actions by Far Right groups and racist and Islamophobic individuals, whose violent extremism is of rapidly growing concern to all communities.
- Finally, the Government's efforts to create an alternative narrative to the Al-Qaeda brand have in essence been a cynical experiment in social engineering. Through its creation, promotion and financing of new organisations, who have no connection to the majority of Muslims and whose beliefs and practices contradict core teachings of Islam itself, the Government has further isolated the vast majority of Muslims in the UK, who are clearly not taken in by such tactics.

BACKGROUND

1. On 5 April 2007, in a document entitled “Preventing violent extremism—Winning hearts and minds”, Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government (CLG), announced a “new action plan to step-up work with Muslim communities to isolate, prevent and defeat violent extremism”.¹

2. As part of this agenda, a Home Office fund for community cohesion, in place since the Northern cities disturbances of Summer 2001, was transformed into a Preventing Violent Extremism “Pathfinder fund”. The 2007–08 PVE Pathfinder Fund delivered £6 million in funding to around 70 local authorities to work with partners and communities to deliver a community-based response to violent extremism.

3. Eligibility for the fund was based on concentrations of Muslim population with 5% or more and funding was distributed according to an assessment carried out by CLG of the need and ambition of the proposals brought forward.

¹ “Preventing Violent Extremism—Winning hearts and minds”; <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/320752.pdf>

4. In June 2008, the Home Office decided to mainstream the Prevent agenda and announced the availability of £45 million in new funding to “local authorities, schools, community groups and police to tackle violent extremism.”²

CRITIQUE

5. There are a number of problems with the current Prevent strategy which, unless remedied, will ultimately lead to its complete failure, counter-productive results, and a waste of the taxpayer’s money.

6. Firstly, the entire premise for the strategy is the incorrect and Islamophobic assumption that every member of the Muslim community is a potential terrorist who needs to be reprogrammed to renounce terrorism and violent extremism. In doing so, it legitimises and validates the negative stereotypes propagated by Far Right and Islamophobic groups that Islam and Muslims are synonymous with terrorism. This in turn can lead to even further marginalisation and isolation of the Muslim community.

7. Secondly, the Prevent agenda unhelpfully conflates the issues of community cohesion and community services delivery with issues of intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism. By doing so, the Government adopts a position that the British Muslim community can only be viewed through the single prism of counter-terrorism efforts.

8. There is no evidence to link areas that have a high proportion of Muslim inhabitants with terrorism. In their book *“Sleepwalking to Segregation?” Challenging Myths About Race and Migration* (pp.107–8), Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson analyse the data for the districts of origin of Muslims charged with terrorist offences. They write:

“If ‘segregated areas’, where there are the largest concentrations of Muslims, were hotbeds of terrorism ... then one would expect more to be charged in these areas. Seventeen of those charged in the period August 2004 to October 2006 were residents of Bradford, Luton, Newham or Wandsworth, four of the seven most Muslim districts where 18% of the population is Muslim. But just as many lived in other areas; for example, 16 lived in districts with on average only 1% Muslims, coming from Breckland in Norfolk, Doncaster, Bournemouth, Reigate in Surrey, Bexley, Brighton and Hove, Aylesbury Vale and Greenwich. The only set of districts where more Muslims were charged than others was those with the second-lowest concentrations, including Crawley, Lambeth, Wycombe and Manchester. So, Muslims living in highest concentration Muslim areas are not more likely to be terrorists than Muslims living in any other type of area. There is no reason to link particular levels of concentration with terrorism.”

9. Thirdly, the Prevent strategy fails to sufficiently engage with the primary motivations behind the actions of terrorists—an unjust and oppressive foreign policy which has caused and continues to cause immense suffering throughout the Muslim world. Instead, it focuses on periphery, if not irrelevant, issues of democratic participation, education, and the role of women in the community.

10. Fourthly, the Prevent strategy documents fail to define emotive and loaded terms such as “violent extremism”, “extremism”, and “radicalisation”. When coupled with intensive pressure on local authorities to hit targets, such failures to define have resulted in these concepts being defined at the whim of individuals within councils, with their biases, prejudices and lack of understanding.

11. The matter has been further complicated by indications as to what is unacceptable behaviour but not definitively “violent extremism”. For example, in a speech at the London School of Economics, former Secretary of State for CLG Hazel Blears included the following behaviour as unacceptable aspects of Islam:

“A belief in the supremacy of the Muslim people, in a divine duty to bring the world under the control of hegemonic Islam, in the establishment of a theocratic Caliphate, and in the undemocratic imposition of theocratic law on whole societies.”³

12. In February 2009, a draft version of Contest two leaked to the press proposed labeling as “extremist” anyone who advocated a caliphate of Muslim nations, promoted Sharia’ah law, believed in jihad or armed resistance anywhere in the world, including Palestinian armed resistance against the Israeli military, argued that Islam prohibits homosexuality and that it is a sin against Allah, and failed to condemn the killing of British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴ Although the final Contest two document did not include any such specific definition, the hysteria created by the leaked report was enough to flag up what local authorities should be looking out for.

13. Essentially, in its efforts to “stop people becoming terrorists”, the Government has effectively criminalised all forms of political opinion, expression and involvement by Muslims. This has manifested itself in a McCarthyite spying culture being implemented in councils, university campuses and even primary schools, as part of the mainstreaming of Prevent.

² Strategic issues—Preventing Violent Extremism; LGA Office Holders Item 2a 16 April 2008 <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/480450>

³ Many Voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism, Hazel Blears speech at LSE, 25 February 2009. Available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/manyvoices>

⁴ Anti-terror code “would alienate most Muslims”, *The Guardian*, 17 February 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/17/counterterrorism-strategy-muslims>

14. One example of this is the Government’s toolkit for schools entitled “Learning together to be safe” which provides guidelines to schools on preventing violent extremism, by which teachers are expected to report any child they suspect of harbouring extremist views. Within these guidelines are included advice from the Quilliam Foundation about danger signs which teachers should look out for including “Political ideology—use of political propaganda that describes political systems and countries as ‘Kufr’ or anti-Islamic, and expressing the need to replace them with ‘The Islamic system’, or ‘Caliphate...’ Suspended morality...; Conspiratorial mindset and ‘westophobia’... Ultra conservative outlook...”⁵ As the An-Nisa Society has stated, such advice is highly simplistic and subjective and raises a number of questions:

- “What are the ‘appropriate mechanisms?’
- What will happen to a child identified as a ‘potential terrorist’?
- Where are the Muslim voluntary sector agencies that will ensure that the child is dealt with appropriately?
- What safeguards are there to ensure that a child or young person is not wrongly labelled for life?
- Who will make these agencies and schools accountable?
- Where are the Muslim voluntary sector support services that can help Muslim families placed in such a situation with, for example, counselling, advocacy and legal help and so on?”⁶

15. As part of its strategy, the Government has used a quantitative measure of “resilience” to so-called violent extremism—termed National Indicator 35 (NI 35). This is an assessment framework that evaluates the effectiveness of Prevent related work programmes. Local authorities were asked to sign up to these performance indicators which would assess and measure how well they were tackling extremism. However there was and continues to be much resistance and concern. Some local authorities have resented this reporting requirement, because it makes them an arm of the police or of the security.

16. According to the LGA Office Holders, “*The Home Office (HO), via the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), have produced a ‘heat map’ which identifies 30 areas with a high risk of producing violent extremists and are seeking a good take-up of NI: 35 across this group. Around nineteen areas across the country have indicated that they will pick up the indicator in their priority 35 set. The HO believe that local authorities that do not select NI:35 are not prioritising PVE and concluding that little or no PVE work is being undertaken. To persuade local authorities to select NI:35, the HO is applying pressure via the Police, and senior officials during LAA (Local Area Agreements) negotiations which has had only limited success... Local authorities are reluctant to pick up the indicator because the term “violent extremism” could alienate communities, undermining cohesion work and are extremely cautious about making public statements around PVE. There is also concern about the measurability of the indicator.*”⁷

17. The Chief Executive of Bradford Council and leader of the Conservative Group Kris Hopkins too raised his disquiet with the PVE campaign when responding to questions from Channel 4 reporter Darsha Soni (10 September 2008) and stated:

*“What they said was that if we were willing to go out and monitor the Muslim community and use the resources of the local council to do that they would release an amount of money to us. The local council should be there to promote education, caring for elderly people, making sure they are in a safe place and not become a wing of the security services.”*⁸

18. When asked what the Government’s response was to his statement that he was not prepared to sign up to NI35, Hopkins replied that a whole procession of people, both officers and politicians, had come to Bradford to tell them that they were “soft on terrorism.”

19. In June 2009, Reading Conservative councilor Jamie Chowdhary said of NI 35: “If ever a document qualified for the charge of inciting racial hatred, then this is it.” He said it would “isolate, stigmatise and alienate one community, my community”.

20. Fifthly, the terminology of “violent extremism” completely ignores the very real and dangerous threats and actions by Far Right groups and racist and Islamophobic individuals, whose violent extremism is of rapidly growing concern to all communities.

21. Since the election of BNP leader Nick Griffin to the European Parliament and his comments to Channel 4 News describing Islam as a “cancer” that needed to be removed from Europe by “chemotherapy”,⁹ the threats and actions of Far Right extremists against Muslims has rapidly escalated in both in frequency and severity. Numerous mosques, Islamic centres and even the Glasgow office of the Islamic Relief office have been subjected to arson attacks. In Loughton, Essex, where the BNP has been advocating a “No Mosques in Loughton” campaign, community leader Noor Ramjanally’s home was

⁵ <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/violentextremism/quilliam/>

⁶ “Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) & PREVENT: A Response from the Muslim Community”, An-Nisa Society (Feb 2009)

⁷ Strategic issues—Preventing Violent Extremism; LGA Office Holders Item 2a 16 April 2008 <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/480450>

⁸ <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=vNYiVXAWnwI>

⁹ “BNP’s Griffin: Islam is a cancer”, *Channel 4 News*, 9 July 2009 http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/bnpaposs+griffin+islam+is+a+cancer/3257872

torched, his family threatened before he was abducted at knife-point. In South London, there has been a spate of attacks against Muslims outside mosques during Ramadan, one of which resulted in the murder of a 65 year old man.

22. The last six months has seen a growing number of virulently anti-Islam marches and demonstrations organised by Far Right such as the English Defence League (EDL) and Casuals United. The demonstrations, in which fascists have chanted “We hate Muslims” and “No more mosques”, have been allowed proceed in areas with high Muslim populations such as Luton and Birmingham. During a march in Luton, fascists attacked and vandalized the homes, businesses and property of the Muslim population in scenes reminiscent of Mosleys Brownshirts in the 1930s. Rather than crackdown on such blatant fascism, the attitude of the government has been one of silent acquiescence.

23. Beyond demonstrations, Far Right extremists are plotting deadlier attacks against Muslims. Numerous terrorist plots have been foiled this year including one in July when an international network of Far Right extremists with access to 300 weapons and 80 bombs was uncovered by counter-terrorism detectives in what was described as the “largest seizure of a suspected terrorist arsenal since the IRA mainland bombings of the early 1990s.” In another recent case not linked to those arrests, detectives seized maps and plans of mosques from the homes of suspected Far Right supporters.

24. Most recently, white supremacist Neil Lewington was convicted of planning a terrorist bombing campaign against those he considered non-British. In a raid on his home, police discovered what was described as a “bomb-making factory” as well as racist propaganda and videos of neo-Nazi terrorists.

25. Earlier in April, Neil MacGregor was convicted after admitting to threatening to blow up Scotland’s biggest mosque and to behead one Muslim a week until every mosque in Scotland was shut down. Curiously, MacGregor was never charged under any anti-terrorism legislation or tried in the High Court as would be expected. Instead, he was charged and tried with mere breach of the peace in the Glasgow Sherriff Court where he was sentenced to only three years’ probation. One need not ask the inevitable question, “what if he had been a Muslim?” For several cases in recent years have answered that question—draconian sentences of between eight and 40 years splashed on the front pages of all print media with 24/7 coverage of the perpetrator’s background, his family, his community, and his religion.

26. This growing threat to Muslims and other ethnic communities led to Commander Shaun Sawyer of Scotland Yard’s counterterrorism command telling a public meeting of Muslims in July that the police feared a “spectacular” terrorist attack by the Far Right extremists designed to kill and to stoke racial tensions. Sawyer added that more of his officers needed to be deployed to try to thwart neo-Nazi-inspired violence. Senior counter terrorism sources also admitted that the Counter Terrorism Unit in Leeds was currently investigating “just as many” far right plots as al-Qaeda conspiracies.

27. If Prevent is sincere about dealing with violent extremism, it must tackle this growing menace to society.

28. Finally, the Government’s efforts to create an alternative narrative to the Al-Qaeda brand have in essence been a cynical experiment in social engineering. Through its creation, promotion and financing of new organisations, who have no connection to the majority of Muslims and whose beliefs and practices contradict core teachings of Islam itself, the Government has further isolated the vast majority of Muslims in the UK, who are clearly not taken in by such tactics.

29. In its document, “Preventing Violent Extremism—Winning hearts and minds”, it unequivocally stated that

*“It is not for Government to intervene in theological debates. But there is a role for Government in providing support where it is sought or needed. We will support the development of strong faith institutions and leaders capable of engaging effectively with all members of Muslim communities”.*¹⁰

30. Since the launch of the Prevent strategy, the exact opposite has been the case and the Government has made every effort to intervene, directly or indirectly, in theological debates and discussions central to the Islamic faith. It has in particular sought to marginalise those Muslims who are vociferous in their political beliefs and instead embarked on a mission to create, promote and fund groups whose version of Islam is more in tune with the Government’s own beliefs. These groups hailed as the true representatives of the Muslim communities include the Sufi Muslim Council (who did not exist prior to their launch by Ruth Kelly in the Houses of Parliament in July 2006), the British Muslim Forum (BMF), and the Quilliam Foundation. All have received and continue to receive the highest amount of funding¹¹ to promote their version of Islam which advocate supporting the Government’s domestic and foreign policies without

¹⁰ “Preventing Violent Extremism—Winning hearts and minds”. Ibid n1

¹¹ The SMC received £160,000 in Government funding in 2006–07, over £80,000 the following year and £150,000 more was awarded to it for 2008–09. 1. In 2006–07, the BMF received £115,000 in funding. In 2007–08, this rose to almost £195,000. Another £125,000 has been budgeted for the next three years.

dissent.¹² The Quilliam Foundation in particular fails to attract more than a miniscule number of supporters and has been by and large condemned by Muslims across the faith spectrum for their attempts to distort the true teachings of Islam.

31. In its latest document in June 2008, Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery, the OSCT lists certain key activities it seeks to achieve including supporting the establishment of a board of leading Muslim scholars to articulate an understanding of Islam in Britain.¹³ It is difficult to think of any clearer way to try and change the teachings of a religion than by establishing a board of Government appointed or approved scholars to teach the people their religion.

32. IHRC wishes to remind Prime Minister Brown what the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir, said in her report on the UK last year:

“The Special Rapporteur would like to emphasize that it is not the Government’s role to look for the “true voices of Islam” or of any other religion or belief. Since religions or communities of belief are not homogenous entities it seems advisable to acknowledge and take into account the diversity of voices. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that the contents of a religion or belief should be defined by the worshippers themselves ...”

33. Rather than deal with those creatures of Government who will tell it what it wants to hear, the Government should engage with those groups and individuals with whom they may disagree but who will provide them with a more accurate and realistic viewpoint of how it is actually perceived at the grassroots. Over expensive and cosmetic projects may make good press but will not “prevent violent extremism” in any community.

September 2009

Memorandum from the UK Youth Parliament (PVE 08)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This submission is made in response to the call for evidence from the Communities and Local Government Committee on 21 July 2009 into “Prevent”, the Government’s programme for preventing violent extremism.

1.2. This submission is based on a two year project—Project Safe Space—undertaken by young people from across England and their findings from nine regional youth led conferences on terrorism and violent extremism and its effect on young people.

1.3. Project Safe Space is a national initiative implemented and delivered by young people from the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) (a registered charity) in partnership with other regional and local youth organisations. The programme was funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Home Office (Office for Security and Counter Terrorism) and the Association of Chief Police Officers National Community Tension Team (now incorporated into the ACPO Prevent Delivery Unit).

1.4. The regional conferences were co-ordinated by a National Steering Group of fourteen young people representing Regional Steering Groups of young people in each of the nine regions.

1.5. The steering groups were asked to deliver a conference—a safe space—for any young person from any community to discuss their concerns and views about terrorism, violent extremism, youth leadership and working with the police. Adults supported the delivery of the conferences but all formats, presentations, podcasts, drama and facilitation of workshops was designed, agreed and delivered by young people.

1.6. A national report on the findings from the project was published by young people in July 2009 and it is on those findings that this submission is based. Where relevant, references are included in this submission to the national report. A copy of the national report is included with this submission, and further hard copies are available if required.

1.7. This submission is structured around the eight questions raised by the Committee but draws on the findings of the national report to represent the composite views of young people. This submission has been drafted by staff and advisors to the UK Youth Parliament and agreed by young people from the Project Safe Space National Steering Group.

¹² The SMC’s spiritual leader Shaykh Hisham Kabbani has previously thanked the British government for its role in the Middle East and also has links with the Neocons in the US and the repressive Karimov regime in Uzbekistan, positions at odds with those of most British Muslims. The BMF have encouraged young British Muslims to join the British army and supported proposals to raise the maximum time limit for detention without charge from 28 days to 42 days. See Join the British Army and become a martyr, say Muslims, *The Sunday Times*, 10 December 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article666527.ece> and UK’s top Muslim backs “42 days”, *The Sun*, 10 June 2008 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article1270796.ece>

¹³ <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent-strategy/preventing-violent-extremism?view=Binary>

2. SUMMARY

- The Government programme for preventing violent extremism has failed to engage effectively with young people who are fearful of discussing extremism and distrustful of the Government approach.
- Where young people are concerned about extremism within their own communities they want safe spaces to raise issues or concerns at local level with people they trust such as teachers and youth workers.
- Young people have a broader understanding of extremism within a local context and do not understand what Government mean by terrorism and violent extremism. They believe that the current Government definitions unfairly target the Muslim community and Islam. They believe that this bias is also reflected in media coverage of the issue.
- Young people have not been consulted directly by Government because they have no leadership role in local communities unless adults have created one for them. Consequently the voices of young people are not being heard, and where they are being heard they are not being listened to.
- Young people see a direct link between community cohesion and extremism, the latter being more prevalent in less cohesive communities. Therefore Government initiatives should focus on developing positive relationships within and between diverse communities to provide local environments that can challenge extremism.
- Current Government initiatives are “top down” and consequently have little relevance to young people. The Prevent programme should be developed involving young people in youth led initiatives at regional level, whereby young people become the best advocates of the Prevent programme to their peers.
- Despite this Government are best placed to develop and deliver a multi agency national Prevent Strategy and young people are ready, willing and able to support Government in that task.

3. OUR RESPONSE

3.1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

3.1.1. Project Safe Space has identified a fundamental need for a coherent Prevent strategy co-ordinated by Government but including all key agencies and organisations involved in preventing terrorism and violent extremism. Whilst there is an overarching Contest Strategy to counter terrorist activity, the UKYP experience of developing this project is that there appears to be little co-ordination between Government departments, regional government, local government, the police and other agencies. Each department or agency appears to have developed their own strategic approach with regards to the Prevent agenda with their own desired outcomes and goals. This is complicated still further on a regional and local level, where staff empowered to work on Prevent projects are unaware of opportunities to link up activity. Young people for example have clearly identified a link between community cohesion and extremism. Yet it appears that the DCLG have the Government lead for community cohesion and the Home Office have the lead for preventing terrorism yet the two approaches appear mutually exclusive.

3.1.2. Whilst there is a fundamental need for a Prevent programme the Government approach is very much “top down”. In terms of young people, this manifests itself in Government identifying what the “prevent” issues are for young people and then delivering strategies in response. Project Safe Space has identified that the Government Prevent programme has little impact on young people as it has no context at a local level or the day to day experiences of young people. In addition, there are variations in these experiences between regions with young people in London for example being more aware of extremism and its effects than young people in other regions.

3.1.3. In terms of the Prevent environment and young people, there was a genuine fear¹⁴ that any discussion about terrorism or extremism within communities would be seen as suspicious by the police and authorities (hence the Project name Safe Space). This fear included those working with young people such as youth workers and teachers. The fear was linked to a distrust¹⁵ of Government and its approach. Therefore those very people from whom the Government and police need support are fearful of giving it. Any Prevent programme must have at its core strategies to create an environment of trust and confidence between young people, the police and Government. This point cannot be overstated, and will require a clear, co-ordinated, joined up and long-term community partnership strategy to bring about the appropriate impact.

3.1.4. Any Government Prevent programme must include young people directly in its development and implementation. Young people have shown through Safe Space that they are innovative and responsive when given the space and support to do so. By involving young people in a genuine reciprocal partnership then they can become the best advocates of a Government prevent strategy amongst their peers.

¹⁴ Project Safe Space National Report (2009) UKYP p.18, p.25,

¹⁵ Ibid p.23, p.43

3.2. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

3.2.1. The perception of young people from across all diverse groups is that the Government Prevent strategy is focused on the Muslim community and Islam. The focus was negative supported by an anti Islamic press and yet young people were keen to "challenge the prejudices and stereotypes, indicating that everyone is capable of terrorism".¹⁶

3.2.2. This perception should be seen within the context of young people's wider discussion about extremism within their own communities. Within that context examples of extremism for their part, included groups advocating animal rights, fathers for justice, the British National Party, the IRA. Young people also made the point that extremism could be a force for good.¹⁷ Consequently within the broader definition of extremism given by young people a perceived Government approach focused on the Muslim community was seen as inappropriate.

3.2.3. Viewed within an international context and with regards to the origin of the current threat from terrorism and extremism it is understandable that the Government Prevent agenda focus on extremism that exploits the Muslim community and Islam as an excuse for criminality. However that perspective is difficult for a large number of young people to visualise locally within their communities, as expressed by young people in one region "the event identified a real concern both prior to and after the Conference that terrorism and violent extremism had nothing to do with young people in the North East of England".¹⁸

3.3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

3.3.1. If you were to view young people as a community then the Government's strategy has been particularly ineffective in reaching the vast majority of young people. The focus appears to have been on those working with young people such as teachers, University staff and local authority youth services as opposed to young people themselves.

3.3.2. There is also a great deal of youth engagement undertaken within the voluntary or third sector either through independent youth clubs and projects or uniformed organisations yet the voluntary sector has not been widely consulted. Project Safe Space's openness ensured participation from a wide cross section of statutory and non statutory organisations. The DCLG Pathfinder funding programme was seen as inaccessible by many local groups and organisations as they didn't meet the criteria, or they felt that funds were already earmarked by local authorities for well established or known organisations and groups.

3.3.3. One of the NSG requests for Project Safe Space was that it included provision to discuss youth leadership. This was in direct response to a view from young people that they had difficulty getting their voices heard and that agendas and debates were always controlled by adults. As the report notes "leadership was perceived as an adult role and that often where young people performed leadership roles they felt overpowered or relegated to a dominant and adult viewpoint. More than often adult community leaders did not represent the views of young people and the young people needed to be in a position to challenge the adult view".¹⁹ Young people were also expected to engage within frameworks devised by adults—ie: committee meetings, agendas, chairmen etc and yet Safe Space showed that young people managed to organise and deliver nine successful conferences using online forums, residential workshops, text messaging et al. There is a need for adults to consider engaging with young people within frameworks and structures developed and managed by young people themselves.

3.3.4. The Government Prevent agenda should not seek to determine who has been affected by, or who is vulnerable to extremism. Project Safe Space has been developed with a focus on who has been affected by extremism from a young person's perspective. This has ensured participation from across a wide section of communities, including a young person from the Gipsy and Traveller community on the NSG. For example, whilst it is accepted that the Muslim community within the context of the current terrorist threat may be viewed as especially vulnerable, targeting that community albeit in the best possible interest merely reinforces to others that extremism is only an issue for the Muslim community. Project Safe Space has shown that extremism is an issue for young people across all communities.

3.4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

3.4.1. Local authorities have an important role to play in implementing and evaluating the Prevent programme especially as they are able to do so from that local perspective. However there are Prevent activities and programmes being developed across the third sector of which Project Safe Space is one, which are beyond the scope of local authority implementation and monitoring. These initiatives, including Project Safe Space, have developed because of community and local need and therefore consideration should be given to local authorities working in partnership with local community youth groups and youth

¹⁶ Project Safe Space National Report (2009) UKYP p.29

¹⁷ Ibid p.29

¹⁸ Ibid p.21

¹⁹ Project Safe Space National Report (2009) UKYP p.6

organisations to develop community based initiatives. The best advice and expertise will come from young people themselves yet currently as outlined in Section 3.3.3 above there are barriers to local authorities in accessing that advice.

3.4.2. However as a result of Project Safe Space there is an NSG of fourteen young people from across England, and nine regional steering groups all of whom have experience and knowledge of the Prevent programme and extremism within their own communities. They also have access to wider networks of youth organisations at national, regional and local level. The NSG adequately resourced can provide local authorities access to advice and expertise on an ongoing basis.

3.5. *Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

3.5.1. Communication of the prevent strategy to young people is poor, the biggest issue being how the Government defines terrorism and extremism. As the report states "There was little understanding of the terms 'terrorism' and 'violent extremism' amongst young people as they developed research for their events. Young people identified multiple and conflicting definitions of both terms. What became apparent was that almost all information relating to terrorism was obtained through the media, television and radio and the internet. Young people felt that little information on terrorism and extremism came from the police and Government".²⁰

3.5.2. The other issue was the means of Government communication, with young people's reliance on new media such as the internet, online social networking sites and mobile telephones. At the events themselves young people used a variety of methods to make their point—drama, podcasts and radio to name but a few. One of the report recommendations is that Project Safe Space "develop a range of new media options that support the Government and police Prevent strategies and it is recommended that they are supported to develop a national youth led new media communications strategy".²¹

3.6. *Is the Government seeking and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the Prevent programme?*

3.6.1. UKYP are of the view that young people are able to give advice in their own right and that Government should develop this to ensure the Prevent goals are met.

3.6.2. Having been successfully delivered, it is now somewhat frustrating to young people on the NSG that they cannot get continued Government support to continue their work with other young people and in particular to deliver three additional Safe Space events in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The NSG are now being approached by local authorities to deliver youth based Prevent based initiatives and yet Government appear not to be utilising advice and expertise that they have previously funded and is readily available.

3.7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

3.7.1. In terms of Project Safe Space the project was monitored on an ongoing basis by the DCSF, there was no ongoing monitoring from the Home Office OSCT.

3.7.2. The evaluation of Project Safe Space by the Government from the UKYP perspective has been non specific in terms of working with young people to see how the project could be developed to support the Government Prevent agenda. The reaction to Project Safe Space from beyond Government in terms of ACPO, local police forces and local authorities has been positive and local initiatives are being developed. There has been little response from Government with regards to the 21 recommendations from young people contained within the report. While Ministers backed the initiation of the project, they have yet to meet representatives from the NSG to discuss their findings and recommendations.

3.7.3. In addition, youth workers have asked for training in preventing extremism and ideas for a youth worker training package was being developed by UKYP, the Federation of London Youth Clubs and the National Youth Agency. The Government through the DCSF had offered to consider a bid for funding this package but recently that offer has been withdrawn without explanation. UKYP are exploring external funding options to develop such a package.

3.7.4. It would appear that an initial emphasis and focus on Prevent by the Government has now been overtaken by other priorities and the impetus initially shown has been lost. This is despite the fact that when local communities are engaged on their own terms around these issues, they both welcome the opportunity and are actively calling out for more.

²⁰ Project Safe Space National Report (2009) UKYP p.5

²¹ Ibid p.37

3.8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

3.8.1. As outlined in the Summary, young people see a direct link between community cohesion and extremism and feel the Government should create environments where extremism has little opportunity to thrive.

3.8.2. Young people want the Government to support more inter cultural and inter faith events to promote mutual understanding between and within diverse communities. This is not to promote one religion or culture above another but to bring communities together as the report notes “where young people from different communities had a better understanding of each others cultures and faiths, they found it easier to reject extremist views as their personal experiences and relationships undermined the extremists narrative”.²²

3.8.3. Whilst it is understood that distinct policy frameworks exist between different Government departments, there must be a coordinated approach through a multi agency Prevent Strategy that encompasses them all with common outcomes as advocated in section 3.1.1 above.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Whilst the tone of this submission could be seen as negative, we feel it is appropriate to reflect accurately the views collected during the project and would reiterate that the willingness of over 1000 young people across England to give their time voluntarily to Project Safe Space is an indication of the need to involve young people in discussions about extremism and those developing policy around it.

4.2. Young people are ready, willing and able to support Government in developing and delivering their Prevent strategy. Young people from the NSG would also welcome the opportunity to support the Committee’s Inquiry by providing oral evidence to the Committee if required.

September 2009

Supplementary submission from UK Youth Parliament (PVE 08A)

Thank you so much again for inviting us to present verbal evidence at the Select Committee. I spoke with the young people at length last week and there were a few issues raised about which they wanted to add clarity. They are as set out below.

DCSF AND DCLG

While we made some specific comments about DCSF, we omitted to say that DCLG were in fact a partner in our work. The work we have been delivering has involved DCLG, DCSF, the Home Office and ACPO. However, rather than that working as a strength, it’s been our experience that the inter-departmental arrangements are actually a major weakness. We made reference to this in the written evidence we submitted, and would again underline our view that the muddled way of working between departments is perhaps one of the major barriers to operational success. It was simply never clear who was in control, who could make decisions, and what the key drivers were. So while many of our conversations were directed at DCSF, DCLG officials were definitely part of the work.

ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG MUSLIMS

You asked for clarification on the numbers of young Muslims we engaged with as part of our broader, cross-community Safe Space project. We involved 730 young people directly in the conferences, and 33% of that group were young Muslims.

One clear point we want to make about reaching out the specific groups of young people—and those who have most to say on the subject and are perceived to be at risk of radicalisation—is that there is a far greater chance of success if youth groups and young people are empowered to undertake this outreach instead of the police or any other Government agency.

Many of the young people who attended our conferences were fiercely vociferous about many aspects of the Prevent programme, and in particular the relationship with the police which in essence is at the heart of any endeavour to build community confidence. Not only would those young people not wanted to have shared those views if the police had organised the conference, they would not even have been there. While supported by the Association of Police Chief Officers, we jointly made an early decision not to publicise this part of the partnership.

Again, we stress the great importance of investing in those best placed to deliver this work, rather than creating entirely new models from scratch.

As a supplementary point, there also needs to be greater understand of the varying levels of young people involvement you are likely to attract and support. We see there being four key groups:

²² Project Safe Space National Report (2009) UKYP p.6

1. *The positive leaders*

This is the growing group of young people who may have an interest in the subject and are willing to take the lead in organising discussions, listening to others, engaging with officials and lobbying for change. We consider ourselves part of this group.

2. *The expressive contributors*

These are young people who may not want to commit huge amounts of time to this agenda, but may have something valuable to say and be willing to contribute ideas useful to the development of policy. These are the type of young people who attended our Safe Space events and contributed to our surveys. Depending on where they come from these young people may also pass on the views of peers from their community, some of whom may come from the next group.

3. *The marginalised, expressive source*

Some young people perhaps on the road to radicalisation (behaviour identified in Government guidance) may do so in a vocal way, which will be picked up by their peers and others in the community.

4. *The non-expressive source*

These are young people—perhaps on the road to being radicalised but also maybe just with no interest in the subject—who will not engage with any Prevent programmes at all.

It is our view that—in thinking long-term how to address this issue, simple solitary targeting of that final group will not be successful. While obviously still putting effort into accessing that group, just as much energy needs to be invested in the other groups—in a joined up fashion. This will counter broadly-held myths surrounding terrorism and violent extremism, and build platforms for further engagement and challenging of extremism views, supported by facts and balanced understanding. Again, the more this is led by young people in the community themselves (with support from agencies), the more likely it is to succeed.

THE CHANNEL PROJECT

We would like to re-iterate our statements that we do not feel it is appropriate for teachers to be asked to spy on young people in a covert manner. A far better way would be to support and encourage them to have open discussions with young people, based on sound reasoning and using facts to dispel many of the myths which we know are prevalent in society. We know this is also an aspiration of the broader Prevent programme and would encourage greater focus on this.

We have direct experience of witnessing ACPO representatives discussing the Channel project with over a hundred youth workers at the UKYP Annual Sitting last year, and we can report that youth workers were extremely hostile to the very idea, so much so that association briefly threatened to cloud the good work we were trying to undertake on the issue. Awareness of the Channel project runs a huge risk of further damaging trust between the community and the state, and for us that trust is all-important to the ongoing success of any Prevent programme.

YOUTH WORKERS

Later on in the day we listened in to the Secretary of State's evidence, and would like to pick up on one point. He said that he very much wanted to provide greater support and guidance for youth workers to enable them to tackle these issues confidently. We would like to ask what evidence there is of that. Spurred on by the sessions we delivered with youth workers in every Government Office region, we pushed for many months for an extension of youth worker guidance, built on the firm foundation of the evidence we had gathered and the specific appeals from youth workers for more information. We tried to push this idea forward with DCSF officials for many months, but in the end were told that there was no resource in place to make this happen. We have written separately to John Denham highlighting our keenness to engage on this issue. However, it is another example of a lack of clarity on issues shared across departments.

As a final point, he also said that he wanted to provide continuity and share examples of best practice. We have to report that that is not our experience.

Memorandum from the Institute of Race Relations (PVE 10)

SUMMARY

Our research has shown that there are strong concerns among community organisations that the Preventing Violent Extremism programme may be seen as:

- constructing the whole Muslim population as a “suspect community”;
- lacking transparency and local accountability;
- fostering social divisions;

- inducing corruption and tokenism;
- facilitating violations of privacy and undermining professional norms of confidentiality;
- degrading local democracy;
- potentially counter-productive in reducing the risk of violent extremism.

We recommend a radical rethink of the government's "communities-led" approach to preventing violent extremism towards one that focuses on democratic engagement across communities.

MAIN TEXT

1. The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) was established as an independent educational charity in 1958 to carry out research, publish and collect resources on race relations throughout the world. Today, the IRR is at the cutting edge of research and analysis on issues such as community cohesion, multiculturalism, the impact of anti-terrorist legislation on human rights, deaths in the custody of the police and prisons, racial violence and the human rights of those detained or removed under immigration laws. Its work covers Britain, Europe and race relations internationally.

2. Over the last six months, the IRR has been carrying out a research project on the government's Preventing Violent Extremism programme (hereafter "Prevent"). The research project draws on existing policy and academic work, freedom of information requests, a programme of interviews and a roundtable discussion. During the course of the project, thirty-two interviews were conducted with Prevent programme managers in local authorities, members of local Prevent boards, local authority workers working on Prevent-funded projects, voluntary sector workers engaged in Prevent work and community workers familiar with local Prevent work. Half of these interviews were conducted face to face, with the rest done over the telephone. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality in order to encourage a frank expression of views. The interviewees were spread across the following towns, cities and areas of England: Birmingham, Bradford, Brent, Enfield, Islington, Leicester, Newcastle, Oldham, Preston, Reading, Rochdale, Walsall, Wakefield, Wellingborough and Wycombe. In July, a roundtable discussion event with twenty-four participants was held in Bradford to explore in more detail some of the issues that had been raised in the interviews. This submission is informed by the material collected in the course of this research project. It focuses solely on the Prevent programme in England. The IRR will be publishing a major report based on its research on Prevent in October 2009.

3. The largest funding stream which the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has made available to carry out Prevent work is its area-based grants, totalling £45 million over three years. The IRR has correlated the allocation of Prevent funding through these grants with data from the 2001 Census. This shows that funding has been allocated to every local authority area with more than 2,000 Muslim residents. Moreover, the size of the grant is closely proportional to the numbers of Muslims in the area. This indicates that, rather than targeting Prevent funding on areas according to identifiable risks, it has simply been imposed in direct proportion to the numbers of Muslims in an area. Moreover, it implies that the allocation of Prevent funding has not been driven by a local decision-making process in which local agencies identify their own needs and access central government funds accordingly. This blanket approach to funding creates an impression that the Muslim population as a whole needs to be the focus of work to prevent violent extremism, rather than specific groups or localities, and irrespective of the views of local stakeholders.

4. In our research, a number of interviewees noted that, far from being "communities-led", as the government claims, Prevent decision-making lacks transparency and accountability. It is likely to be driven by the demands of the police and central government rather than the views of local people. Decisions were seen as taking place "behind closed doors" rather than in consultation with the voluntary and community sector. Despite the statutory "duty to involve" local people in the setting of priorities for Local Area Agreements, many of our interviewees felt that NI35, the national indicator on "building communities resilient to violent extremism", had been imposed on communities without a proper discussion or awareness of the issues involved. Rather than engaging local people democratically, many local authorities seem to take the view that decisions over Prevent are best made away from public scrutiny. Some local authorities were reluctant to share with us details of what their Prevent programme involved. A number of youth workers on Prevent-funded projects are reluctant to let the young people they work with know that their project is Prevent-funded.

5. Our research into what work local authorities are actually carrying out with Prevent funding suggests that, in its early stages, most of it has been "targeted capacity building of Muslim communities", focusing particularly on young people, women and mosques. There is no doubt that the need for community development among Muslim populations is great. But serious problems arise when deprived communities with many needs are told that their voluntary sector organisations can only access the resources to meet these needs if they are willing to sign up to a counter-terrorism policing agenda. Moreover, if organisations are forced to accept Prevent money to survive, in spite of the concerns of the communities they work with, then there is a danger of alienating the very people that need to be won over and the whole exercise may become counter-productive.

6. Community cohesion has had a number of meanings since it was introduced as a policy programme following the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the summer of 2001. The government rhetoric with which it was associated at birth indicated that it was a declaration of the end of multiculturalism and an assertion that Asians, Muslims in particular, would have to develop “a greater acceptance of the principal national institutions” and assimilate to “core British values”. At a local level, however, the language of community cohesion has occasionally been used for more progressive projects that united across communities to address shared issues of deprivation.

7. Prevent has undermined any progressive element within community cohesion and absorbed from the cohesion agenda those parts which are most problematic. Initially, Prevent funding allowed some projects to continue doing progressive cross-community work. But, more recently, Prevent, with its focus on a single group, has undermined this aspect of the cohesion agenda. Often the relationship between a local authority and its Muslim citizens is conducted through the very same structures of ‘community gatekeepers’ which the community cohesion agenda had identified as being problematic and divisive. The developmental needs of Muslim communities are, it appears, being trumped by the need for “reliable” partners in relation to Prevent. While cross-community work in the name of cohesion has suffered, the ideas of “shared values” and Britishness—a powerful strand within the cohesion agenda—have been strengthened by Prevent. This has been especially the case since the publication in March 2009 of the government’s revised counter-terrorism strategy, Contest 2. This aspect of the community cohesion agenda, which is seen as a one-sided demand to assimilate to ill-defined values of Britishness, has alienated many Muslims.

8. Many of our interviewees asked why there was not a wider programme of preventing extremism across all communities. In our research, we have been unable to document any evidence of practical Prevent work at community level that is not directed at Muslims. In August 2009, updated guidance for local Prevent partners was published by the government which seemed to signal a recognition that “violent far right groups” should also be taken seriously. It remains unclear what form this shift in emphasis will take in practice. In a bid to gain acceptance, some local authorities already present their Prevent programmes as working across communities to create “cohesion”. One local authority, for example, has rebranded its Prevent programme as “Building a stronger and united West London: working with Muslim communities”. Whatever the wording, so long as the projects funded are actually directed at Muslims, with other communities involved only insofar as it is necessary to support the core objective of a “hearts and minds” campaign among Muslims, the fundamental problem of a discriminatory agenda will remain.

9. There is strong evidence that Prevent-funded services are being used for information gathering by the police and that the line between the Prevent strand and the investigative “Pursue” strand of the government’s Contest counter-terrorism strategy is being blurred in a way that is counter-productive. In practice, a major part of the Prevent programme is the embedding of counter-terrorism police officers within the delivery of other local services. The primary motive for this is to facilitate the gathering of intelligence on Muslim communities, to identify areas, groups and individuals that are “at risk”, as well as more general police engagement with the Muslim community to manage perceptions of grievances. The extent to which counter-terrorism police officers are now embedded in local government is illustrated by the fact that a West Midlands Police counter-terrorism officer has been permanently seconded to the equalities department of Birmingham City Council to manage its Prevent work.

10. Prevent-funded voluntary sector organisations and workers in local authorities are becoming increasingly wary of the expectations on them to act as providers of information to the police. Many of our interviewees were unclear as to who had access to the data they collected in their Prevent work. A youth project manager we spoke to said: “If there are specific individuals at risk you would support them anyway out of a duty of care. But the local Prevent Board is asking for a more general map of Muslim communities. I make confidentiality promises to young people, which I shouldn’t break unless it is a matter of child protection or a criminal act.” As a number of interviewees pointed out, the imposition of information sharing requirements on teachers and youth, community and cultural workers undercuts professional norms of confidentiality. Moreover, it will be impossible to generate the trust that the government sees as one of the aims of Prevent if there is any suspicion that local services have a hidden agenda.

11. A key aspect of Prevent is the cultivation of “moderate Muslims” through “targeted capacity building” and government backing. The aim is to elevate “moderate Muslims” to becoming the strongest voices in Muslim communities, able to lead a campaign of promoting “shared values” and isolating the “extremists”. For Muslim organisations that are able to present themselves as “moderate”, significant financial and symbolic resources are being offered by central and local government. The danger is that the distinction between “moderate” and “extremist” is flexible enough to be exploited, either by government, to castigate anyone who is critical of its policies, or by voluntary sector organisations, to access resources. In the former case, government, by designating critics of Prevent as themselves “extremists”, ends up counter-productively creating “extremists” where previously there were none. In the latter case, opportunities for corruption and tokenism become rife. We found many examples of both problems in our research.

12. An additional problem arises from the perception that the government is sponsoring Muslim organisations on the basis of theological criteria—for example, holding Sufis to be intrinsically more moderate than Salafis. Such an approach violates the secular separation of “church” and state, even though such a separation is itself upheld by the government as a marker of “moderation” which Muslims should aspire to. The use of government funding to promote a “correct interpretation” of religious texts is fraught

with dangers, irrespective of the theological merits of any such interpretation. As Asma Jahangir, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, pointed out in her 2008 report on the UK, "it is not the Government's role to look for the "true voices of Islam" or of any other religion or belief. ... The contents of a religion or belief should be defined by the worshippers themselves."

13. The government has failed to adequately consider analyses of radicalisation which downplay the role of religion. For example, the leading French scholar of Islamism, Olivier Roy, has argued that violent radicalisation has little to do with religious practice, while radical theology does not of itself lead to violence. It is more productive, he says, to understand al Qaida in Europe as a modern youth movement that radicalises through a narrative of heroic violence and anti-imperialist politics rather than a religious ideology. On this view, it is irrelevant to counter radicalisation by providing an ideological or theological alternative. To promote a "moderate" Islam against al Qaida's "bad Islam" would be counter-productive as it elevates al Qaida's narrative to a religious phenomenon.

14. The Prevent agenda is tightly integrated with a policing agenda and so the allocation of the DCLG area-based grants to every area with more than 2,000 Muslims amounts to a form of religious profiling that is inconsistent with commitments to racial and religious equality. In focusing on all areas with more than 2,000 Muslims, because it wants to mobilise all these persons against "extremism", the government is constructing the Muslim population as a "suspect community". The failure of Muslim individuals or organisations to comply with this mobilisation makes them suspicious in the eyes of the counter-terrorist system. In fact, Muslims may want to avoid participating in the government's Prevent programme for a number of reasons which have nothing to do with support for extremism—for example, concerns about surveillance, transparency, accountability or local democracy.

15. The atmosphere promoted by Prevent is one in which to make radical criticisms of the government is to risk losing funding and facing isolation as an "extremist", while those organisations which echo back the government's own political line are rewarded with large sums of public money. A number of our interviewees argued that the problem with this state of affairs is that it undermines exactly the kind of radical discussions of political issues that would need to occur if young people are to be won over and support for illegitimate political violence diminished. The current emphasis of Prevent on depoliticising young people and restricting radical dissent is actually counter-productive because it strengthens the hands of the extremists who say democracy is pointless. What needs to happen is that young people feel that there are democratic spaces where radical criticisms can be productively made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. "Extremism" is a vague concept that is easily exploited to demonise anyone whose opinions are radically different. The real issue is support for, or use of, illegitimate violence to achieve political ends. As a first step, there needs to be a recognition that this is a problem across all communities that takes many forms, including white racist violence.

17. Teachers, social, youth and cultural workers must have the integrity of their professional norms protected against the expectation that they become the ears and eyes of the counter-terrorist police. It is wholly counter-productive to turn public services into instruments of surveillance. Such an approach only serves to alienate young people from institutional settings that would otherwise be well-placed to give them a sense of trust and belonging.

18. The specific needs of different communities for local services and community development should be recognised as valid in their own right and met on their own terms. Muslim citizens should not be forced into accepting a discriminatory and divisive counter-terrorist programme as a condition for enjoying their rights to access basic services.

19. The government should refrain from any attempt to promote one particular interpretation of Islam. The interpretation of Islam is a matter for Muslims themselves and government should not promote particular sectarian or theological interests over any other through "targeted capacity building".

20. The focus of Prevent work on all areas with over 2,000 Muslims is discriminatory and counter-productive. Instead central government funding should be available to any local area which, through a genuine process of local decision-making, independently identifies a need to win individuals away from support for illegitimate political violence.

21. Al Qaida-type violence should not be arbitrarily separated from other problems of violence among young people. Solutions to the problem of youth violence/extremism will be most effective and fair if they meet the following conditions:

- (a) Young people need to be empowered to engage politically and contribute to society, not made to feel that their opinions have to meet with official approval. The creation of spaces for genuinely open discussion about difficult political issues is crucial.
- (b) The impact of racism, Islamophobia, social exclusion and everyday violence on the well-being of young people needs to be recognised. The terrors that young people experience in their everyday lives involve bullying, taunting, victimisation and harassment from peers at school, local gangs, police, community support workers, the media and, in some cases, members of their own families. The threat of "international terrorism" is real. But to reduce terror and extremism to al Qaida

alone, and to skew the whole status of Muslims in Britain into responding to it, is likely to be seen as an unwarranted and arbitrary choice of central government, rather than something that is democratically rooted, let alone “community-led”.

- (c) The minutes of all decision-making meetings in the local authority, local strategic partnership or Prevent Board should be published along with exact details of what has been funded, which organisations are carrying out the work, what funds they have been allocated and how it will be evaluated.

22. The credibility of empowerment work with young people can only be ensured if there is a separation of activities of this kind from the police, including obligations to share information beyond the basic requirements of child protection and prevention of specific criminal acts.

September 2009

Memorandum from the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (PVE 11)

CLG COMMITTEE INTO “PREVENT”

SUMMARY

- The nature of the Prevent agenda has meant that new strategies and interventions have had to be developed at speed.
- The Government’s approach in supporting locally-relevant strategies is welcomed, but it must be accepted that this reduces the potential for standard or easily measured outcomes.
- Consequently, the evaluation framework for this programme is perceived as being under-developed.
- Considerable care should be taken in communicating messages relating to the Prevent agenda, and in particular when attempting to rebut “myths”—experience has shown that this will not be achieved by simply circulating key messages.
- Further work is required to place Prevent work more effectively within the community cohesion agenda.

1. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

1.1 The Government has rightly recognised that the bulk of its engagement with communities in relation to the Prevent agenda can only be carried out at a very local level, through local government and its partners.

1.2 The benefit of this approach is that it can be targeted towards local need and circumstances. The unavoidable risk is that there is a lack of visibility as to whether all relevant groups are being engaged with.

1.3 This is further complicated where communities are rapidly changing. In authorities such as Tower Hamlets and the northwest and east where muslim communities are well established, the profile of local communities is well known and can be readily understood. In a borough such as Barking and Dagenham, where it is estimated that the BME population has increased from approximately 15% in 2001 to around 25% at present, to be able to identify and engage with the relevant communities is highly challenging. More up-to-date demographic information than that provided by the 2001 census would assist in this work.

2. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

2.1 When the Prevent strategy was first launched there was very little advice and expertise available on the implementation of the programme. Over the last 18 months this provision has developed, but it is still limited, and is not always relevant to local circumstances, since most advice is forthcoming from areas which have experienced significant PVE challenges. The development of a proportionate, risk-based approach therefore remains a challenge.

2.2 Very limited advice and expertise has been forthcoming in relation to the evaluation of PVE programmes. The recent self-assessment framework for National Indicator 35 was very usefully supplemented by guidance produced by a London Borough and shared more widely.

2.3 Greater clarity from the Government about the objectives of the Prevent programme has emerged over the last 18 months, which has assisted in achieving a greater focus on required areas of work, but, due to the nature of the objectives, it will remain difficult to demonstrate a clear link between cause and effect—particularly that by employing X interventions, no violent extremism has emerged from a particular locality.

3. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

3.1 The objectives of the Prevent agenda have now been communicated effectively to those officers who lead its implementation (this was not always the case).

3.2 However, there remains the question as to how effectively the objectives of the Prevent agenda have been communicated to the muslim and wider communities. Recent efforts by the Government to represent and refocus the Prevent agenda are unlikely to overcome negative impressions about the programme already implanted in both muslim and indigenous communities.

3.3 In Barking and Dagenham we have done considerable work to understand the prerequisites of effective conversations with local residents—which includes building up trust, empathy and respect, before one can hope to discuss “myths” on any topic. The Government’s continued tactic of disseminating briefings which state the Government’s position on matters relating to the Prevent agenda are unlikely to change the opinions of anyone who is not already favourably disposed to the Government on this matter without considerable work to build that trust.

3.4 Furthermore, guidance on good practice in mythbusting, which has been borne out in light of experience in Barking and Dagenham, shows that stating and re-stating the facts is not only ineffective, but can be counter-productive in an environment where there is disaffection and alienation, and extremist politics are gaining traction.

4. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

4.1 Please see the response given at paragraph two above to the availability of expertise on how to evaluate the programme. From a local authority perspective, there has been little visibility of Government evaluation of the effectiveness or value for money of the programme, or reactions to it.

5. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

5.1 There is clear differentiation between Prevent work and cohesion and integration frameworks. The concern is rather at the lack of joining-up across policies: many of the problems which have arisen from the Prevent programme could have been addressed if the Prevent work had been considered in light of the wider cohesion agenda from the beginning. Similarly, as the Prevent strategy is developed, there is no sign that it is developed in light of developing cohesion guidance or initiatives.

5.2 The lack of joining-up is also an issue within the Prevent agenda: what appear to be arbitrary security restrictions on documentation have acted as a barrier to information sharing and joined-up working with the police in the context of otherwise excellence collaborative working between the police and local authority.

September 2009

Memorandum from Oxfam (PVE 12)

Oxfam submission to Department for Communities and Local Government new inquiry and call for evidence issued in the session 2008–09, dated 21 July 2009

1. Oxfam is responding to the inquiry into *Prevent*, the Government’s programme for preventing violent extremism, its effectiveness to date, and likely effectiveness in the future. Oxfam wants to see greater awareness of the unintended negative impact of *Prevent*, which we evidence below, and a greater focus in underlying cohesion policy on tackling poverty and deprivation.

2. As a humanitarian organisation mandated to alleviate poverty and suffering, Oxfam opposes any violations of civilian human rights, including through conspicuous atrocity such as terrorism. We speak out strongly against extremism because it is likely to generate hatred. Oxfam works to overcome poverty in the UK in three ways. We develop projects with people living in poverty to improve their lives and show how things can change. We raise public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change. And we work with policy makers to tackle the causes of poverty. Oxfam works with ethnic minority communities, particularly women’s groups in the North of England and has recently been awarded £500 thousand from Communities and Local Government to support the empowerment of poor BME communities.

3. The risk of being in poverty is higher for BME communities than it is for the majority white population in the UK. It is highest for the Bangladeshi and Pakistani population (59% of whom are in poverty, and most of whom are Muslim) compared to 19% of the white population.²³ This poverty remains persistent, caused by structural barriers and discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities in the labour market, with low financial assets, living in areas of deprivation.

²³ *Financial Inclusion and Ethnicity*, Runnymede Trust, 2008

4. Oxfam is responding to this inquiry because we believe that the unintended poverty consequences of *Prevent* and wider cohesion policy are significant and widespread, increasing the sense of injustice felt by BME communities, the inequality they experience, and make their poverty worse. Our submission explains the dimensions of these unintended consequences and how they work. Our knowledge is based on our programme experience, and on research conducted together with our partners²⁴ on the negative impact of community cohesion policy on their beneficiaries. In Oxfam's view competition for funding, and failure to tackle public perceptions can contribute to lack of cohesion and provide the breeding ground for discontent and extremism.

5. The unintended effects of *Prevent* fall into three areas. The first is the impact of cuts in funding to organisations working in poor ethnic minority communities, as part of a shift away from "single group" funding and towards community cohesion. The second is the discrimination experienced by ethnic minority communities because of the targeting of Muslims by *Prevent*. The third is the way in which ethnic minority women may become more vulnerable because *Prevent* and cohesion policy puts more power and authority into the hands of religious leaders and interfaith networks.

6. In the first area, Oxfam is concerned about the impact of cutting funding to race equality organizations, such as those supporting Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, as part of the move to community cohesion and *Prevent* policy. In a series of interviews in Oldham *Peacemaker* revealed that funding was diverted to mainstream organizations who did not pick up the support needs of those communities when the race equality organizations closed, leaving people from deprived communities worse off, heightening their poverty and exclusion.

"The Afro-Caribbean project worked to meet the needs of the community in Oldham for many years, working with service users to overcome the disadvantage and poverty they faced. The project was very successful in getting black boys into education, training, and even jobs. Now funding has been cut and no-one is providing that comprehensive service to young black boys in Oldham".²⁵

*The Bangladeshi community is one of the poorest in the borough and the association offered a range of advice and support services to the community with appropriate language support and cultural understanding which enabled the association to meet their needs. "What has happened to all those needs? They are just not being met by other services."*²⁶

7. In the second area, Oxfam believes government should be alert to the way in which cohesion policy has multiple detrimental impacts on the BME community. Muslim communities feel that both the problem of extremism and its solutions are laid at their door. The way the public perceive Muslims as a result adds to the racism and discrimination they experience, deepening their sense of alienation when combined with the experience of living in poor areas and receiving poor services, which fail to target "*unemployment, segregation and poor achievement in schools, and access to housing in mixed developments*".²⁷

8. BME communities in Bradford, for example, reported in research by *Just West Yorkshire*, feel that the *Prevent* agenda carries with it a limited view failing to encompass the activities of right-wing white extremists. The *Just West Yorkshire* research for Oxfam found that people from white estates in Bradford have little or no knowledge of community cohesion or *Prevent* policy, and do not believe it applies to them. By focusing primarily on the perceived threat from Muslims, the *Prevent* policy has unwittingly created a strong sense of injustice that is likely to run counter to the involvement of BME communities within the *Prevent* agenda which the government seeks.

9. In the third area, Oxfam is concerned about the negative effects of the *Prevent* agenda on BME women. Our partner *Southall Black Sisters* researched the impact of community cohesion policy on their beneficiaries experiencing domestic violence. The way in which the *Prevent* and community cohesion agenda funds religious organizations, accompanied by cuts in funding to specialist women's organizations, increase the vulnerability of BME women. Interviews conducted by *Southall Black Sisters* report how women feel caught between the demands of religion and family. They need advice from professionals to secure their own safety and rights to protection as women under British law, and the role of specialist women's organizations in getting them out of danger, is critical. In Oxfam's view the risks for vulnerable women in cutting funding is an unacceptable result of cohesion and *Prevent* policy, and warrants further research and examination.

10. Oxfam believes that the government should ensure that *Prevent* is adequately monitored and evaluated to achieve a better picture of its impact on communities. Government Departments acknowledge this,²⁸ stating that defining and measuring success in *Prevent* is an "under-developed" area. Oxfam has been unable to identify published information on what indicators of success are being used for *Prevent*, or any evidence of significant evaluation. We urge national and local government to commission solid work on evidence baselines for anti-extremism initiatives that focus on poverty and deprivation as well as perceptions of who works well together. We would like to see a thorough evaluation of the impact on communities, both intended and unintended, of *Prevent*.

²⁴ Peacemaker, Just West Yorkshire, and Southall Black Sisters

²⁵ Oxfam Interview with community leader in Oldham, facilitated by Peacemaker

²⁶ Oxfam Interview with community leader in Oldham, facilitated by Peacemaker

²⁷ *Perspectives on community cohesion in Bradford: a comparative analysis of two neighbourhoods*, Ratna Lachman and Alyas Karmani, Just West Yorkshire, 2009

²⁸ *Preventing Violent Extremism: learning and development exercise*, October 2008, HMIC and Audit Commission

11. The police acknowledge that information from communities accessible to public bodies is patchy. The most recent guidance from Communities and Local Government on mainstreaming cohesion across public services indicates that there is still insufficient connection between mainstream services (housing, funding for leisure facilities, jobs etc), and cohesion initiatives. This failure to gather the right information, or to join up services, leaves a question mark over the effectiveness of the £100 million investment in the *Prevent* programme, both in its own terms, and in relation to the unintended effects outlined here.

12. Oxfam suggests that if this money was invested in mainstream services for deprived areas and groups with better and more housing, improvement to public spaces, and employment services, this would make a measurable difference in addressing the causes of extremism which often lie in poverty and legitimate dissatisfaction.

13. Oxfam is concerned that as part of the *Prevent* agenda, local decision-makers are not talking to the right people and therefore may not be getting the information or advice they need to support anti-poverty work. Our connection with BME organizations leads us to believe that better connections need to be made with organizations working directly with communities in poor areas, and that government should be more aware of the damage to its own reputation in these communities caused by *Prevent*. As a result some organisations with relevant and timely information could be unwilling to share this with the relevant authorities.

14. In conclusion, Oxfam wants to see greater awareness of the unintended negative impact of *Prevent*, and a greater focus in underlying cohesion policy on tackling poverty and deprivation. We have provided evidence here that this is the case, and will be happy to give further evidence. Community cohesion policy has the potential, to reduce conflict and increase of the well-being of BME communities. However the *Prevent* agenda, with its primary focus on rooting out extremism, is increasing mistrust and a sense of grievance in BME communities.

September 2009

Memorandum from Dr. Paul Thomas, University of Huddersfield (PVE 13)

SUMMARY

This Submission argues that, as it is currently constituted, the Prevent programme is not the most effective way of addressing the undoubted problem of the attraction to violent extremist ideologies of a minority of young people, and that, indeed, there is real likelihood of Prevent having a counter-productive impact through working in contradiction to the overarching policy goals of cohesion and integration. Here, it is argued that there should be less distinction between Prevent and Cohesion, rather than more, in terms of educational interventions with young people. This argument is based on significant primary research around work with young people in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester, not only around Prevent itself, but also around the impact of community cohesion programmes, the understandings of “Identity” held by young people, and previous attempts to operationalise “anti-racist” educational programmes amongst white young people attracted to violent racist ideologies. This primary research shows Prevent programmes to be working with large numbers of Muslim young people in monocultural settings without effectively engaging with the actual issues and perceptions driving the groundswell of support for extremist ideologies. Not only is this counter to the goals of, and positive evidence around, community cohesion programmes, but it runs the real risk of creating a further “backlash” amongst some alienated white young people. Here, the recent decision to “extend” Prevent to far-right “extremism” is helpful, but still does not address the root problems of a mis-constructed policy (“Government ‘Prevent’ strategy widened to combat rightwing racism”, *The Guardian*, 9 September, 2009).

BACKGROUND DETAILS

I am a Senior Lecturer in Youth and Community Work at the University of Huddersfield, with many of our Youth Work students working and living in key areas, such as Dewsbury and Batley (Kirklees), Halifax (Calderdale), Bradford, Leeds, Oldham and Rochdale. My previous professional roles have included being a Youth Policy and Campaigns officer for the Commission for Racial Equality in the north of England, and work with white young people and football fans around racism and violence. In particular, this submission summarises evidence from the evaluation I carried out of the initial phases of the Prevent Pathfinder activity in Kirklees (Thomas, 2008), my wider examination of Prevent activity (Thomas, 2009), my recent research in to the understandings of national and personal “Identity” held by young people in Oldham and Rochdale (Thomas and Sanderson, 2009), and my in-depth examination of the impact of Community Cohesion programmes with young people in Oldham (Thomas, 2007).

1. It is clear from my own local evaluation (Thomas, 2008) and national mapping (DCLG, 2008) that the initial phases of Prevent work aimed at young people have worked with significant numbers of Muslim young people on a monocultural, “single group” basis only—this is a programme aimed at Muslim young people. Whilst agreeing that suggestions of blanket bans on any type of “single group” funding or activity was an unhelpful and clumsy interpretation of the Commission on Cohesion and Integration’s discussions (DCLG, 2008), I feel this approach of Prevent is problematic in a number of ways. The problems and

possible unintended consequences of such “single group” educational programmes are explored below, as are problems with the actual content of these programmes. In contrast, the submission suggests that we already have clear evidence about the success and efficacy of Community Cohesion work aimed at ethnically and socially-mixed groups of young people in terms of helping to build positive attitudes and more inclusive, over-arching identities, but Prevent work nationally is currently ignoring this evidence, and is so working in contradiction rather than in coherent partnership.

2. It is clear that the Government’s underpinning strategy (Home Office, 2005) on belonging and identity is rightly working towards the strengthening of common and inclusive national identity and affiliation that overlays any specific community, faith or ethnic identities and affiliations, but this perspective is not currently identifiable within Prevent work with young people. By working with Muslim young people only in monocultural settings, all other forms of identity and connection with others are effectively ignored. Our own recent research on identity amongst young people in Oldham and Rochdale (Thomas and Sanderson, 2009) identified that young people of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin do indeed overwhelmingly see “Muslim” as the form of identity most important to them, but they also had positive local identities and were very clear that Muslim identity is not incompatible with, or problematic, towards “Britishness”. This is positive and important evidence, but we did also find that many of these Muslim young people were using their faith-based identity to make very negative and prejudiced moral judgments on the lifestyles and priorities of non-Muslims, with some of this expressed in crude and aggressive terms. Such feelings found a clear parallel in many of the white young people we surveyed, who displayed a racially-based territorial defensiveness and aggression to non-white “others”. These racialised, faith-based and mutually antagonistic understandings of identities found in our research echo the Community Cohesion analysis (Cantle, 2001) that has led to a welcome re-orientation of public policy over recent years, and leads me to have real concerns that the type of monocultural approach of Prevent could harden and re-enforce the negative and antagonistic aspects of singular Muslim identity for young people living in tense and divided areas. Such programmes are taking place in a public context where many young Muslims rightly feel that their faith and communities are being stigmatised by outsiders, with the danger that a programme squarely targeting them solely as young Muslims will fuel such feelings.

3. The problematic nature of the monocultural Prevent programme is exacerbated by the fact that currently the programmes do not focus squarely on issues, concerns and events that seem to be driving some young Muslims towards more extreme ideological interpretations, or even to violence. Whilst the more recent “Channel” programmes of developing work with individuals deemed to be at risk of radicalisation are a welcome and targeted addition to policy approaches, the more broad-based programmes are avoiding discussion of local or international political issues, or of religious interpretation, instead opting for what is often simply general youth activities but for Muslims only. Such avoidance is understandable for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is clearly great concern amongst Muslim communities around any programmes that, in name or content, imply that their community or faith has a generalised problem with “violent extremism”. My own research has found a studious avoidance of use of terms like PVE, something now accepted by recent government guidance, but which heightens the dangers of such programmes appearing to be dishonest and disingenuous about their real purpose and funding source. Secondly, my research (Thomas, 2008) clearly found that practitioners and managers feel unskilled and unprepared to engage with young people around such controversial and emotive subjects, as well as feeling that they have not been authorised to engage with young people and communities on such subjects. Such a finding echoes findings of previous research carried out by the University of Huddersfield (CRE, 1999; Thomas, 2002) that many teachers and youth workers charged with carrying out programmes of “anti-racist” educational work with white young people avoided such engagement, or adopted a “do as I say” approach, because they personally felt ill-equipped and unconfident about such work in the face of sometimes overt racial prejudices and opinions from some young people. There is clearly a disjuncture between the stated national aims of the Prevent educational activity and the reality of much of its content—much of it is positive and diversionary youth activity, but it is not Prevent activity in any meaningful sense and contains the problematic contradictions explored in this submission. This has been exacerbated by the very limited external evaluation of the programmes (DLGG, 2008) to date. Whilst more recent guidance on evaluation (DCLG, 2009) is helpful, it arguably still understates the importance of genuinely independent evaluation by the many agencies such as Universities equipped to do such research.

4. As well as the possible impacts the current Prevent activity is having on the self-identity of young Muslim people, there is a real risk that the programme is adding further fuel to feelings of “unfairness” amongst some white young people and their communities. This feeling has been well-documented by academic researchers such as Hewitt (1996; 2005) over the past 15 years, with the sometimes clumsy implementation of well-intentioned equal opportunities policies and anti-racist educational measures provoking a “white backlash” from some white working class young people who feel that there is little regard or respect for their own backgrounds and community traditions. A key element of this has been perceptions around funding schemes dedicated specifically to ethnic minority communities, with such, often unfounded, beliefs in favouritism seen as a crucial ingredient in the 2001 violent, racially-charged disturbances in the northern towns and cities of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). The resulting discussion around “single group” funding has been highlighted above, but it is clear from my own research in Oldham and Rochdale that perceptions of “funding favouritism” run deep amongst some white working class young people at a time of very difficult economic circumstances and of active agitation by far-right

political groups whose stock-in-trade is lies and half-truths about governmental approaches to non-white ethnic minority communities. In this context, the extension of Prevent to white communities affected by far-right political extremism is a welcome recognition that violent political extremism is not confined to one ethnic or faith group, as witnessed by the number of explosives and conspiracy charges involving far-right activists over recent years. However, monocultural work with white young people only would repeat the failing of existing Prevent work with young Muslims detailed above, and do little to help young people re-examine the “taken for granted” views, identities and assumptions within their communities, as well as make all sorts of questionable assumptions regarding what actually drives and causes any sympathy they apparently have for extremist and racist right-wing positions.

5. In contrast to the very questionable assumptions underpinning much of the current Prevent educational work with young people, and the very scant evidence regarding positive impacts flowing from such work despite significant national funding streams, there is clear and positive evidence at a local level about the positive impacts on young people’s attitudes and behaviour from programmes of Community Cohesion work based around cross-ethnic contact and work. A more general discussion around Community Cohesion is not the focus of this call for evidence, but the Committee did pose the question, “*Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*”. The evidence discussed above of the monocultural nature of Prevent work argues that Prevent activity is not just differentiated but contradictory to community cohesion activity. My own in-depth study of the impact of community cohesion youth work activity with young people in Oldham, Greater Manchester (Thomas, 2007) highlights the very significant changes to the assumptions and priorities of youth work brought about in Oldham by this new policy priority of cohesion, and the extremely positive response to cohesion from both youth workers and young people of all ethnic backgrounds. This positive evidence suggests, I would argue, that we need to question whether any meaningful distinction between cohesion and Prevent work with young people is actually helpful and effective. Bluntly, if community cohesion is rightly a key policy priority, and actual community cohesion work with young people in racially tense areas is successful and well-received, which my research suggests it is, what is the evidence base for suggesting that monocultural work with significant numbers of Muslim young people is an effective way of addressing violent extremist attitudes and actions of a small number of those young people? To date, much Prevent work has produced no meaningful evidence of success on its own stated terms.

Youth Work agencies in Oldham have reacted to the post-2001 focus on Community Cohesion by recasting their priorities and work plans. My research found that they had prioritised cross-ethnic contact amongst young people in all the work they did, not just in projects focussed on equality and diversity, but in all their mainstream, arts, sports and outdoor activities. Their aim here has been to make contact with, and respect for, diversity of all types central to all their work with young people, utilising “twinning arrangements” between youth projects, residential trips, and regular town-wide youth festivals and projects. The focus has not only been on improved contact between white and Asian young people, but between able-bodied and disabled/learning disability young people, rural and urban areas, and different geographical areas seen as having “territorial” disputes between their respective young people. In doing this, this new community cohesion-based youth work has utilised the key principles of what is known as “contact theory” (Hewstone *et al*, 2007). Here, none of the young people have been asked to deny their existing community identity, with vital preparation done in their own local, monocultural settings. The cross-ethnic contact has been carried out regularly and over time, to allow relationships to build naturally and safely, with fun and shared youth activities used as a platform to enable dialogue about difference and identities to develop informally and naturally, rather than “forcing” it through programmes overtly about “racism” or “violent extremism”. Both youth workers and young people involved have reacted positively because this process works on the basis of what they have in common as young people living in Oldham, with common interest in having fun and new experiences. In particular, youth workers have welcomed this community cohesion work, with its emphasis on commonality and fun, as being much more effective than previous programmes of “anti-racist” work, which were delivered in monocultural settings and which appeared closer to formal, school-type lessons, in stark contrast to the enjoyable and challenging experiential community cohesion activities shared with others.

In conclusion, this submission argues for a significantly reduced differentiation between current Prevent educationally-based activities and community cohesion activity. Smaller-scale, targeted work with young Muslims viewed at risk of radicalisation, through the “Channel” approach, is undoubtedly needed, but large-scale, unfocussed and monocultural work with significant numbers of Muslim young people is not only not effective, but arguably counter-productive in terms of actually strengthening separate identities and damaging efforts to promote community cohesion. Instead, the submission draws on a range of recent empirical research by the University of Huddersfield to argue that the helpful extension of the programme to include far-right violent extremism should be used as an opportunity to fundamentally re-cast Prevent activities towards a cohesion basis, whereby opposition to and collective resilience against violent political extremism of all kinds is built through funding youth activities that develop cross-ethnic contact, dialogue and respect, and which strengthen common local and national identities.

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- September 2009
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Memorandum from International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion, University of Central Lancashire (PVE 14)

1. This submission draws on ISCRI’s recent academic work²⁹ specifically on the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda in England. Key points include:

- Alienation of Muslim communities by the single-community focus of *Prevent*.
 - Counter-productive effect of increasing vulnerability to radicalisation of such a focus.
 - Unreliability of religiosity as an indicator for radicalisation.
 - Need for accelerated work on community cohesion and identity as a viable tool *versus* discrimination and radicalisation.
 - Factors in some individuals’ vulnerability: discrimination, socio-economic disadvantage, intellectual radicalisation.
 - An invigorated drive to tackle deprivation and disadvantage reflect changes in the thrust of U.S. policy to combat violent extremism globally.
 - Need for intervention by trusted local social capital—both religious and community with street credibility.
 - More meaningful use of credible local social capital which is also capacity built and supported.
 - The state, local authority and their partners should provide community with advice and support but avoiding a dominant lead in mobilising community contributions.
 - Treat and present the problem of violent radicalisation as part of the wider crime and community safety agenda around which all communities share common ground and those vulnerable can be targeted more effectively by credible community intermediaries.
 - Focus by the police in *Pursue* rather than *Prevent*.
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²⁹ References are cited in this submission to provide supporting evidence of key points which we hope prove helpful, rather than a distraction to the flow of the narrative.

2. Evidence is provided from two principal sources. First, a detailed and major research-engagement programme (Community Engagement Pathfinder Programme) in London, commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and led by ISCRI itself; and second, academic consideration of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and associated issues from published critiques more widely. Together this evidence reinforces significant criticisms of the *Prevent* programme to date and includes some remedial suggestions.

3. The review acknowledges how *Prevent* seeks to achieve substantial and productive interaction and engagement with citizens for the purposes of prevention, as part of the government's wider counter terrorism strategy, which is articulated in *Contest* (HM Government, 2009).

4. However, ISCRI research and review would indicate that in important respects this has been flawed in its inception and unsuccessful in both design and implementation. The *Prevent* strategy has proven unpopular and indeed, counter-productive in alienating the very community that it seeks to engage and influence positively, unwittingly heightening potential vulnerabilities to radicalisation by terrorist propaganda.

5. Evidence from the ISCRI managed research programme in London (McDonald *et al*, 2008),³⁰ commissioned by MPS, illuminates a set of issues, critical to the *Prevent* agenda. First, the source of primary data from within affected communities themselves is particularly important, given the acknowledged tendency on counter-terrorism research for reliance usually on state-based perspectives and secondary sources (Breen Smyth, 2007; Jackson, 2007).

6. ISCRI led this programme in 2007-08 in five London Boroughs in order to get a better understanding, particularly of Muslim and other faith communities in the capital, their needs and concerns around issues of policing, crime and community safety. In-depth qualitative primary data was gathered from over 1,100 local people from Black and minority ethnic communities, conventionally deemed as "hard-to-reach" by authorities but who took part enthusiastically in the project through ISCRI's model of engagement; the cohort of respondents' average age was under 30 years with a roughly 50:50 male-female split. Respondents highlighted violent extremism as a particular concern and in-depth testimony was gathered on this specific issue, using community peer-led research methods, with a model of engagement pioneered by ISCRI, from 10 different Muslim ethnicities. In leading and supporting the research programme, ISCRI had to overcome significant obstacles in providing communities with the confidence, capacity and willingness to participate in what they considered at the outset as an especially sensitive and controversial field of enquiry for them and concerns about involvement in a police originated project. This serves to highlight the richness and value of the evidence derived from those directly affected by *Prevent* and as a source to inform policy.

7. Community respondents provided opinion individually and anonymously both on factors that underpinned vulnerability to recruitment/attraction to causes of radicalised violence; and their recommendations for mitigating and preventing that recruitment/attraction. Muslim respondents acknowledged the problem of Al-Qaida influenced terrorism, at the same time as universally condemning it.

8. Their testimony pointed to how no single causal factor predominated and that there was no simple stereotype of a terrorist recruit—factors can influence different individuals in different ways but with a similar outcome. Contributory factors to vulnerability included:

- Long-standing structural factor of deprivation.
- Persistent experience of discrimination.
- Increases in Islamophobic attacks and hate crime.
- Causes were not always around issues of poverty or poor integration in mainstream society.
- Frequent mention was made of two specific tools used by extremist recruiters: a focus on perceived injustices associated with western foreign policy; and, a focus on a perceived distortion of the Islamic faith to suit personal and political agendas.

9. The ISCRI programme had a strong solution focus to the engagement programme and community participants offered the following as recommendations for mitigating and preventing recruitment into causes of violent extremism:

- Consistent support for an all-community approach to the problem rather than one which even implicitly focused predominantly on the Muslim community(ies).
- A focus on commonly held values of tolerance, citizenship and cohesion was one which demanded an all-community rather than a singular-community emphasis.
- The threat from violent extremism was a criminal act that needed diffusing from what respondents saw as inappropriate religious connotation and one that affected society as a whole.
- The challenges and causal risk from discrimination and Islamophobia demanded an all-community response.
- The challenges and causal risk from deprivation and lack of social/economic opportunity also demanded an all-community response.

³⁰ Reports enclosed with submission to CLG Select Committee.

- Advocacy for citizenship and cohesion to be promoted in Islamic contexts rather than as secular concepts and consistent with the dynamics of Muslim communities.
- Faith-based interventions to challenge extremist messages according to different community preferences.
- Facilitation of internal debate, discussion and involvement for all communities.
- Genuine engagement of grass roots community infrastructure with trust and access to provide safe space and opportunity.

10. The report was strongly critical of police intervention as a tool for prevention of violent extremism. The testimony stressed how trust and confidence in the police was low, largely unmitigated by the albeit emergent “safer neighbourhoods” programme for neighbourhood policing and too great to be a productive or welcomed *Prevent* instrument, whilst everyday community concerns about safety and policing styles and performance still remained poorly addressed.

11. The findings also highlighted significant weaknesses inherent in local authority, police and community safety partnership structures for achieving meaningful and effective engagement of Black and minority ethnic communities in the capital in the conduct of crime and community safety policy and initiatives. Existing structures lacked genuine representation from minority groups and were seen as mechanisms to impose top-down agendas rather than meet communities’ own determined needs and priorities.

12. Respondents readily acknowledged the problem posed by Al-Qaida influenced terrorism but expressed despair at how *Prevent* represented public sector victimisation of Muslims as a whole faith community, that further fuelled feelings of isolation, vulnerability and was, hence, counter-productive.

13. Consideration of sources more widely reinforces the thrust of these findings and their importance for a re-assessment of *Prevent* policy.

14. The spectrum of opinion on community engagement to reduce the terrorist threat is described in Birt (2009) as alternating between two main schools of thought: a “values based” approach that sees the Al-Qaida threat as the promotion of theological error which needs to be delegitimised by the promotion of partnership with Muslim moderates, stressing the compatibility of mainstream Islam with mainstream liberal/secular values; and, second, a “means based” approach that seeks to isolate the impact of Al-Qaida as a socio-political movement by closer engagement with the vulnerable by partnering those who can most credibly work with them. The second approach highlights personal social, emotional and psychological factors that can attract young people to Al-Qaida. This “twin track” analysis presents an interesting interpretation, though the two approaches should not be considered mutually exclusive.

15. Muslim community disaffection with and muted support for *Prevent* as an unpopular intervention by the state is well documented (eg Cante, 2009), as are reservations from other non-Muslim communities and some local authorities (eg Khanna, 2009).

16. Turley (2009) contends the strategy is counter-productive in heightening the vulnerability of individuals to being radicalised by fostering community alienation and a recurring theme in sources is the disadvantage of a strategy that has fuelled notions of an undifferentiated “suspect”, and so demonised, Muslim community. This reinforces feelings of alienation which in turn prepare a “hunting ground” for terrorist recruiters (McDonald *et al*, 2008a, p. 7) from evermore withdrawn, defensive and disaffected communities.

17. The validity of treating religiosity as a reliable indicator of radicalisation or a lack of patriotism are also notions challenged by recent international research (eg Alvensleben von, 2008; Change Institute, 2008; Gallup Inc, 2009). Similarly, Hillyard (1993) and Sen (2006) have reinforced the damage from single-community approaches and limiting, narrow definitions (often faith-assigned) of community identity.

18. The need for *Prevent* to move away from an exclusive focus on the Muslim community towards a greater focus on community cohesion is a theme tracing through the progression in the recent literature (eg Cante, 2009; McDonald *et al* 2008b; Turley, 2009). The preference for accelerated cohesion activity (eg Thomas, 2009) is based on a number of factors.

19. These include:

- disquiet by some (including Muslim and non-Muslim communities and local authorities) at an inherent moral injustice of a single community focus;
- public policy contradictions (eg Thomas, 2009; Turley, 2009) of a Muslim-specific focus in *Prevent* within a longer-standing community cohesion agenda; and
- the unintended stimulus a single-community focus gives to discriminatory attitudes against Muslims, and fuelling hate crime, Islamophobia and right wing extremism (eg McDonald *et al*, 2008a).

20. Community cohesion is seen as a relevant, focused and sharp tool in the reduction of those vulnerable to extremist radicalisation and recruitment. One of the consequences of such a change in emphasis would be for less exclusive concentration in *Prevent* on Muslim youth and more on accelerated community cohesion work with all communities. Addressing hate crime across all communities would also be a measure to tackle extremist radicalisation.

21. The rationale for an emphasis in *Prevent* on a single “suspect community”, and resulting attempts at what is seen as clumsy social engineering, have been challenged in various sources.³¹ The “values based” approach (Birt, 2009) is sometimes seen as unjustified religious/civil interference with communities, based on flawed assumptions about vulnerability through their Islamic faith *per se* (see para17).

22. However, critiques variously acknowledge that some individuals are indeed vulnerable in Muslim and other communities. Three factors interlink and help explain this vulnerability:

- discrimination: Islamophobia has already been mentioned earlier in this submission; other communities can also be affected by a singular focus in *Prevent* on the Muslim community, hardening attitudes amongst white communities (eg Thomas, 2009);
- socio-economic deprivation and disadvantage: the emphasis needs to focus on recognising and identifying genuine need and tackling disadvantage, marshalling³² efforts in education, training, skills development, access to employment for purposes of social justice rather than for purposes seen as disproportionate, intrusive community surveillance; and
- protection against intellectual radicalisation: commentaries agree on the influence of a persuasive ideology in the radicalisation process (eg Burke, 2007) with Al-Qaida’s objectives couched in religious language and imagery. Sources assert the uncertainties about identity, shared especially by Muslim young people, as a risk factor in vulnerability to radicalisation and terrorist recruiters. Antidotes lie both in the provision of opportunities to debate, explore and understand issues about faith and identity and also to discuss controversial foreign and social policy in inclusive community contexts (eg Thomas, 2009).

23. Recent announcements from the United States government (eg Assistant to President Obama for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism) point also to a revised policy for combating violent extremism which emphasises the importance of addressing socio-economic issues:

addressing...upstream factors [economic, social, political] is ultimately not a military operation but a political, economic and social campaign to meet basic needs and legitimate grievances of ordinary people (Brennan 2009, p. 8)

24. Addressing these factors as tools against violent extremism came through strongly and consistently in ISCRI’s Pathfinder Programme, funded by the MPS (McDonald *et al*, 2008). Islamophobia and hate crime featured as notable community concerns, nurturing resentment and vulnerability to radicalisation, were persistently under-reported and ineffectively communicated to the police and authorities because of community perception of flaws in and the concept of third-party reporting mechanisms, for example.

25. Sources variously stress the value of virtuous religious intervention in intellectual discussion and de-radicalisation processes. Indeed, the need to engage and foster the Islamic faith and a better understanding of the religion in these processes is seen as a pivotal remedy.

26. Such intervention is dependent on the involvement of local community figures with religious and street credibility (eg Lambert, 2007); the use of trusted community intermediaries rather than organisations and groupings that may alienate the same communities by their status as being created and controlled by the state, centrally or locally (eg Ghannoushi, 2008); and an opportunity to debate and share issues of concern on an all-community basis. The “means based” approach to *Prevent*, outlined in Birt (2009) finds expression here.

27. The use of genuine, grass-roots social capital of communities, including the Muslim community, is crucial in confronting threats of radicalisation. International studies (eg Change Institute, 2008) assert the generic value of vibrant “civil society organisations”, themselves providing alternatives to violent radical narratives, and often enjoying understanding of the issues and access across dense, local, horizontal, social networks. The autonomy of such civil organisations is crucial to their community credibility and effectiveness. McDonald *et al* (2008b) also assert the value of such organisations and individuals articulating to Muslim audiences issues of cohesion and citizenship in the context of Islamic teaching.

28. This can be undermined by “risk averse” authorities who have turned away in the main from engaging with progressive yet stigmatised local groups (eg Lambert, 2008) who actually themselves condemn terrorism (eg Salafi and Islamists) in favour of those deemed “moderates” but who lack credibility and the knowledge (often religious) to counter Al-Qaida propagandists. Work with communities by trusted grass roots practitioners, including women and young people, is crucial.

29. Aspirations by local authorities to acquire more influential roles (eg Turley, 2009), to lead initiatives, to control agendas and deploy funding to augment their own internal capacity, rather than that of credible and more effective community organisations, work against efforts to engage wider community support against radicalisation.

³¹ The flaws in a single community focus also find echoes a decade ago in the Macpherson report (Macpherson, 1999) and its concerns about racist stereotyping and discrimination within state services, together with the statutory requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 by public authorities to promote good race relations and combat institutional racism.

³² Often referred to as “mainstreaming”.

30. Consideration needs to be given to community preferences for a different balance in partnerships: state bodies such as local authorities and their partner agencies should provide support and expertise in advisory but not in lead capacities that are so obviously dominant (eg McDonald *et al*, 2008). This imbalance in the community-state power relationship has been a factor in the unpopularity of the *Prevent* strategy and programme with such communities hitherto.

31. Finally, and importantly, the process of violent radicalisation needs to be treated as an act of criminality perpetrated by individuals who may be either, vulnerable, malevolent or both; rather than as a social deficit of a whole community deemed to require disproportionate, social engineering by the state. Rather, the problem should be seen as one important issue of crime and community safety amongst several community issues—an issue that can be identified by the community itself (eg Keane, 2008) amongst other concerns and needs, and around which all communities can find common ground.

32. From review and consideration of a wide range of sources, ‘*Prevent* as currently constructed, remains a government programme, conceived and applied centrally without community consultation or mandate and which is inherently contradictory in its objectives and methods to engage community support in the prevention of violent radicalisation. Such a centrally imposed programme steepens the spiral of silence whereby a Muslim community, often already disaffected and withdrawn, is made to feel even more isolated and disengaged from mainstream civil society, thereby increasing its vulnerability to the risks of violent extremist propaganda and sympathy.

33. Indications from government to widen *Prevent’s* brief to include forms of extremism other than Al-Qaida influenced terrorism (eg RICU, 2009) are positive steps forward but evidence as presented points to the need for other significant changes too. Tensions persist between “values” and “means based” approaches and how they have been applied but careful consideration now needs to be given how to better appreciate and engage the integrity and contributions which can and need to be made by Muslim communities:

trusting the talents, know-how and insights of British citizens who happen to be of the Muslim faith will prove to be invaluable (Birt, 2009, p. 57)

34. The brief from CLG Committee requests reference to be made in submissions to seven specific questions. In light of the detail provided above, our summary response to these would be as follows:

(i) *Robustness of government analysis of factors leading to recruitment into violent extremism:*

The causal link between recruitment and underlying socio-economic conditions leading to vulnerability seem to have been included but not emphasised adequately by government in its approach, preferring to focus on security and religion. Problems of discrimination, hate crime, deprivation, identity and the impact of an unpopular foreign policy need greater emphasis. All these factors make the vulnerable more susceptible to ideologies of violence and add to feelings of disconnection from the state and a government failing to meet needs.

(ii) *Effectiveness of government strategy in community engagement:*

Rarely do genuine and trusted local community groups, who can reach and influence those most at risk and the young and vulnerable, appear engaged. Instead, the strategy appears to communicate through a “values based” approach with the whole Muslim populace as an undifferentiated and stigmatised social grouping (causing resentment); or, it establishes, or is guided by “arms length” entities the government itself has created but which in the main have poor local credibility and lack genuine community understanding and relevance. Despite often good intentions, bodies such as the Young Muslims Advisory Group, Muslim Women’s Advisory Group, Quilliam Foundation and Sufi Muslim Council all share these disadvantages.

(iii) *Advice and expertise availability to local authorities on implementation and evaluation:*

The social capital of trusted local community groups needs to be engaged and supported more intensively. Evaluation through NI35 fails to deal with *Prevent* interventions that in the main struggle to reach the truly vulnerable, rather than the “whole” community.

(iv) *Effective communication of Prevent to those at who it is aimed:*

Communication about *Prevent* tends to be construed as a government initiative that unfairly and disproportionately targets the “Muslim” community as being “suspect” about which intelligence needs to be gathered overtly in projects or covertly through the recruitment of informants.

(v) *Government benefiting from appropriate advice:*

See point (ii) above. Advice seems to have derived from those with poor local community understanding and credibility, often promoting their own kudos, personal reputations or agendas.

(vi) *Effectiveness of the programme:*

See point (iv). and generally.

It is accepted that engagement of communities is needed to tackle the terrorist threat and cannot be tackled by military means alone. However, *Prevent* has not hitherto been effective in recognising and engaging the integrity of domestic Muslim communities in these efforts which will be crucial to success.

(vii) *Differentiation between Prevent, cohesion and integration:*

Terminology is not merely decorative but crucial for the development of a successful approach which can more effectively address the upstream factors that underpin future risks of violent radicalisation:

- Improvement can be achieved by treating such risks as part of a crime and community safety agenda (alongside other concerns by many communities affected by, eg gun crime, gang crime, drug related crime etc). This can be an effective approach in targeting policy at vulnerable young people, at risk of being criminalised (eg BASIAN, 2009);
- The labels of *PVE* and *Prevent* are largely unhelpful and the problem of radicalisation into violence needs articulating more in terms of crime and safety, rather than as an assumed (and unproven) social deficit within a so-called single community;
- Accelerated work on community cohesion, addressing discrimination and hate crime would help counter risk; emphasis on tackling socio-economic deprivation should also be reinforced but, as with cohesion work, not as part of a *Prevent* agenda (or using its terms and perceived objectives to gather intelligence as part of a hidden agenda) but as one trying to meet genuine community needs and aspirations on a just and equitable basis;
- Some aspects of *Prevent*, especially the identification of individuals at risk, would be more helpfully articulated as *Pursue* objectives. This would mean the police moving away from *Prevent* work where their roles are viewed suspiciously by communities, seen as seeking to recruit informants and gather intelligence and, hence, counter-productive in alienating the very community whose support the *Prevent* strategy seeks to achieve. Conflation of the police's role in *Pursue* with *Prevent* may also damage the police's neighbourhood policing efforts and integrity.

35. Such adjustments would allow local communities themselves—their social capital—to contribute much more effectively to addressing some of the causes of such intentions and acts of criminality, and with greater fairness and enthusiasm. An approach is needed that recognises genuine need for certain individuals to be protected from violent radicalisation, alongside addressing structural socio-economic problems of broader vulnerability, acknowledging the integrity of the wider Muslim community(ies) and engaging their social capital (religious and community) properly in the strategy without stigmatisation.

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September 2009

Memorandum from Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) (PVE 15)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Institute of Community of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) is an independent not for profit partnership set up to promote community cohesion as a modern framework for race and diversity focussed on practical action, based on research and evidence.

1.2 iCoCo has unrivalled experience in the area of engaging all sections of Muslim communities and we have undertaken reviews of these communities in many parts of the Country, often as part of more broadly based reviews of community cohesion.

1.3 See website for further details of iCoCo (www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk)

2. SUMMARY OF OUR VIEWS

2.1 In summary, our views about the Prevent agenda are:

2.1.1 We fully support the need for an anti-terrorist strategy, and believe the present approach should be developed to tackle all threats from extremists that preach hatred and are prepared to resort to violence.

2.1.2 We fully support the need for a preventative agenda which seeks to undermine the allure of violent and anti-democratic means of change and as a means of developing resistance to such appeals.

2.1.3 However, the present single-minded focus on Muslims has, to some extent, been counter-productive in that the association with terrorism has been strongly resented by the majority Muslim community and has damaged relations with Muslim communities and created divisions within and between them.

2.1.4 The association of the Muslims with terrorism and extremism has also become stronger in the eyes of the majority, as well as other minority communities

2.1.5 Muslim identity, paradoxically, has also been narrowed and reduced to a simple faith persona, rather than building upon and providing wider experiences for people of Muslim heritage.

2.1.6 Further, we question the efficacy and value for money of many of the schemes developed under the Prevent agenda.

2.1.7 We therefore propose that the Prevent agenda be de-coupled from the counter-terrorist strategy and that all future preventative work be positioned within the community cohesion strategy (with changes in departmental responsibilities) and re-branded and widened to deal with all risks of violence by extremists on a common basis, which is proportionate and informed.

- 2.1.8 In so far as subsequent preventative work focuses on Muslims (or any other specific community) we propose that they be engaged through multiple channels, as employees and employers, parents, neighbours, sports players, students, mothers etc. rather than solely through their Muslim faith identity.
- 2.1.9 Finally, we have to tackle the underlying causes of hatred and intolerance and that means doing more to tackle the poverty and deprivation within Muslim and other disadvantaged communities to ensure that they have better educational outcomes and employment opportunities and that they can more fully integrate and engage in a wider range social and economic activities. We also have to build social capital across faith, ethnic and other divides (“bridging” social capital), ensure that there are many more schemes to promote educative experiences, democratic renewal and a shared sense of citizenship. This will depend upon a new process of community cohesion “proofing” of all related programmes, in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

3. PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES OF PREVENT

3.1 During the course of our research and working with Muslim communities throughout the Country, we are aware that there has been a consistent and growing concern, about the Prevent agenda. There is a widely held perception that the Prevent agenda in the current form, demonises Muslims and attaches guilt by association. This is not the stated aim of the policy and the Government has been anxious to avoid such accusations, but the iCoCo team frequently meets groups which simply refuse to engage with the Prevent agenda. It is not just Muslim-led organisations that are unhappy with the present arrangements—many different groups, both other minority and majority groups, also express strong reservations about what they see as the inherent unfairness of focussing attention and resources on one community. Local authorities have also been critical of the general thrust of this policy and have been less than enthusiastic about using the funding and developing programmes.

3.2 No one seriously doubts the need to prevent terrorism, so we need to ask why the Prevent agenda in its present form has been so controversial.

3.3 Anxiety has grown partly as a result of the Government’s latest version of the CONTEST Strategy (The UK’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism, March 2009). This suggests that those who stop short of advocating violence, but express “extreme” views, will now be targeted:

3.4 This appeared to create a further and unequal level of special treatment for Muslims—ie they may be targeted for expressing views that stay within the law. Many Muslim and other commentators have suggested that, as a consequence, most Muslims would be identified as extreme simply because they do not share the Government’s foreign policy objectives.

3.5 This approach further isolates Muslims, already feeling under siege from the general association of everything Muslim with terror, at least, in the usual discourse of much of the press and media. Many Muslims have also been subject of verbal abuse, and attack. For example some Muslim women have reported having their hijab forcibly removed in public places, on buses and in supermarkets.

3.6 However, concern was evident before the new version of CONTEST as the overall approach also appeared to ask Muslims to choose between those who express strong and inflammatory language to demand justice for the Muslim community to end victimisation; and those who support western values and a democratic engagement in wider political life.

3.7 Whilst this may sound a reasonable choice to some people, it misunderstands the complex range of perspectives across Muslim communities. And within those communities there is a widespread belief that an anti-Muslim set of policies operates across the world, including the invasion of Iraq, resulting in a distrust of western values. In addition, some Muslims (as with other faith groups) are theologically opposed to democratic engagement on the grounds that man made systems/rules should not rival faith based doctrine. However, this does not mean that they do not associate themselves with Britain and such a choice is therefore unhelpful and far too simplistic. It could even encourage some Muslims to be more inwardly focussed and be counter-productive, facilitating more support for “extremist” views.

3.8 The views of Muslim communities are, like any other community, subject to change, but change is more likely with fuller engagement to discuss concerns openly, particularly international policy. Tackling the day to day concerns of Muslims (much of which are shared with other communities including deprivation and poor educational attainment—see below), will also foster a greater sense of respect, trust and inclusion and help to demonstrate that democratic participation is not at odds with Muslim theological values.

3.9 The Prevent agenda includes elements designed to provide an alternative (and moderate) counter-narrative at least in terms of the use of violence, but this has been focused on Muslim theology—which to some extent reinforces the notion of anti-Muslim agenda. However, all extremist arguments should be openly challenged and defeated. We must demonstrate that such challenges are applied fairly across all communities and to all extremist views. Similar mistakes with the Far Right: in the past it was argued that they should not be given “the oxygen of publicity”, but sympathisers can then argue that they are silenced because society is “afraid of the truth” and win support on the basis that “political correctness” is at play.

We believe the Far Right needs to be challenged more openly. This is a tough option, but debating any extremist point of view is essential to change attitudes and beliefs, rather than simply contain behaviour, it is likely to be more successful in the longer term.

3.10 So there is a real problem here—if we brand “extremists” as potential law breakers, the really dangerous people may retreat to the shadows, beyond challenge, capitalising on their suppression and wider sense of grievance, (even assuming that there is in fact an empirical basis to support the claim that extremists tip people over the edge into violent actions).

3.11 The CONTEST strategy is much wider, and in overall terms, impressive and comprehensive. It has four components:

- *Pursue*: stopping terrorist attacks.
- *Prevent*: stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism.
- *Protect*: strengthening our protection against attack.
- *Prepare*: mitigating the impact of attacks.

3.12 Generally no one would argue with any of these strands and we must all be prepared to work together to avoid any violence or further loss of life.

3.13 We believe that situating Prevent within the CONTEST strategy has however been unfortunate, as it is the one area that relies upon community involvement and support, yet essentially links that community—and only one community—to terrorism.

3.14 The Government introduced its revised *Prevent* strategy in October 2007. The strategy is based on trying to understand what causes radicalisation (defined as the process by which people become terrorists or lend support to violent extremism). It has five objectives:

- To challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices.
- Disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate.
- Support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists.
- Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism.
- To address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.

(The are also two supporting objectives—communications and intelligence.)

3.15 There is very little direct reference to “Muslims” in this strategy, but nevertheless, this is almost the entire focus. The Government has allocated substantial funding for Prevent to a wide range of agencies and Departments to develop these objectives.

3.16 Most of the money is directed through local authorities and other statutory agencies, but programmes are generally implemented by Muslim-led organisations, some of which have only recently been established to gain funding, and is generally wholly applied in Muslim communities.

3.17 Not surprisingly, “Prevent” and “Preventing Violent Extremism” has simply become synonymous with Muslims.

3.18 This therefore has all the problems of “single group funding” which the Commission for Integration and cohesion (CIC) warned about and which the Government supported to a large degree. It has certainly reinforces the separateness of the Muslim community.

3.19 There is also scepticism about the way in which Prevent money has been allocated with suggestions that money is “being thrown at a problem”, or even inappropriately “thrown” at particular organisations. Meanwhile, some Muslim organisations will not, on principle, apply for such funding. This scepticism seems to be shared by many Local Authorities concerned about alienating their Muslim communities, by associating them with terrorism especially as some schemes are perceived as “spying on the Muslim community”, thus developing a further sense of alienation and distrust.

3.20 Those schemes which are established—and to some degree supported by sections of Muslim communities willing to utilise the funding—are difficult to target. Firstly, the groups which do accept funding are generally, almost by definition, moderate and do not influence those most attracted to extremist arguments. In any event, those most at risk of radicalisation do not have an outwardly identifying label as “potential terrorist”. The most alienated young people are also unlikely to be drawn into community events where they may be identified.

3.21 Unsurprisingly, local authorities and community organisations have used a fair degree of innovation to develop schemes which address some of these concerns, and iCoCo frequently works with local authorities that are genuinely trying to build an approach which creates a common purpose, believing that this is much more likely to achieve better results in the longer term.

3.22 However, there needs to be a strong dose of practical reality associated with this agenda; even the best local authority, university, health trust or school, is simply unable to understand the intricacies of Muslim (or any other) community. Except for a very small number of staff, this role will always be ancillary

to their main function. Whilst they all need to do more to reach out to all sections of the community, this debate makes them even less confident and willing to tackle increasingly difficult issues and feel that we should focus on capacity building community cohesion teams.

4. THE NARROWING OF MUSLIM IDENTITY

4.1 iCoCo's fieldwork supports the view that the Prevent's sole focus on Muslims through their faith identity is limiting, rather than broadening, their perspectives. This view is supported by academic and other commentators. For example, Gary Younge writing in the Guardian (30 March 2009) pointing out that "the government continues to approach Muslims as though their religion defines them". Younge draws upon Amartya Sen to suggest that the present approach has been paradoxical in its effect:

"The confusion between the plural identities of Muslims and their Islamic identity is not only a descriptive mistake, it has serious implications for policies for peace in the precarious world in which we live", "The effect of this religion-centred political approach, and of the institutional policies it has generated ... has been to bolster and strengthen the voice of religious authorities while downgrading the importance of non-religious institutions and movements."

Amartya Sen: *Identity and Violence*.^{4.2} These appear as sharp criticisms, but the former Community Cohesion Minister, Sadiq Khan, has in fact made a very similar point in his Fabian Pamphlet, *Fairness not Favours* and drew out his own personal experience:

I did not come into Parliament to be a Muslim MP... Just as ordinary citizens have multiple identities, so do MPs... The people of Tooting elected me and those voters came from all faiths and of none. But no matter how hard I try not to allow my faith to define me as an MP—no matter how many times I ask not to have my religion precede my occupation when I am introduced or described—the fact is that others do often define me by my faith."^{4.3} We must recognise that any programme aimed at a particular community tends to create and/or reinforce a stereotyped and homogenised view of that community. That is why iCoCo is particularly proud of its commissioned work in many parts of the country to "understand and appreciate" the diversity of Muslim communities. Like all communities no one group can represent all ethno-national, theological or political strands let alone the many differences associated with generational, gender and other lines. The iCoCo approach has developed a series of local and national studies based upon "understanding and appreciating Muslim communities", which has helped to develop new engagement strategies. (We have begun to apply this same approach to other faith communities including disaffected White working class groups).

4.4 Another problem is that Government also addresses PVE as though local and community concerns will make the difference to the sense of grievance felt by many Muslims, whereas there is no doubt that many Muslims are less concerned by local issues and continue to believe that Muslims around the world are under attack.

4.5 Meanwhile, we must not forget that the poverty and deprivation are very real in some sections of Muslim communities and that many will find it difficult to develop a meaningful sense of engagement and a real stake in society.

4.6 This therefore all points towards the need for a broader approach, using multiple aspects of the identities of Muslim communities and to integrate the work into that of other communities where the potential for violence is also a concern.

5. PREVENT AND THE COMMUNITY COHESION AGENDA

5.1 We are concerned that the Prevent agenda has been run as part of a counter-terrorism national programme. This appears to be because of a lack of trust in the mainly local authority community cohesion programmes which are seen by some Government departments as "soft and fluffy". We reject this view—as do most local authorities and other agencies—and would point out that changing attitudes and values is generally much harder than controlling behaviour. Further, local authorities and their partners are able to see all threats to cohesion in the round and have the same governance, policy and practice in place to reach across the spectrum. Indeed, it is not practical or cost effective to set up separate teams. An inclusive approach enables them to maintain a working relationship with their Muslim communities.

5.2 The real problem with the Prevent agenda is simply that it is presently situated within a counter-terrorism strategy and implemented by a team dedicated to counter-terrorism and is therefore viewed through this lens with suspicion and apprehension; there is a strong belief that the community will be spied upon, wrongly accused and treated unfairly; or simply that the community is made guilty by association with terrorism.

5.3 If Prevent were to be positioned with the remit of community cohesion practitioners a more inclusive and proportionate approach could be taken, working across communities, dealing with all forms of extremism, in which ever community is most at risk. We would point to the growth of the Far Right and whilst some Far Right groups are legitimately contesting democratic elections, it is also the case that these

groups are often accompanied by a dangerous fringe element who are prepared to resort to violence and practice intimidation and promote hatred. Even Far Right democratic parties often demonise communities, exacerbate tensions and intimidate sections of our community.

5.4 The link between the Far Right and the Muslim community is plain to see—many of their campaigns promote negative images of Muslims, fringe elements sponsor hate campaigns which just happen to coincide with elections and more recently and more worrying the Far Right are embarking on a campaign of provocation against Muslim communities—as evidenced by the recent events of Harrow and Birmingham. All extremism is therefore inter-connected and in this case, the intimidation of Muslim communities is bound to heighten their fears and apprehension and, in turn, push them towards their own extreme elements who persuade them that this is simply indicative of the underlying western anti-Muslim campaign. Community cohesion local teams and practitioners will necessarily have to adopt common approaches and provide interventions which are cross—community, to bridge divides, dissolve tensions and widen experiences and identities.

5.5 We therefore propose that the Counter—terrorism (CONTEST) strategy should focus on the largely reactive and responsive elements most closely aligned with the emergency services and that the “prevent” element be widened, re-named and incorporated into generic and local cohesion programmes dealing with all aspects of community relations, including the tackling of issues of poverty and alienation and promoting common interests and shared experiences.

5.6 None of this is to suggest that Government should remove its very sharp focus on the combating of terrorism, but rather it is more effective to engage people through all of their life experiences and roles, rather than simply through their faith identity. It exposes them not only to a wider variety of voices and influences, but also to members of many other communities too—and of course has the added benefit that non-Muslims begin to see what they have in common with themselves. This would also enable a closer alignment with other Government strategies to promote active citizenship and community empowerment, which are generally ignored under the current narrowly focussed work of Prevent.

5.7 Community cohesion programmes are more able to tackle the underlying issues that breed resentment, fear and hatred and to provide the skills to enable communities to learn to live and prosper with difference. This requires a wide range of approaches including both formal and informal education programmes (and the new schools duty has been a very welcome development), active citizenship and volunteering schemes, sports, arts and social care schemes, to build social capital and to encourage people to look out for one another across ethnic, faith, age and other boundaries. This needs supporting with a drive to ensure that public services are cohesion “proofed” so that all policies and programmes support “bridging”. This also needs to include procurement and the funding of schemes in the voluntary and private sectors.

5.8 We believe this new approach will be much more likely to broaden peoples’ horizons rather than reducing them, and be seen to be more open and fair, addressing extremism and risks on a consistent and proportionate basis. This will gain a wider acceptability and will be more sustainable in the longer term.

September 2009

Memorandum from Quilliam (PVE 16)

Quilliam is the world’s first counter-extremism think tank. Located in London, our founders are former leading ideologues of UK-based extremist Islamist organizations. Quilliam stands for religious freedom, human rights, democracy and developing a Muslim identity at home in, and with the West.

Quilliam welcomes the “Prevent” programme as one strand of several in the government’s counter-extremism policy but believes changes are necessary, including to certain of its underpinning assumptions.

- Taking preventative measures against violent extremism is vital but the Prevent programme needs a sharper focus on preventing violent extremism as a debate about ideas. In other words, the government should recognise that violent extremism is always preceded by political and religious extremism. Prevent’s work should serve to bolster liberal democratic values against such extremism rather than being distracted by youth sporting activities.
- When looking at radicalisation, Prevent should address the complex identity issues stemming from a failure to access a shared British identity, a failure which leaves some people vulnerable to radicalisation.
- Prevent should move away from talking about separate faith “communities” and “community cohesion” and instead focus on creating national cohesion whereby every British citizen is considered primarily as a British citizen, not only as a member of an artificially constructed “faith community”, which homogenises identity and denies individuality.
- Many civil servants working both in national and local government lack the necessary advice and expertise to properly understand the complex ideological and theological issues surrounding extremism and therefore to properly support the Prevent programme. Assessing whether a group

- or speaker propagates dangerous ideas should be carried out centrally by people with experience, expertise and the executive power to transparently and accountably disrupt extremist groups' gatherings.
- Whilst cases like that of Andrew Ibrahim demonstrate that there has been some success in involving mosques in aiding the Prevent programme, many of the people most important to Prevent are yet to be impacted by it.
 - The government must communicate better the goals of the Prevent programme. This is a process which has been undermined by some government partners who have misrepresented Prevent and its objectives to the public.
 - Prevent must foster a sense of belonging amongst all British citizens by developing an understanding of shared values. The struggle to prevent all kinds of extremism must be understood as the struggle to create national cohesion through developing an accessible British identity based on shared universal values, principally freedom of speech, equal rights for all, accepting that no one religion has a monopoly on influencing law in our secular public space and that sovereignty is for the people. Fostering such an identity and defeating extremist ideologies of all types is the best preventative measure against violent extremism.

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

(a) Prevent is a vital strand of Britain's strategy to prevent violent extremism but this role is being undermined by its unfocused implementation. The only way in which violent extremism can be eradicated is if the ideas and ideologies which justify it are defeated. This will only occur through debate and so the Prevent strategy must support that side of the debate which stands for shared universal values antithetical to violent extremism.

(b) The fact that this is a debate about ideas means that Prevent must have a sharper focus on supporting those individuals and groups who promote shared universal values. Kickboxing classes and football leagues, however well intentioned, do not help to propagate the crucial ideas which can undermine and defeat violent extremism. Prevent should take as partners organisations committed to furthering this debate about ideas and, in particular, encouraging belief in those ideas which tie people together in modern Britain.

(c) Choosing partners on the basis of their claim to represent all members of one group tends to empower only politically active, male, middle-aged members of a diverse population. It also undermines parliament as a body which represents us all as equal citizens. This is of particular importance at present as the new secretary of state for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon John Denham MP appears to have shown some sympathy for the politics of "community representation" in the past.

2. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

(a) Whilst it is to be welcomed that Prevent acknowledges that there is no single cause of radicalisation,³³ its emphasis on real and perceived grievances³⁴ heavily outweighs the more fundamental question of identity³⁵. In the video he recorded before carrying out the 7/7 suicide bomb attacks, Leeds-born Mohammad Sidique Khan addressed the British public saying: "Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight."³⁶ The fact that Sidique Khan felt no loyalty or connection to other British citizens, identifying only with Muslims, was crucial in allowing him to murder innocents.

(b) The argument that radicalisation is driven by grievances, in particular about foreign policy and the idea that of a "War on Islam", is a popular one but one that is undermined by a comparison between Britain and America. If British foreign policy feeds into a narrative of a "War on Islam" then America's foreign policy must also equally or more so. Yet, despite American Muslims sharing British Muslims' concerns about a "War on Islam",³⁷ America has seen nothing like the home-grown 7/7 attacks. This can be explained by the greater accessibility immigrants to America have to a shared identity built on universal values than is granted to immigrants to Britain.

(c) Furthermore, the idea that violent extremism is driven by concerns about foreign policy is belied by how such violent extremism occurs. Targets in Britain chosen by Islamist terrorists have included nightclubs, airports, underground trains and buses—none of which have any connection to foreign policy. Thus, whilst radicalisers exploit such grievances to manipulate vulnerable members of society and to justify violent extremism to those who do not share their ideology, the radicalised were vulnerable to manipulation because of their failure to access a British identity based on shared universal values. Changes to British foreign policy would not eradicate the existence of extremist ideologies which legitimise and encourage violence.

³³ Contest 2, 5.19, p41.

³⁴ Contest 2, 5.20–5.23, pp41–42.

³⁵ Contest 2, 5.24, p42

³⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>

³⁷ Christian Leuprecht, Todd Hataley, Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, "Winning the Battle but Losing the War", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 3:2 (August 2009) Terrorism Research Initiative, p27.

3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

(a) The question of “engaging with communities” is the wrong premise for countering violent extremism. We need to look at a wider “national cohesion” rather than more limited “community cohesion”; the British society which we would hope to build and which would be truly resilient to violent extremism is not a Balkanised one of separate communities existing apart within the same country like the Ottoman millet system. Rather, we must build a society where all citizens are equally integrated and involved through the democratic structures of the state.

(b) The idea of engaging with any single Muslim “community” or even separate Muslim “communities” within Britain is part of a narrative which suggests that there can be “community leaders” and “community representatives”. Giving them a voice occurs at the expense of integrating individual Muslims fully into British society through the democratic structures of the state. This is not to say that Prevent should not operate with partner organisations; groups like Radical Middle Way, the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board and the British Muslim Forum facilitate access to and communication with large numbers of mosques and Muslims around the country without claiming to speak for them. However, these bodies tend to lack the organisational infrastructure of a group like the Muslim Council of Britain whose leadership, in claiming to speak for all Muslims in their dealings with the government, actually co-opt and deny individual Muslims' voices.

(c) In terms of gaining access to and influencing those people who are most at risk of radicalisation, Prevent has seen little success. For example, three groups which are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation (students, prisoners and Somali youths) have seen little benefit from Prevent spending, partly as a result of unfocused approaches to identifying priority areas for activity. For example, when deciding which universities should be prioritised for attention as part of the Prevent strategy, the decision is made purely according to the size of the establishment's local Muslim community.³⁸ Thus prioritisation for Prevent attention is decided not on the basis of evidence of radicalisation occurring nor even on the basis of the number of Muslims studying at the establishment but on a much more arbitrary basis. Durham is an example of a university with few Muslim students and few local Muslims yet Hizb ut-Tahrir is very active on campus there. Prevent is a very important and delicate programme which necessitates a focus on the most vulnerable people in society and on establishments where radicalisation is occurring, not aimed carelessly at areas which simply have many Muslims resident in them. This strategy risks alienating British Muslims by playing into the hands of groups which claim that Prevent is aimed against all Muslims, not just extremists.

4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

(a) The Prevent strategy is concerned with addressing complex ideological and theological issues which local authorities are ill-placed to understand. The recent case where Kensington and Chelsea Council did not prevent the broadcast of a video message by Anwar al-Awlaki, an English-speaking jihadist preacher who advocates an al-Qaeda worldview, at Kensington Town Hall until his appearance was highlighted by politicians and campaigners shows that local authorities lack the advice and expertise to implement the government's commitment to disrupting radicalisers and making it harder for them to operate in the places they use.³⁹

(b) It is therefore vital that central government provide clear guidance and advice to prevent such a situation arising in the future and to help with identifying suitable partners for “Prevent” who are committed to shared British values. Furthermore, decisions about whether a certain speaker should be allowed a platform in council premises should be taken centrally where experience and expertise in counter extremism exists whilst clear advice and guidance must be given to local authorities and police about how to choose partners who promulgate shared universal values. At present, the Department for Communities and Local Government is funding local authorities' Prevent work with £45 million over three years but how this money is spent remains in the hands of local authorities which lack the expertise to choose partners effectively. This leads to the situation where money is handed out by the local authorities with no means to assess whether it is furthering the Prevent agenda or not.

(c) Of the £12 million already distributed by local authorities to fund community group run Prevent projects, around £850,000 has been given to affiliates of the Muslim Council of Britain, whose deputy director-general signed a declaration supporting Hamas and understood by some to advocate attacks on the Royal Navy.⁴⁰ £38,000 was also allocated to the Cordoba Foundation, only £4,000 of which was withdrawn⁴¹ despite the Cordoba Foundation sponsoring the recent event at Kensington Town Hall which was supposed to feature a video message from Anwar al-Awlaki, and the fact that it has also hosted Dr Abdul Wahid, UK chairman of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bristol council gave £3,180 to the 1st Bristol Muslim Scout Troop for “camping equipment”⁴² and large sums of money have been distributed by Enfield⁴³ and other

³⁸ Contest 2, Footnote 148, p172.

³⁹ Contest 2, 9.22, p89.

⁴⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/08/daud-abdullah-gaza-middle-east>

⁴¹ <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/prevent.pdf> p1

⁴² <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/prevent.pdf> p10

⁴³ <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/prevent.pdf> pp18–19

councils to fund purely sporting groups. How such projects contribute to combating the ideologies which justify and promote violent extremism remains unclear. Systematic measures must be taken to ensure that such lapses do not occur and that all money spent on Prevent contributes to preventing extremism.

5. *Are the objectives of the 'Prevent' agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

(a) Prevent has certainly seen some successes; the case of Andrew Ibrahim, whose plans to launch a suicide bomb attack with a homemade device were discovered after his local mosque reported that he had burn marks on his hands and arms,⁴⁴ demonstrates this to be the case. However, other opportunities were missed to identify Ibrahim as a threat including his college failing to take further the concerns of a visiting lecturer after Ibrahim asked questions about “the best” biological agents for killing people. This shows that the objectives of the Prevent agenda are still not being effectively communicated to all necessary people.

(b) This situation has been exacerbated by misinformation about Prevent, in particular Contest 2, which has been spread by some individuals and organisations, some of whom are government partners. Figures associated with prominent organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain have misrepresented Contest 2 to the public by continuing to organise public meetings about an imaginary version of Contest 2, published in the Guardian and alleged to be a draft but which did not become part of the Prevent agenda.⁴⁵ To avoid the alienation of those whom Prevent aims to support, measures must be taken to ensure that Prevent partners are giving Muslim and non-Muslim members of the public accurate information about it.

6. *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?*

It is impossible to say whether or not “the Government” as a whole is receiving appropriate advice on achieving the goals of Prevent as different departments appear to be applying different standards to their choosing of partners in the Prevent programme. Whilst the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office both appear to have implemented measures to ensure that it is seeking advice on Prevent from partners who promote shared British values, Communities and Local Government continues to cooperate with Saudi-funded and Islamic Forum Europe and Jamaat-e-Islami dominated East London Mosque. Furthermore, leading politicians from both the Labour and Conservative parties have paid uncritical visits to East London Mosque, with then Communities Minister Sadiq Khan visiting the mosque in February of this year⁴⁶ followed by Conservative mayor of London Boris Johnson in September.⁴⁷

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

At present it is difficult to see what measures have been taken by government departments to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes. Certainly, without rigid systems for careful monitoring of how money is distributed to Prevent partners and how those partners contribute to countering extremist ideologies, some would argue that the government is failing in its duty to British tax-payers to check that results are being achieved from spending public funds.⁴⁸

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

When looking at the Prevent programme it is vital to remember that violent extremism cannot be defeated except by defeating the underlying issues which encourage it to develop and the ideologies which feed on those issues. This entails fostering a sense of belonging based on shared values, principally to freedom of speech, equal rights for all, accepting that no one religion has a monopoly on influencing law in our secular public space and that sovereignty is for the people. “Cohesion” and “integration” should be understood in reference to these values rather than more superficial matters such as clothing, work or speaking English. Thus groups and individuals who are committed to these values should be understood to be “integrated” whilst those who reject these values should not, even if they show superficial signs of integration. People who reject these values, although they are not being criminalised, must be recognised as undermining national cohesion and thereby the objectives of the Prevent programme.

9. *Conclusion*

The government’s strategy for defeating terrorism is made up of four strands, Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. There is no debate about the necessity of continuing Pursue, Protect and Prepare yet the most important of these strands, Prevent, is in disarray. Nearly five years after the suicide bombings of London Underground and buses the government is yet to set in place effective preventative measures against the

⁴⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/5851168/Terrorist-Andrew-Ibrahim-was-turned-in-by-the-Muslim-community.html>

⁴⁵ Daud Abdullah, deputy director general of the Muslim Council of Britain spoke at an event called “Putting Contest 2 in Context” in Hounslow on 11 July 2009. Flyers for the event made reference to “leaked drafts” of Contest 2 rather than to Contest 2 in its published form.

⁴⁶ http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/?page=news_archive_sub&news_id=148

⁴⁷ <http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedImage/pdf/Boris%20Johnson%204.9.2009.pdf>

⁴⁸ This argument was recently made by the TaxPayer’s Alliance in “Council Spending Uncovered”, <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/prevent.pdf> p1.

radicalisation of British citizens. Indeed, some money allocated for Prevent has actually undermined national cohesion through promoting separatism and thereby preventing the creation of a British identity based on shared universal values. There is also little evidence that the government has acted on its commitment to “challenge those who want to work against our shared values.”⁴⁹ It is vital that Prevent money be used only to support shared values

September 2009

Memorandum from the Institute for Policy Research & Development (PVE 19)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Government’s understanding of extremism inadequately analyses the core social factors behind violent radicalization, seeing these factors as separate and contingent, rather than as mutually interdependent dynamics of a single failed social system that has (1) marginalized the majority of Muslims from British civil society; and (2) thereby facilitated the capacity of Islamist extremists to mobilize on British soil. This has meant that the Government’s capacity-building programmes have insufficiently addressed key structural problems at the root of radicalization processes.
- The Government’s unwillingness to engage with Muslim communities on terms other than related to counter-terrorism has exacerbated widespread distrust and apathy toward Government, and discouraged communities from supporting the “Prevent” agenda, which is often viewed instead as a self-serving tool of political control by the very communities that most require Government support.
- The following factors by themselves each constitute *necessary (but not sufficient) conditions* for violent radicalization; their cumulative interaction creates a *mutually-reinforcing positive-feedback system*, acting in *totality* as a *sufficient condition* and causal basis for a minority of British Muslims to experience violent radicalization:
 - Social structural inequalities and institutional discrimination have generated a groundswell of social alienation, civic exclusion, and political impotence that fuels psychological instability and vulnerability to identity crises in many Muslim communities, including those which are more upwardly mobile.
 - This is reinforced by Islamophobic media reporting, which in turn has fuelled social polarisation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Britain, contributing to Muslim vulnerability to separate self-identification through negative reflected appraisal, and increasing the ability of extremists to operate among both communities.
 - Foreign policy grievances exacerbate this condition and provide a focal point and critical catalyst for a sense of generic victimization that potentially undermines attachment to British national identity.
 - While the preceding items highlight “push” factors, the key “pull” factor comes in the form of Islamist extremist ideology⁵⁰ operating through organisations which exploit all these circumstances of exclusion, which navigate the groundswell of potential discontent to identify vulnerable individuals for recruitment into various forms of ideological indoctrination as a means to resolve their identity crises. Some such groups, particularly al-Muhajiroun, provide a radicalizing social network opening material prospects for individuals to participate in violent activities that potentially threaten public safety, at home and abroad.
 - The radicalizing activities of such groups in turn serve to feedback into the previous processes of social and civic exclusion, negative perceptions of Muslims, and so on, processes which become further intensified in the aftermath of terrorist attacks or plots by associated individuals.
- The Government’s “Prevent” programme has focused on trying to build the capacity of Muslim communities to counter extremism without properly addressing these social factors and their mutual reinforcement. Urgent interventions are therefore required to holistically address all these fronts to dampen, and eventually extinguish their positive-feedbacks (see Recommendations).

INTRODUCTION

1. Dr Nafeez Ahmed is a political scientist and counter-terrorism expert at the University of Sussex who has published widely on international terrorism and al-Qaeda, including *The London Bombings: An Independent Inquiry* (Duckworth, 2006). He is the Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Research & Development (www.iprd.org.uk), a London-based non-profit research organization analyzing violent

⁴⁹ Contest 2, p87.

⁵⁰ The term “Islamist” here denotes simply the mobilisation of Islamic language and symbolism to legitimize a specific political ideology, often (but not always) involving violent action, and should not be assumed to be co-extensive with Islam.

conflict in the context of global ecological, economic and energy crises. He has testified in US Congress about his research on security policy toward Islamist extremist groups, which was also used by the 9/11 Commission.

2. Currently, the “Prevent” agenda is in danger of criminalizing Muslim communities by labelling them as “at-risk” from violent extremism. The scope of risk-assessment is rendered potentially unlimited by the assumption, recently espoused by the MI5 Behavioural Science Unit for instance, that there is no “typical pathway to violent extremism” for British Muslim terrorists who fit “no single demographic profile”—all genders, classes, ages and localities of British Muslims may therefore potentially be “at-risk”. Categorizations of being “at-risk” from violent extremism could include anything from holding foreign policy grievances or expressing disillusionment with the parliamentary system, to holding religious beliefs assumed to contradict an as yet amorphous and contested conception of shared values—“symptoms” which have no proven relationship to a propensity for violence.

3. For example, surveys show that while between 30 and 40% of British Muslims would support the introduction of Shariah Law in some form by British authorities into some areas of public life; the number of British Muslims who believe terrorist attacks against civilians in the UK are justifiable is between 1 and 2%. There is therefore no causal correlation between the adherence to certain beliefs suspected of undermining shared values, and actual vulnerability to terrorist recruitment. Thus, the promotion of shared values, while clearly critical for community cohesion, should not be conflated with countering violent extremism. These are overlapping, but nevertheless distinct, areas of work.

4. Over the last decade, the Government has consistently expanded the powers of police and security agencies, and broadened the scope and definition of what constitutes terrorist activity. This trend of “widening the net” has meant that huge amounts of public funds are being expended on apprehending and pursuing greater numbers of normal citizens to discern evidence of violent extremism. This is an approach that focuses on surveillance to deal with symptoms, and is therefore bound to fail by way of largely ignoring the key “push” and “pull” factors, and their relation to root structural causes.

SOCIAL STRUCTURAL FACTORS BEHIND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

5. Rather than a diverse “range of causes” being responsible for violent radicalization, as the Government argues, violent radicalization is the *culmination of a hierarchy of interdependent causes* operating as a *mutually-reinforcing positive-feedback system, which needs to be addressed holistically*, necessitating not just a targeted and focused counterterrorism strategy, but intensified Government efforts to revitalise the social contract with British Muslim citizens on its own terms.

6. Social exclusion and institutional discrimination by themselves do not explain the phenomenon of violent extremism in the UK, but they are primarily responsible for a weakening of a sense of British national identity and citizenship, particularly amongst some ethnic Muslim communities in Britain that are most marginalised.

7. The majority of Muslims in the UK are socially excluded. Studies show that 69% of British Muslims of Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic origin live in poverty, compared to 20% of white people. Unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than those for people from any other religion, for both men and women. Muslims aged 16 to 24 years have the highest unemployment rates, and are over twice as likely as Christians of the same age to be unemployed. Two-thirds of ethnically-South Asian Muslim children in Britain are impoverished. In families with at least one breadwinner, 60% of ethnic Bangladeshis and 40% of ethnic Pakistanis are in income poverty, compared to just over 10-15% of white people.

8. Social exclusion is linked to institutional discrimination. Another survey found that 80% of British Muslims had experienced discrimination, up from 45% in the late 1990s. These findings are corroborated by a Minority Rights Group International study documenting deteriorating conditions in British Muslim “access to education, employment and housing” along with a “worrying rise in open hostility” from non-Muslim communities.

9. The social exclusion of the majority of British Muslims is a disturbing phenomenon preceding the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism, and worsening in its aftermath, representing the systemic discriminatory violation of the inalienable social, civil and human rights of one of the United Kingdom’s largest religious minority groups.

10. The combination of social exclusion and institutional discrimination contributes to a general collective sense of marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and disenchantment; a sense of being excluded from civil society, which thus exacerbates the experience of a separate or segregated identity to mainstream Britain. This sense of *civic exclusion* is reinforced primarily by a perception of blocked social mobility and discrimination, rather than individual socio-economic status, which erodes confidence in the British socio-political system, and consequently negatively affects the sense of belonging to Britain. Thus, extremist groups like al-Muhajiroun are able to recruit largely from upwardly mobile groups, such as university students, who retain a consciousness of Muslim socio-economic disenfranchisement in Britain which is buttressed by perceptions and experiences of a discriminatory system which they feel prevents the realization of their full potential.

11. Only a minority of British Muslims are likely to respond by negating their sense of British identity and citizenship, becoming vulnerable to a powerful sense of civic exclusion. While only half the general British population identifies strongly as British, 77% of Muslims in the UK identify very strongly as British, with 82% affirming themselves as loyal to Britain. Although employment levels for British Muslims are at only 38%, British Muslims have a higher confidence in the judiciary than the general public, and 67% of them want to live in a neighbourhood that has a mix of ethnic and religious people, compared to 58% of the general British public.

12. Trends are less heartening regarding non-Muslim perspectives of Muslims in Britain, which are increasingly negative. A YouGov survey found that the number of non-Muslim Britons who believe that “a large proportion of British Muslims feel no sense of loyalty to this country and are prepared to condone or even carry out acts of terrorism” had nearly doubled from 10% after 7/7 cent to 18% a year later. The number of non-Muslims who believe that “practically all British Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens who deplore terrorist acts as much as anyone else” fell from 23% to 16% in the same period. Further, 53% of non-Muslims said they felt threatened by Islam (as distinct from fundamentalist Islamism)—up from 32% in 2001. Overall, only 36% of the general population believes that Muslims are loyal to Britain.

13. These increasingly negative perceptions of Muslims by the general population play a fundamental role in the formation of British Muslims’ self—and social-identities, serving to reinforce a sense of exclusion from British society. Yet these perceptions are largely fueled by reactionary and irresponsible reporting in the mass media, catalysing processes of social polarisation. An independent study of UK press coverage of British Muslims from 2000 to 2008, found that: “Four of the five most common discourses used about Muslims in the British press associate Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values.”

14. Ironically, then, the media has served to reinforce the sense of blocked social mobility, discrimination and alienation experienced by many British Muslims, while simultaneously stoking widespread paranoia about Islam amongst non-Muslims and promoting the views of Islamist extremists as representative of British Muslims. These factors interplay to create an environment that undermines the notion that Muslims belong intrinsically to British society, culture and values as citizens, and even negatively affect the formation of British Muslim social identity.

15. Exclusion and discrimination are known to be key causative factors in mental health problems, and there is little doubt that these processes have detrimentally affected British Muslim mental health, raising the question of the link between mental illness and young Muslims’ vulnerability to identity crisis. Although there are insufficient studies of this, one survey found that 61% of British Pakistanis believed that negative perceptions of them by the media and society had damaged their mental health, but were reluctant to seek help due to lack of community-based or women-based faith—and culturally-sensitive mental health services.

16. By themselves, the social factors described above do not lead to violent radicalization, even while they do undermine community cohesion. However, they generate a climate in which British Muslims are vulnerable to identity crisis. It is at this sociological moment that the “pull” of Islamist extremist organisations becomes significant. These extremist groups exploit conditions and perceptions of disenfranchisement fuelled particularly by grievances over British and Western foreign policy, to recruit British Muslims who due to a convergence of personal, psychological and social reasons linked to their peer-networks, family environment and so on, may find a potential resolution of their identity crises in these organizations.

17. The organization of most concern is al-Muhajiroun, founded by Syrian cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed in 1996. The Centre for Social Cohesion reports that 15% of convicted terrorists in the UK were either members of al-Muhajiroun or knew members of the network. In the last decade, “one in seven Islamist-related convictions” have been linked to al-Muhajiroun.

18. Al-Muhajiroun’s primary function is neither logistical nor operational, but consists of providing a *radicalizing social network* that employs ideological techniques to indoctrinate and motivate recruits, as well as providing access and connections abroad through which recruits may receive opportunity to undergo terrorist training with groups associated with al-Qaeda. Al-Muhajiroun exploits grievances about both perceived discrimination in Britain, and British foreign policy in Muslim-majority countries, and is often the first time recruits will come across a detailed presentation of ideas associated with Islam. An April 2004 joint Home/Foreign Office report concluded that among the factors attracting young Muslims to extremism is “a perception of ‘double standards’ in British foreign policy, where democracy is preached but oppression of the ‘Ummah’ (the one nation of believers) is practised or tolerated eg in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya; a consequent sense of helplessness over the situation of Muslims generally; the lack of any real opportunities to vent frustration.” This frustration is galvanized to inculcate an “Us” and “Them” mentality in which violence against “Their” (Western) civilians is justified by misappropriation of Islamic language and symbolism as a response to “Their” killings of “Our” (Muslim) civilians abroad.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR “PREVENT”

19. The Government’s focus on capacity-building to undermine violent extremism purely under the rubric of the ‘Prevent’ agenda is highly counter-productive, and communicates to Muslim communities that the only line of engagement between them and their government concerns terrorism (ie Muslims as either conducive or a hindrance to terrorism). It is necessary to widen the *terms of engagement* beyond the “Prevent” remit so that the Government addresses Muslims as British citizens with inalienable social, civil and human rights (not simply as potential terrorists), even *if some of the outcomes of doing so would fulfill that remit*.

20. Citizenship is a two-way social contract between Government and citizens, involving mutual rights and duties enshrined in the rule of law. The entrenchment of social exclusion of Muslims in Britain undermines this social contract, and is indelibly linked to the identity crises that render a minority of British Muslims vulnerable to Islamist extremist indoctrination and terrorist recruitment. This illustrates a serious failure at the heart of Government social policy towards its Muslim citizens—of which continued Governmental insistence on addressing British Muslim citizens solely in relation to counter-terrorism is itself symptomatic. The “Prevent” agenda requires urgent efforts to revitalize the social contract between Government and British Muslims *outside this agenda*, on its own terms. This will generate renewed trust, confidence and good faith between British Muslims and their Government that will impact directly on “Prevent”.

21. New long-term social policies must be devised to address the severe social inequalities faced by the country’s majority of Muslims, particularly in terms of unemployment, housing, and education, to open up opportunities for social mobility. In the near-term, this can be kick-started by mobilising civil society organisations, particularly Muslim community groups and charitable bodies, to develop opportunities for young British Muslims especially in deprived regions linked to a wide variety of professions and skills. This should be accompanied by establishment of more community-based faith and culturally-sensitive local services, particularly in the health and social care sectors. Further, new research is needed to understand the link between British Muslim social exclusion, mental illness and identity crisis.

22. This should be pursued in tandem with stronger legislation and procedures to tackle institutional discrimination against Muslims, especially in the form of Islamophobia. Such measures should be extended and enforced in relation to Islamophobic media reporting, which violates journalistic obligations to report with honesty and integrity, and implicitly encourages hate-crimes. This should include establishing transparent and enforceable professional standards to avoid demonization of Muslims as a group, as well as ensuring more equal representation of Muslims as journalists, editors and commissioners in media institutions. Such standards need not be established solely for Muslims, but should be developed to protect the safety of all ethnic, religious and racial groups.

23. Tentative acknowledgement by Government of the centrality of British foreign policy as a recruiting sergeant for extremists is welcome, but should be supplemented by greater inclusion of Muslim community stakeholders in the consultative processes by which foreign policies for Muslim-majority countries is formulated. This should include cultivating formal institutions for sustained consultative dialogue between security agencies and British Muslim civil society organisations concerning the extent to which these policies genuinely conform to the national interest. These should provide space for meaningful grievance platforms providing opportunities for Muslims disaffected with foreign policy to critically engage with policymakers.

24. More *focused* counter-ideology measures should be adopted against Islamist extremist organisations to de-legitimise *violent extremist* ideology. Rather than being so broad-based as to potentially demonise common Muslim religious beliefs whose relation to British shared values is contested, focus should be on actively de-constructing and de-legitimising the specific Islamist “jihadist” theological, ethical, and socio-political interpretations mobilised by al-Qaeda, and adopted by groups like al-Muhajiroun. This also requires the cultivation of alternative progressive interpretations of Islam—particularly regarding the key issues such as jihad, voting, women, Shariah, and so on—that remain authentic, traditional and scholarly, while also dynamic, modern and British, so as to be truly appealing to grassroots British Muslim communities. This inclusive, progressive vision for British Islam needs also to provide a positive outlet for positive political activism commensurate with British civil society, such as social welfare, ecology & environment, human rights, and so on. Such a dynamic and vibrant vision of Islam as indigenous to Britain and supportive of progressive values shared by all citizens, is not only possible, but an inherent requirement of authentic traditional Islamic scholarship. However, this cannot be truly achieved simply by importing foreign scholars from the Middle East and Central Asia, but requires efforts to nurture an indigenous, inclusive British Islamic discourse and scholarship, supported by grassroots British Muslim communities themselves.

Memorandum from Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) (PVE 20)

1. Having operated for four years under the umbrella of the Women's National Commission, the Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) established itself as an independent national organisation in 2007, registering as a Community Interest Company.

2. Since 2007, membership has expanded threefold and the MWNUK now has 140 members. These include academics and students; workers in voluntary sector support services; health professionals; experts in women's rights, diversity policy, disability, and refugees; businesswomen; local government and law enforcement officers; and artists. Membership is diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and location.

3. MWNUK has an elected Board which consists of 13 members, some connected with the network since its founding, and some drawn from newer members. MWNUK has two part-time staff, an inter-active website (www.mwnuk.co.uk) and an office located in central Birmingham.

ABOUT THE VIEWS IN THIS REPORT

4. Prior to writing this report, the members of MWNUK were consulted for their views. This submission also includes the views of the author of this report, Shaista Gohir, Executive Director of MWNUK as she has considerable experience in "prevent" work. She is an accredited specialist peer for the Improvement and Development Agency—a role that involves developing and sharing best practice with local authorities on preventing violent extremism (PVE). She has also worked as a PVE consultant with local authorities which has involved engaging with Muslim communities, facilitating workshops, developing commissioning processes, assessing projects for funding, project evaluations, assessments for the NI35, developing action plans, advising on schools tool kits. Shaista also sits on various local authority and police PVE boards.

Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?

5. The current approach of targeting the entire Muslim community while trying to address the problem of violent extremism is morally wrong. The far reaching implications of the "Prevent" agenda for the Muslim community have been totally ignored by government. There is little evidence of recognition by the government on the massive harm done by their emphasis on policies relating to preventing violent extremism. The main concerns that have been expressed about this programme are:

All Muslim are being stigmatized

5.1 The "prevent" agenda is too broad as it stigmatizes the majority of Muslims who are law abiding citizens. Even those Muslims who find the current prevent programme as an acceptable approach to tackling extremism, feel uncomfortable in the way that it is being promoted and labeled eg usage of words such as "preventing violent extremism." Anger has also been expressed in other usage of language in the "prevent strategy" as it implies all Muslims have the potential to become violent extremists. For example, prevent objective 4 is about: "*Increasing the capacity of communities to resist violent extremism.*" Page 31 of "The Prevent Strategy" explains this objective as follows: "*strong, organized and empowered communities are better equipped to effectively reject the ideology of violent extremism.....*" This description suggests that all Muslims will be tempted towards violent extremism unless action is taken to build their resilience.

Hatred of Muslims is increasing

5.2 Many Muslims believe that stereotyping all Muslims as potential terrorists in the "prevent" strategy is resulting in the increase of racist attitudes and Islamophobia within the media, amongst the general public and service providers. Resentment also includes from other minority communities who feel that Muslims are being given special treatment by having funding targeted towards them. There is also great concern that right wing groups such as the British National Party are taking advantage of the anti-Muslim sentiments and fuelling further hatred of Muslims. There is fear that Islamophobia has become so acceptable that even school children are becoming involved in verbal and physical abuse.

Right wing extremism is being ignored

5.3 There is resentment in Muslim communities that to date the "prevent" funding by local authorities has not been used to tackle the rising violent threat from racists and fascists. This approach has led to the further alienation of Muslim communities. Although the new Communities Secretary John Denham has recently stated that the "prevent" programme will now also focus on rightwing extremism, it remains to be seen whether that translates to projects on the ground by local authorities.

Muslim are being put under surveillance by mainstreaming "prevent"

5.4 There is a new drive to mainstream the "prevent" strategy in core council services and other statutory agencies so that it is embedded in the delivery of services. The government has not shown that it has considered the impact this part of the strategy will have on how Muslims are viewed and treated by service providers. There is a fear that "prevent" will exacerbate the problem of discrimination already faced by

Muslims when accessing services. This part of the strategy also emphasizes information sharing amongst agencies which is being perceived as “spying” on and monitoring of Muslims who use public services. This is likely to alienate Muslims further.

5.5 Concerns about mainstreaming the “prevent” agenda are also shared by service providers. For example, many schools in the UK are resisting applying the guidance in the school PVE toolkit launched by the Department of Children, Schools and Families. The toolkit is aimed at helping schools to contribute to the prevention of violent extremism. The government says that many of the recommendations within the toolkit are in line with what schools are already working (on eg to develop equalities and anti-bullying practice, community cohesion and the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum). The fact that separate guidance has been produced especially to deal with PVE puts majority of the law abiding Muslim pupils under the spotlight. According to research carried out by various teachers unions, the problem of faith-based bullying in schools and colleges has intensified in recent years, particularly in the case of anti-Muslim prejudice and racism.

5.6 Services and school are also expected to refer vulnerable young people to the police “Channel” project. The project takes referrals from a number of sources on individuals that may be vulnerable to becoming involved in violent extremism. The referrals are likely to be subjective and may result in inappropriate referrals of young Muslims bearing in mind the anti-Muslim sentiments that have increased. It appears that Muslims are under surveillance in every aspect of their lives and such a strategy will be counterproductive.

Data Collection on Muslim communities

5.7 The national indicator 35 (NI 35) is an assessment framework which evaluates the effectiveness of Prevent related work programmes on a 1–5 scale against four main criteria. One of the four criteria is: understanding of and engagement with Muslim communities. Page 55 of “The Prevent Strategy,” states that local authorities should have: “*the sophisticated understanding of local Muslim communities including strong knowledge and their make-up including different ethnic groups, denominations, social and economic status, elected representatives, community leaders, knowledge of location and denomination of mosques, awareness of community groups.*”

5.8 This part of the strategy highlights the amount of scrutiny that Muslim communities are under. The government has not showed how this extent of the mapping of Muslim communities is going to help it in its counter terrorism strategy. This blanket approach towards whole Muslim communities highlights that the “prevent” strategy is not targeted towards individuals who are perhaps on the fringes of violent extremism. No other community has been subjected to this level of information gathering.

No Policies and Actions to tackle Social Injustices faced by Muslim communities

5.9 There is concern that government actions are not matching their rhetoric. For example the government promotes “shared values” but policies and actions are not addressing problems such as the rise in incitement of hatred against Muslims which is resulting in increased verbal and physical attacks. Many of the PVE projects funded by local authorities focus on capacity building rather than deradicalising extremists and bringing them back from the brink of radicalization. Such projects therefore do not need to be linked with preventing violent extremism. Instead these should be a part of a broader attempt to tackle inequalities. A priority area for government should be policies and action to tackle the discrimination against and inequalities faced by Muslim communities. Due to the high levels of deprivation faced by Muslims communities, the government could justify building the capacity of communities without having to link such a policy with the “prevent” programme. The relationship and trust between the government and Muslim communities would be strengthened if it helped Muslims in Britian achieve social justice.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Prevent should not be the only strategy used to tackle violent extremism. The government should explore alternative strategies and/or review and amend the current “prevent” strategy and take into account the concerns raised by Muslim communities, academics and other professionals who have knowledge or are working in this field of work.

6.2 The language in the prevent strategy should be reviewed and some research carried out on the impact that the usage of the negative language has had. Research should include an analysis on how the “prevent” programme has impacted on the opinions of non-Muslims about Muslim communities.

6.3 The government should ensure that where right wing extremism is a problem, there are projects which tackles this issue.

6.4 The government should weigh the costs of mainstreaming the “prevent” programme against any tangible benefits eg will service providers realistically be able to spot potential violent extremists?

How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

7. The government lists many factors that lead people to violent extremism which includes racism, discrimination, inequalities, lack of social mobility, unemployment, and criminality. Foreign policy remains the main grievance yet the government analysis down plays this fact often describing this grievance as "perceived" implying that it is not justified. In fact, "prevent objective 5" in the "prevent" strategy is about addressing grievances. However, projects addressing this objective tend to focus on providing space to express grievances rather than actually dealing with them. Despite the government's analysis of factors leading people to violent extremism, it has not shown how any of these grievances are being addressed or taken into account in policy decisions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The government should not just to create space for debating grievances but actually implement policies and take action to tackle the grievances.

How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is-or should be-aimed?

9. Concerns regarding "who" the government is engaging with and "how" they are engaging with Muslim communities have been expressed as follows:

Muslim women are being used by government

9.1 Concern has been expressed about the use of Muslim women in the "prevent" agenda. Muslim women are one of the most deprived groups in Britain today who should be empowered anyway. There is concern that the skills of Muslim women are being built up to "spy" on their families rather than participate fully in society and overcome barriers they face. For example, Muslim women face multiple discrimination based on their gender, ethnicity, faith and dress; highest unemployment rates; the poorest health; low educational attainment etc, yet there appears to be no concrete policies to tackle these issues. In addition other faith and secular women's groups are hostile towards Muslim women's groups as a result of the "prevent" funding being targeted towards them.

9.2 As Muslim women are high on the government's political agenda, the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group was set up almost two years ago. At the time, this appeared to be a good idea as Muslim women's voices are often not heard by policy makers. In the last two two years the women have had little opportunity to influence policy. Instead the women have been involved in developing and overseeing the delivery of three projects. However, this task could have been carried out by the myriad of the already existing women's groups. The government has missed a real opportunity to involve Muslim women in decision making processes—something that even the Muslim communities are not doing.

Engagement not diverse enough

9.3 The government's engagement with Muslim communities has improved since 2007 with more diverse groups of Muslims being engaged with including women and youth. However, more still needs to be done. The government and especially local authorities need to continue with efforts to reach out to and engage with more diverse Muslim groups and newer Muslim communities.

9.4 Some local authorities are only engaging with a handful of groups and individuals who they are familiar with. There is concern that this is resulting in some hard to reach communities being ignored and funding being given to organizations that have no access to people affected by extremists therefore are achieving little tangible benefits. There are also concerns that many grass root organisations are still unaware of the PVE funding or have find it difficult to access it as they are unsure of the agenda. This may perhaps explain the lack of resistance from Muslim communities on "prevent" as they may not be fully aware of the long term implications for them. However there are groups that are refusing to work under the PVE banner as they fear losing credibility as the title ignores that the vast majority are law abiding citizens. Those that have accepted the funding may not necessarily agree with the current strategy but may be viewing the funding as an opportunity for empowerment and capacity building.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The National Women's Advisory Group should be given more opportunities to influence policy.

10.2 Policies to tackle the empowerment of Muslim women should not be linked to "prevent."

10.3 Government and local authorities should to continue seeking out more diverse voices in the Muslim communities.

10.4 Local authorities should to ensure the PVE funding is accessible to a wider range of groups.

Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

11. It is very difficult to judge whether “prevent” has been effective. The local authorities may feel that their initiatives have been successful. But overall can we measure really the public is safer and the threat of violent extremism has been reduced due to the “prevent” projects? If Muslims feel alienated by “prevent,” can we really say that the strategy has been a success? Some concerns with regards to the handling of “prevent” by local authorities include:

Lack of expertise

11.1 Concerns have been expressed that local authorities do not have sufficient guidance, expertise and knowledge of Muslim communities to implement the “prevent” programme. In some local authorities there is insufficient staff to help deliver the “prevent” work and is added to the existing workload of staff. This often results in too much pressure being placed on staff which must have a negative impact on the delivery of the agenda. PVE budgets make up a tiny proportion of local authorities total budgets, yet this area of work appears to be taking up a disproportionately large amount of staff time in terms of delivery, oversight and feeding back to government etc.

11.2 There does not appear to be sufficient training and face to face opportunities for staff from different local authorities to share best practice or learn from each other’s problems. Although a website exists through the Improvement and Development Agency to share good practice and experiences, staff are often too busy to make use of this resource. Also the National PVE conferences that often take place involve listening to selected speakers and do not give opportunities to staff actually delivering the strategy to discuss good practice and problems amongst themselves.

Lack of transparency

11.3 The issue of lack of transparency has also been raised with regards to how projects are funded ie whether impartial and robust selection procedures are being applied; the amounts of funding being awarded to organizations; and evaluation reports. Where individuals have actually tried to obtain this information from their local authorities, they have been met with resistance. Some local authorities are also accused of being too busy ticking “boxes” and achieving targets on paper that may not necessarily translate to practical tangible results on the ground with real people.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Opportunities for staff delivering PVE from different local authorities (such as away days) should be created where they can share good practice and learn from each other’s problems and experiences.

12.2 There should be sufficient resource in place to deliver the “prevent” strategy and support provided to local authorities where needed.

12.3 Local authorities should implement procedures to ensure there is transparency on funding awarded; which groups receive funding; selection criteria followed on funding decisions; and on evaluations.

12.4 Local authorities should have procedures to ensure better communication with their communities.

Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively those at whom it is aimed?

13. Most groups that are being funded are unable to reach those vulnerable youth that are likely to be drawn into violent extremism or have extremist attitudes. Also such individuals are unlikely to want to engage with such mainstream Muslim organizations.

14. During the consultations the issue of the issue of citizenship education was also raised. There was criticism that the rather than patronizing youth by educating them on what it means to be a good British citizen, more effort should be directed towards making young Muslims feel that they are fully accepted by society as a British citizen through action such as tackling discrimination; raising educational attainment; tackling high unemployment rates; and tackling health inequalities etc. More need to be done to engage with disaffected youth who are marginalized and excluded from decision making processes but *not* under the “prevent” policy.

15. RECOMMENDATION

An analysis needs to be carried out on how many projects that have been funded to date actually engage with youth who are on the fringes of extremism or have extremist attitudes compared projects targeting Muslims generally.

Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?

Influence of Police

16. Concerns have been expressed about too much influence from the police on local authorities on delivering the agenda which means some action plans for delivery have a heavy police bias and are insensitive to Muslim communities.

Influence of Muslim Advisors

17. Concerns have been expressed that the Muslim advisors selected by government to advise on “prevent” have had no or very limited contact with the Muslim communities whom they are advising on and whom this strategy is having a considerable impact. The recent recruitment of Muslim advisors through an application process is welcomed and is a step in the right direction. However, as the communities are diverse and spread across the UK, their reach will still be limited.

Influence from Muslim communities

18. Concerns have been expressed that some local authorities are not consulting the local Muslim communities with regards to the best way to achieve the “prevent” objectives especially as these communities are considered vital in helping to deliver the “prevent” programme locally.

19. RECOMMENDATIONS

19.1 Recruitment of regional Muslim advisors who can feed concerns of Muslim communities to the national advisors should be considered.

19.2 When delivering the “prevent” programme, local authorities should assess how the language and actions relating to “prevent” is impacting on local communities.

19.3 There should be check and balances in place to ensure that police working with local authorities take into account the impact their use of language; input; and actions are having on local Muslim communities.

19.4 Local authorities should carry out regular consultations with Muslim communities.

How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

Lack of expertise

20. Local authorities are often under resourced in terms of staff to carry out “prevent work” and do not have the expertise to carry out evaluations of projects. Local authorities therefore at times have to rely on consultants for evaluations and support. As this is a new agenda, there are insufficient experts in this field of work. There is concern that some so called “experts” have little knowledge of the agenda or knowledge of communities but are being used by local authorities who perhaps feel they have no choice as they need the support and are under pressure to deliver the strategy locally.

Evaluations are not carried out or are not robust enough

21. Although local authorities have been visited by government auditors and some have even had independent evaluations of their projects, such assessments are only as good as the criteria set for them. During the consultation, there were suggestions that some local authorities “know” what to say to pass such reviews. Also there has been criticism of some evaluations praising projects which the local communities have felt have been wasted resources and have not fulfilled the “prevent objectives.” In most cases, where independent evaluations and audits have been carried out, they have not been communicated to the local communities and are not made accessible.

22. The government has selected certain “prevent” projects from around the country as best practice in their national “prevent strategy.” However, there was no independent evaluation of these projects to verify they were indeed good projects that were worth replicating elsewhere. The projects were simply chosen as they were recommended by local authorities and regional government offices. Some of these so called best practice projects have received criticism locally.

Reactions to the projects not being gauged locally

23. The “Prevent” programme will only be effective if it has the support of the local organizations and communities. It appears that to date, the opinions of people on the ground have not been gauged after the delivery of projects with regards to their effectiveness and appropriateness. Although some local authorities may be running community workshops where the reactions to their projects may be expressed, there is no formal requirement to consult local communities to check the effectiveness of the projects and local strategy. Such feedback is important as it could help improve the local “prevent” strategy.

24. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 24.1 Projects that are highlighted by government as best practice should be verified and evaluated first.
- 24.2 All evaluations should be more robust with improved measurement criteria.
- 24.3 Lists of experts in the field of PVE should be provided to local authorities by central government.
- 24.4 Local reactions towards projects should be measured.

Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

25. The engagement of Muslim communities is mainly occurring through “prevent” rather than any other policy framework including cohesion and integration. However, as some of the aims of “prevent” overlap the aims of integration and cohesion, some local authorities are packaging and delivering “prevent” under the cohesion label to make it more acceptable to Muslim communities. The Integration and Cohesion programmes should be separate entities with their own unique aims and goals as they are crucial issues in a multicultural society. However, these policies also need to be reviewed as they have been reduced to the failure of Muslim and other migrant communities themselves. The government therefore focuses exclusively on changing the behavior of these communities. However, cohesion and integration involves a two way process involving both minority and indigenous white communities. Unless the government acknowledges that there is also an attitude problem among the white community, who maybe even more unwilling to integrate, then any of the government’s policy frameworks will have a limited impact.

26. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 26.1 The “prevent” and cohesion/integration policies should be kept separate by local authorities.
- 26.2 The cohesion and integration policies should be reviewed and not just focus on attitudes of minority communities but include the white indigenous communities as well.

September 2009

Memorandum from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) (PVE 22)

SUMMARY

- This response focuses on the following question only: How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is or should be aimed?
- This response discusses the Inquiry’s questions, using evidence gained in a one year qualitative research study noted in paragraph three below, that analysed grass-roots approaches to countering terrorism in the London area.
- This response focuses on the importance of religious knowledge to successful partnership approaches to countering terrorism, and the role that Muslim police officers play.
- Also discussed is the role that women and young people play, and some evidence of how they can best be reached and engaged.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the committee’s inquiry. This response does not include or necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

2. The AHRC supports research within a huge subject domain from traditional humanities subjects, such as religion, history, modern languages and English literature, to the creative and performing arts. The AHRC funds research and postgraduate study within the UK’s higher education institutions.

3. The AHRC and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) provide funding for the Religion and Society Research Programme. One of the projects funded as part of this programme is entitled *An examination of partnership approaches to challenging religiously endorsed violence involving Muslim groups and police*.

4. The information in this response summarises the evidence found by the research team, led by Dr Basia Spalek at the University of Birmingham. The research team includes an Islamic theologian, a criminologist, a sociologist and a former head of the Metropolitan Police’s Muslim Contact Unit (MCU). This response should therefore be viewed as a summary of the evidence gathered as part of an independent research study carried out by AHRC/ESRC funded researchers, and not a statement of the AHRC’s and ESRC’s views on preventing violent extremism.

5. The ESRC are submitting a separate response outlining some further research which is also supported by the AHRC.

RESPONSES TO THE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities?

Community policing models can bring tangible results

6. Community policing models are increasingly being drawn upon under engagement activities within Prevent as a way of building trust between communities and police. One such model is the "Neighbourhood Policing" (NP) model in England and Wales which it is being argued that in responding to individuals' routine security concerns around issues such as anti-social behaviour or crime, police officers will be more likely to persuade community members of the benefits of assisting them in establishing the presence of any suspicions about potential terrorist activities.

7. The MCU is a good example of successful, direct engagement with communities and those deemed "at risk" of violent extremism. Working in a multi-agency environment, the MCU has succeeded in reclaiming a mosque from hard-core violent extremist supporters and has introduced Muslim police officers into counter-terrorism policing.

8. Initial face-to-face contact with police officers has developed into working relationships that involve police officers working with community members on a host of areas related to counter-terrorism, from issues in relation to community safety and cohesion, to Prevent work with young people and direct challenges to violent extremist propaganda and structures.

Religious convictions can provide strong motivation for community members to co-operate with the police's efforts to fight religious violence.

9. Individuals' commitment to Islam may provide them with a feeling of moral responsibility or a duty to help the authorities in counter-terrorism work, to form good relations with others and help people around them. They "want to do good, but want to contextualise this 'Islamically' within the framework of their own religious values", to solve social justice problems and the issue of religious violence through an Islamic framework. While engaging proactively, such community members also scrutinise the messages of violent extremists, exposing the non-Islamic elements and rejecting the violent approach to political change altogether. In doing so, they draw their answers from within, not without Islam.

10. Knowledge of, and experience in, the various ideologies of political Islam is an essential factor in winning the ideological battle and driving preachers who have promoted this ideology out of influential mosques. The success of earlier efforts by some community groups has now resulted in a number of more sophisticated and less conventional projects all based on preventing violent extremism by exposing the illegitimacy of its ideological bases. It is important for community members to clarify that their religious views and beliefs are not to be compromised as a result of their relations with the police and counter-terrorism work.

The role of Muslim police officers within Prevent is also important to consider

11. It may be that some police officers are happy to talk openly about how their faith will feature in their work and this can be a source of reassurance in developing open, respectful and equal relationships with their community partners without requiring them to make unwilling compromises. Muslim police officers not only may bring with them operational policing and community policing experience, but also social and cultural capital that might enable police-community partnerships to be built, particularly with those sections of Muslim communities who are generally distrustful of the police. Muslim police officers can play an instrumental role in building bridges with members of mosques, developing trusting relationships with mosque communities and then extending these relationships to non-Muslim police officers.

12. In order for Muslim police officers to access certain sections of Muslim communities they must have credibility with those communities and respect for the religious identifications of community members. In order to partner people for whom religion is important, it is often necessary for police officers who are making initial contacts with community members to show religious sincerity and credibility. Interestingly, the number of Muslim police officers engaged in community counter-terrorism work is extremely low—27 individuals nationally at the time of writing, of whom two are women (NAMP & Demos 2008:8).

Has the Government been speaking to the right people?

13. Identifying which community groups are best placed to challenge the behaviours and attitudes of individuals deemed at risk of violent extremism is a key issue. It may be that in some instances, it is important for groups to have knowledge about, and shared experience, backgrounds and credibility of the people vulnerable to or already engaged in violent discourse and action. Such a 'street' approach is invaluable to this form of countering terrorism. Indeed, the street credibility of a community member or group, and their in-depth knowledge of Islamic texts and jurisprudence can be crucial in fighting violent extremism on ideological grounds. Groups who have less credentials, less knowledge or who are not trusted by others of the same faith will be easily defeated in the ideological debate and will be unable to sustain the position of a convincing alternative to extremism.

Has its programme reached those at whom it is or should be aimed?

Women and young people are key groups in the Prevent agenda

14. Another purpose of engagement might be to build trust between police officers and Muslim communities more generally, particularly when activities under Pursue and Disrupt may concern and affect some community members. Counter-terrorism is a context traditionally characterised by secrecy; therefore, part of ongoing engagement between police and Muslim communities can be to dispel fears or suspicions that people may have which may be preventing them from working more closely with the police.

15. In the case of young people, who are arguably facing the greatest levels of scrutiny in the counter-terrorism arena, issues of trust and access are paramount. Working with youth workers who have the credibility and expertise to tackle sensitive issues has proven to be highly successful, for example in allowing for preventative interventions with young people both vulnerable to and in some cases already holding violent extremist ideologies. This is not the remit for the vast majority of youth workers, but those experienced at the street level, and with the drivers of violent radicalisation. These experts may have particular theological affiliations and may have been through the process of radicalisation themselves.

16. Women are viewed as key stakeholders within the Prevent agenda, with initiatives such as the Muslim Women's Advisory Group well publicised. It could be argued that a number of barriers exist preventing Muslim women at a grassroots level from engaging in Prevent and Pursue strands. Overcoming these barriers would enable greater numbers of community members to engage, and specific to Muslim women, allow for contact through key, experienced individuals with some of the most isolated and potentially vulnerable community members.

There is a need to focus on individuals rather than whole social groups

17. Engagement that takes place under the counter-terrorism Pursue and Disrupt strands should be specifically aimed at those individuals undertaking criminal activities rather than being targeted rather diffusely at particular social groupings, in this case Muslim communities. This is because forms of engagement that exist within Pursue and Disrupt, if inappropriately carried out, may alienate and erode the trust of the social groupings that are being targeted for intensified street policing or other intrusive tactics, yet trust is crucial for obtaining community intelligence. It is important to establish the purpose of engagement as this will influence decisions about who should be engaged. One purpose might be to provide reassurance to Muslim communities with respect to issues such as racist or Islamophobic attacks, particularly in the aftermath of an attempted or real terror attack. Here, engagement should have a fairly broad remit, being inclusive of all members of Muslim communities.

September 2009

Memorandum from PeaceMaker (PVE 23)

ABOUT PEACEMAKER

PeaceMaker began in 1997 as a voluntary organisation to challenge racism and overcome the fear, prejudice, and segregation prevalent across Oldham. Since our inception, PeaceMaker has worked across all communities, with a particular focus on children and young people from segregated communities, to promote integration, build solidarity, forge positive relationships across communities, and collectively respond to the challenges faced by deprived communities.

PeaceMaker aims to support the development of inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds are encouraged to feel they belong and are able to contribute to the development of strong, cohesive communities. PeaceMaker achieves its aims through creating opportunities for shared learning where people can work together to challenge and overcome prejudice.

Since our inception, PeaceMaker has been working in segregated South Asian (Muslim) and white working-class communities and has successfully developed a portfolio of initiatives that has built the resilience of these communities to protect themselves from extremist influences. We have been engaged in this work long before 9/11, 7/7 and the emergence of the PVE agenda.

Fundamental to success in our opinion, is the need to engage in these communities with a positive focus, rather than the current emphasis where the rationale appears to be "we are here to stop you from becoming bad." We are active partners in the Prevent agenda, are committed to its aspirations, but do have reservations about how it is currently being implemented and welcome an opportunity to help shape the Prevent agenda to be more effective at delivering its aims and outcomes.

SUMMARY

Our response is based upon actual frontline delivery of the Prevent programme across the ten Greater Manchester local authorities and through providing training and consultancy services to voluntary and statutory organisations involved in the Prevent agenda across England.

The key challenges that we have identified within the Prevent programme are:

1. The crude methodology used to allocate funding and identify communities of risk does not target the Prevent interventions on those individuals and communities most at-risk.
2. Prevent funding is being used to replace general historical race equality funding and therefore fails to target individuals and communities most at-risk.
3. The re-emergence of faith leaders as central to the agenda's implementation and as representatives of entire Muslim communities in the dialogue with government increases the marginalisation of vulnerable community members who have not historically identified or engaged with these leaders.
4. The interpretation of faith as a primary motive of those who display sympathy towards Al-Qaeda type groups has been over-simplified and over-emphasised by those leading the Prevent agenda.
5. The use of the word "prevent" as opposed to a more positive "resilience-building" creates extreme challenges of communicating the Prevent agenda to Muslim communities who feel victimised. In addition, the almost exclusive focus on Muslim communities and the indiscriminate targeting of all Muslim communities reinforce this sense of victimisation.
6. The failure of policy-makers to genuinely involve local Muslim communities in shaping the Prevent agenda further reinforces this sense of victimisation and one-sidedness, thus increasing the likelihood of communities not engaging with the agenda.
7. The failure to engage on the agendas and priorities identified by communities makes Prevent a government-driven, government-enforced agenda, rather than a community-driven agenda. This further increases cynicism among communities and the likelihood of enterprising individuals and community groups to exploit Prevent funding for ulterior motives.
8. At delivery level, over 90% of activities delivered as Prevent projects, of which we are aware, are nothing more than community cohesion projects delivered to Muslim communities and individuals. It seems that the only criteria for a project to be delivered under the Prevent agenda is that it work with Muslim people, regardless of the actual content of the delivery or the aims and outcomes of the project. In any other context, these projects would merely be classed as community development work.
9. There has been complete failure to evaluate the effectiveness of Prevent projects and facilitate in the sharing of good practice across the country. The Prevent agenda is over-localised in comparison to the global rhetoric of Al-Qaeda influenced organisations.
10. There is a clear lack of understanding and confusion amongst policy-makers, politicians, and frontline organisations over the distinction of policy frameworks including Prevent, community cohesion, and integration.
11. There is also confusion between the roles of police, local authority, and frontline organisations delivering Prevent, resulting in the side-lining and de-funding of frontline organisations that do not agree to covertly gather intelligence for the police through Prevent projects.

The following paragraphs expound on the above-mentioned summary of emerging themes of our work on the Prevent agenda:

1. The crude and clumsy methodology of distributing Prevent money in local authority areas that have more than 2,000 Muslims, without taking into account additional risk factors, clearly demonstrates the government's ineptitude at defining risk, identifying vulnerability and targeting resources at communities and individuals that are actually at risk. Additionally, it has a negative impact on the sense of victimisation felt amongst Muslim communities and, in areas where resources are hard to come by, it increases the grievance felt by other non-Muslim groups. Our experiences are that both white working-class communities and traditional African-Caribbean communities are increasingly hostile to allocation of resources exclusively for Muslim communities. Whilst the rhetoric in some places talks about tackling extremism across communities, the emphasis of the funding is exclusively on Muslim communities. The fundamental problem with this is that funding is being allocated indiscriminately without an analysis of risk.
2. Traditional South Asian organisations are successfully accessing Prevent funding through emphasising the Muslim aspect of their identity. This funding is being used to replace historical race equality funding that has seen severe cutbacks with the emergence of the cohesion agenda. Indeed, Prevent funding is being used to deliver activities that are anti-cohesion, and this is taking us back at least five years in the way in which we engage and support community groups.
3. There is a clear discrepancy between organisations and communities that are engaging in the Prevent agenda and those that are at-risk. The re-emergence of faith leaders as community representatives will have far-reaching, long-term consequences on disaffected young people who

have never nor will ever consider these faith leaders to represent their experiences or interests. As in many other communities, there is a growing gulf in inter-generational relationships within these communities, and the engagement of older traditional faith leaders as representatives of their communities creates a vacuum of representation that makes it easier for extremists to exploit vulnerable young people.

4. The placement of faith leaders in these positions of influence over-emphasises the focus on Islam and the perception that violent extremism is caused through a misunderstanding of Islam. Many young people, who we spoke to that held violent extremists views, did so for a plethora of reasons of which faith was at best only one small aspect.
5. Since the inception of Prevent, prior to any outreach work conducted by local authorities or their partners, politicised and indeed radicalised Muslims had already engaged in their communities presenting their own interpretation of Prevent, which has hindered the acceptance of Prevent within communities. Additionally, Prevent is a government-led agenda, perceived as being forced upon communities, rather than as a response to a need identified by communities. As such, there is hostility towards the agenda, and the language used in Prevent is only one factor of the hostility towards Prevent within these communities. In our experience, the communities and individuals engaging in the Prevent agenda are not actually at-risk of violent extremism.
6. On the whole, Prevent programmes have been developed in the abstract and behind closed doors. We have also seen clear examples of patronage, where Muslim elected members have ensured that organisations with which they are linked have received funding, irrespective of their capacity, capability, or indeed the agenda of these organisations.
7. Prevent is not a community-led agenda and until it becomes a community-led agenda, it will be exploited by individuals and organisations from within communities. We have seen a shift from a reluctance to engage in the agenda to a situation in which people will take Prevent funding but will use it for their own projects, irrespective of the aims of the Prevent agenda. Local policy-makers are fully aware of this and indeed in some places are colluding with such activity. We have a fear that tens of millions of pounds are at best being misdirected and at worst doing nothing to reduce the likelihood of violent extremism.
8. Due to the hostility towards Prevent in communities, there is a reluctance amongst policymakers to genuinely develop and deliver Prevent-focused activities. This has resulted in the funding of watered-down activities. Additionally, there is a reluctance to genuinely challenge potential extremist views for fear of upsetting and further alienating individuals and communities. We have delivered commissions where analysis that we have made based upon robust methodology has had to be amended in order not to upset certain people. This tiptoeing around the issue and not frankly discussing notable findings is counterproductive.
9. Whilst partnerships may exist across local authorities at a strategic level, we have seen no examples of sustained forums and networks supporting those involved in frontline activities. Local authorities are competing against each other in their Prevent deliver, are not sharing their practice with one another and, more importantly, are not accepting the good practice of others. Unfortunately, these local territorial attitudes are up against a global agenda and rhetoric of violent extremism that cuts across local authorities. Whilst local issues within communities increase a sense of grievance that Muslim people may have, this on its own does not and will never result in them becoming violent extremists without the global connection.
10. There is a whole host of complementary policy agendas that are difficult to distinguish among. Having said that, particularly amongst Muslim (South Asian) communities, the cohesion agenda has weakened community infrastructure as we have seen a movement away from traditional race equality work. From their perspective, they do not care if the policy context is race equality, community cohesion, or indeed PVE as long as they can access funding for their projects. The lack of clarity amongst policy-makers of the intricate distinctions between each of these agendas has resulted in Prevent funding being spent on race equality and cohesion projects, rather than bespoke Prevent projects that directly build resilience to violent extremism.
11. We have come across clear examples of the police attempting to use Prevent as a means to gather intelligence and, where delivery organisations have resisted this, we have seen pressure put on the local authority to distance themselves from these organisations. The Prevent agenda is not a Pursue agenda, nor should it ever be a covert, intelligence-gathering programme for the police. We have engaged with well-meaning professionals in organisations across England that have had similar experiences with the police. The bullying tactics of the police are alienating the very organisations that have the most trust within communities and are best placed to delivery Prevent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A more sophisticated, multi-layered process should be developed to identify communities in which Prevent needs to be targeted. Using such a methodology will help ensure a wider dispersion of Prevent funding to include other communities that are at-risk of violent extremism, such as far-right extremism. PeaceMaker has developed a sophisticated screening process in partnership with a leading professor that helps identify specific risk factors, and we would be willing to share our work with DCLG.
2. Organisations that receive Prevent funding should receive training on the aspirations of the government's Prevent agenda and local decision-makers should ensure that their funded activities have very clear and overt Prevent elements within them.
3. Local authorities should be encouraged to engage with individuals and communities on community-identified priorities using more creative techniques, rather than engaging traditional faith leaders and elected members in formal meetings. A multi-layered approach where engaged individuals are encouraged to be gateways into their communities and are supported to more effectively engage with the hard-to-reach elements within their communities would help transform this situation.
4. Safe spaces should be created and frontline staff trained to facilitate conversations around key political issues that are the focus of Al-Qaeda type organisations, rather than over-emphasising and misunderstanding the role that faith plays in extremism. Prevent needs to respond to the wider issues that violent extremists exploit when recruiting and radicalising young people.
5. Prevent needs to be one aspect of a portfolio of interventions that are delivered in communities. This portfolio needs to also include interventions that respond to community needs and priorities.
6. An open, frank and transparent series of conversations with communities needs to be encouraged in localities that receive Prevent funding. Prevent funding should only be allocated where this has already taken place and where there is clear evidence of communities shaping Prevent interventions. The existing practice of allocating funding before these conversations or engagement take place is counter-productive.
7. The above two recommendations will ensure that the agenda is community-driven rather than government-enforced and will help create a climate of successful community ownership.
8. A clear Prevent strategy should be developed at local level prior to funding being distributed. All funding should be commissioned based upon the strategy thus ensuring that funding will be used to deliver Prevent,
9. Central funding should be allocated to develop a practitioners' network that will share good practice, aid localities in developing initiatives and evaluate and improve on these interventions. We do not envisage that Prevent will be a short-term agenda and the quicker that this mechanism is created, the less money will be wasted, the less mistakes replicated, and significantly we will see a professionalisation take place within this area of work. All of these factors will contribute to the better development, delivery, and sharing of good practice.
10. Government should produce clear guidance that demonstrates, both in the abstract and through case studies, the overlap between different policy areas and also the key distinctions between them.
11. A compact should be established that clearly defines the roles and expectations of key organisations including the police, local authorities, and frontline organisations in the delivery of Prevent. This will ensure that frontline organisations are not exploited and go a long way towards strengthening trust within communities where Prevent is being delivered. This compact should be signed by all Prevent delivery partners at a local level with a clear complaints procedure directly to DCLG.

The Prevent agenda has had a challenging start. Without doubt, if developed and delivered in a more appropriate manner, it has value in helping to build resilience within communities. Unfortunately, in our experience to date, the Prevent agenda is not fit for purpose and is consistently failing in its remit to build resilient communities. If a radical overhaul does not take place, then the government will not only continue to waste money but increase the animosity held within the very communities that are most at-risk and make it more difficult than ever before to engage within these communities.

Memorandum from Birmingham City Council (PVE 25)

SUMMARY

- Birmingham is committed to the Prevent programme, as it currently stands, and adopts its approach to delivering the agenda in accordance.
- Our Delivery Plan utilises intelligence from West Midlands Police (eg Counter-Terrorism Local Profile) in order to target funding and provision as necessary to support vulnerable communities and institutions.
- Birmingham has governance structures in place to ensure that communities are represented at key decision making levels regarding delivery of Prevent.
- Birmingham has access to advice and expertise on how to implement and evaluate Prevent, and has used this provision as needed. Guidance issued has been very useful in producing the Delivery Plan and planning for the evaluation that will take place regarding how effective the plan is and has been.
- Birmingham has systems in place to monitor Prevent delivery and make sure that any targets set are being met. We also have an evaluation plan in place to look at short and long term impacts the Delivery Plan.
- Birmingham delivers Prevent as its own programme (and has specific resources and governance structures to do so), although we recognise links with other relevant areas such as community cohesion and respond accordingly.
- The PVE Steering Group is able to bring together all funding streams thereby ensuring synergy and no duplication.

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

1.1 Birmingham is committed to delivering the Prevent programme and believes that Prevent should stand as its own strategy and not be combined with other related areas such as community cohesion (although we recognise that these links do exist and respond accordingly). Our approach to delivering Prevent therefore reflects this belief by having a direct approach with those it is engaging with, both partner organisations and the community. For example, when tendering for new projects to deliver interventions all applications must contain details of how their projects link in with the Prevent strategy and the specific areas of delivery that we are looking at (eg “reclaiming Islam”). West Midlands Police Security & Partnership Officers work within communities, as part of the Counter-Terrorism Unit, to assist in delivering the Prevent agenda. Their role is to provide an overt, visible and accessible link between the covert counter-terrorism function, the Police, communities and partners.

1.2 Birmingham recognises that there is a threat and risk as borne out by terrorism arrests and convictions within the area.

2. *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the ‘Prevent’ programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

2.1 Although there is no single profile of a violent extremist, or a single pathway that can lead to becoming radicalised, Birmingham has based its Delivery Plan upon intelligence from West Midlands Police’s strategic assessment and Counter-Terrorism Local Profile in order to target funding and interventions in appropriate areas and institutions to strengthen their resilience to violent extremism. Projects and interventions being delivered in such areas fall under the seven objectives defined in the Prevent strategy. As more interventions are being set up and delivered, we are finding it easier to identify what works well and to also look at potential areas to build upon (for example, mental health services) in order to further assist in building resilience and supporting vulnerable individuals.

3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

3.1 Birmingham’s current governance structure in relation to delivering Prevent includes representation from not only Local Authority and Police, but also from community organisations. Member from such organisations sit on the PVE Steering Group, which has responsibility to ensure the programme delivers within its agreed parameters (cost, timescale, impact), resolve the strategic and directional issues between projects which need the input and agreement of senior stakeholders to progress the integration into mainstream, and provide assurance. Members of community organisations sit on the Project Assessment Panel, which review all Prevent-funded project applications and makes recommendations to the PVE Steering Group. The Prevent Programme Manager also attends Local Delivery Groups in each of the identified vulnerable constituencies within Birmingham, which includes representation from Local Authority as well as local partner organisations that operate in the specific constituency, to ensure that

Prevent agenda is included in discussions and any future plans for the areas. This therefore ensures that communities within Birmingham are represented at key decision making levels in terms of how funding should be distributed, and what areas of work need to take place to support vulnerable communities.

4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

4.1 Guidance from CLG has been helpful in producing Birmingham's Delivery Plan and providing resources to use in order to evaluate projects and the whole delivery plan. Birmingham will be using the evaluation guidance to run a workshop with partners delivering projects around the resources available and how to evaluate their projects accordingly. The evaluation guidance has also been used to produce an evaluation plan to look at short-term, internal evaluation of the Delivery Plan in order to inform National Indicator 35 self-assessment, as well as planning a longer-term evaluation to look at the whole three year's worth of delivery within Birmingham.

4.2 Guidance issued around National Indicator 35 has proved invaluable as it has provided the ability to effectively measure performance against the criteria and recognise gaps in delivery, which will enable performance to improve.

5. *Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

5.1 Please refer to answer to question three.

5.2 We also believe that other local authorities should recognise the threat/risk and embrace Prevent. Only by tackling the issues "head-on" whilst simultaneously stating that the aim is to support Muslim communities will we be able to prevail. Those LAs who refuse to accept Prevent, or through perceived sensitivities do not discuss the issues with their communities and therefore divert funding to broader community cohesion issues, make the task more difficult for all of us.

6. *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?*

6.1 Advice need to be credible and moderate, though pushing at the boundaries of moderate. Young people listen to those groups/individuals who have been "over the edge" and come back. The Government has to differentiate about what is the "credible" element appropriate to—the Government or the audience—and recognise that it should always be the audience.

6.2 The Government should be careful as to whom it openly endorses and engages, as this makes the endorsed group not credible within the community.

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

7.1 Birmingham have robust systems in place for monitoring project progress against Service Level Agreements and have now produced an evaluation plan which covers the duration of the funding period (2008–11). The evaluation plan includes both internal and external evaluation of the Prevent Delivery Plan and will look at effectiveness, value for money and community perception of Prevent, and will help to inform future work to be undertaken within Birmingham. This will add to mainstreaming the delivery of Prevent objectives, therefore making us able to defend any potential criticism due to our strict governance and management of funding.

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

8.1 Birmingham delivers Prevent as its own programme (and has specific resources and governance structures to do so), although we recognise links with other relevant areas such as community cohesion and respond accordingly.

8.2 Although there are obvious links between Prevent and Community Cohesion, Prevent should remain as a distinctly separate agenda. By integrating the two it serves to lessen the importance of Prevent in order to appease Muslim communities. This may be viable and desirable in some local authority areas. In Birmingham we have tackled the Prevent agenda head on, in that the Muslim communities are aware that there is a very threat and risk from violent extremists (ie Operation Gamble and other terrorist arrests/convictions), and that the LA and Police have a Prevent strategy which is there to support them. By being very open and honest about our engagement and intentions this has helped to dispel any negative/adverse feelings about the communities being stigmatised and spied upon. There is an element within the Paper which mentions the threat of BNP/Far Right extremism which is not being addressed by the Prevent agenda. In Birmingham we can say that we recognise the threat from BNP/Far Right extremism also, and as a result have commissioned two PVE projects to look at this very issue in Kingstanding and Shard End.

Memorandum from the Somali Family Support Group (SFSG) (PVE 26)

The nuance that the programme itself was carrying was very antagonistic and ill conceived. Positioning a programme that denotes to fight violent extremism and help, support and capacity build Muslim communities in one sentence spelt disaster from day one. Most NGOs dealing with Muslim communities felt by working under the said programme, they were in agreement with the impracticality that Islam and its followers were sympathetic terrorism.

On the Prevent programme our appraisal is as follows:

- We do not think it to be the way forward in addressing the problem of violent extremism. This is because the government is tunnel visioned when it deals with its Muslim community and fails dreadfully to get a peripheral view. In the context of the Muslim community, it is significant that the government should develop a policy that is transparent, that alleviates the social injustice and structural inequalities Muslims have endured in the last decades.
- The British foreign policy plays a crucial role in the way British Muslims identity themselves with the Ummah, and the government needs to accept that this unhappiness with the foreign policy felt by those at “risk groups” could be a potential for radicalisation. This especially rings true in the Somali community regarding “Al Shabab” and piracy, propagated by the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq & Palestine.
- Giving the charge of both funding and supervising the funded project to the Local Authorities (LA) has worked well in some boroughs but not in others. Some local authorities use the money for other purposes, especially since it is not ring fenced in the Local area agreement. We feel that the diversity within the British Muslim communities is something that needs to be acknowledged as there is no “British Muslim community” who can speak for all British Muslims. We feel that the government should set up an impartial body who oversee the delivery, consultation and the dispensation to the whole of the Muslim community. The programme must be widely promoted and application process simplified. It is also very important to re-evaluate the objectives of the programme in to what is potentially achieving and what is failing at.
- We believe that the LA do not have the necessary expertise to evaluate the governments’ targets (especially since the targets are quantitative rather than qualitative on the Muslims) and perhaps a steering group ought to be set up, made up of those within the diverse Muslim communities to evaluate its effectiveness. Such implementation has to follow a carefully thought through programme on the aims and outcomes, and be transparent on all its dealings within the delivery and commissioning of services.
- Many of the Muslim grass root workers who are respected and considered credible, prefer not to apply for PVE money as they do not wish to come across as colluding with the idea that Islam is an inherently violent religion. Many Muslims are disillusioned and therefore do not trust the government’s intentions as they feel there is a institutionalised culture of double standards, a point that the government must address.
- Another factor hindering the effectiveness of the Prevent strategy is the perception of non Muslim communities. There has been more funding going into Muslim communities ever since 9/11, however there is a growing sentiment from other communities that this is almost like a reward for “bad” behaviour, creating tensions and thus hindering effective inter community partnerships.
- The dissemination of PREVENT agenda remains largely misunderstood, if not totally hidden from the target audience; this is all stems down to a lack of diverse communication package that is palatable to the audience its targeting
- By instituting the Local Authority as the main purser for this programme, the government has failed to address issues with relevant communities. The programme became an exercise on ticking boxes and achieving targets on paper that may not necessarily translate to practical tangible results on the ground with real people.
- In this experience we consider ourselves to be a isolated within a smaller minority and we therefore remain marginalised, institutionalised and secluded from all decision making policies that could have imminent effect on our way of life.
- Government must learn to consult a much wider group of Muslims as the British Muslim community is one of a very complex web that encompasses multiple identities, different cultures and indeed different historical backgrounds and this leads to the present objectives in our opinion to be somewhat misguided. Especially among the African Muslims who are not consulted in most of the government policies that affect the local Muslim communities, thus creating a plethora disenfranchisement from mainstream society.

Memorandum from the Association of Police Authorities (PVE 28)

SUMMARY

- The Prevent Strategy is welcomed as one of the ways of addressing violent extremism
- The funding formula for the allocation of Prevent resources needs to be reviewed to reflect circumstances other than Muslim population figures
- Regional Government Offices should be encouraged to actively engage police authorities in strategic discussions on Prevent
- The Comprehensive Area Assessment process should be utilised to ensure all relevant partners are fully engaged in local Prevent partnerships and delivery
- A fundamental responsibility of the police in relation to Prevent is the development of local Prevent partnerships and delivery of activity. However, it needs to be recognised that policing on Prevent covers a breadth of activity requiring a range of different partnership relations, from community engagement at a neighbourhood policing level to the operational work of Counter-Terrorism Units and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Units
- Consultation and engagement with communities on matters of policing is a responsibility of police authorities and local partners and Government Offices should be directed to include police authorities in any proposed activity
- The APA believes that performance management in relation to Prevent is not sufficiently robust to ensure organisations can be held to account for their delivery
- The APA believes that approaches to Prevent and community cohesion should be better distinguished in order to ensure that Government funding for Prevent is used locally specifically for Prevent objectives

INTRODUCTION

1. The Association of Police Authorities (APA) is generally supportive of the Government's approach to Prevent, and has recognised the critical importance of Prevent in policing. The APA has established a dedicated post of Strategic Policy Adviser on Prevent to support police authorities in delivering on Prevent, and to represent the APA nationally.

2. Underpinning many of the responses to the consultation questions is the APA view that Prevent is an extremely broad concept, and difficult to consider as one notion. At one end of the spectrum it is about communities and has real synergy with community cohesion, whilst at the other, it is hard edged, operational, often bespoke to an individual, and can be at odds with community cohesion. We would suggest that there needs to be more of an acknowledgement of the breadth of Prevent work.

3. It is important to draw to the attention of the committee that the primary concern of police authorities in relation to Prevent is policing. Additional growth in police resources for Prevent has principally come from Home Office OSCT. However, police forces and Basic Command Units are engaged in partnership activity at a regional and local level, many of them specifically in relation to CLG PVE funding. In addition police authorities themselves often take on roles within the development and management of strategic partnership's that oversee Prevent and a number consult and engage with local communities specifically on Prevent.

Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?

4. Prevent is one of the ways of addressing the problem of violent extremism, along with other elements of the CONTEST strategy, and also longer term work on cohesion. From a policing perspective there is a fine balance to be sought between Prevent and Pursue, and the overall imperative is to stop terrorist attacks.

5. The delivery of Prevent is sometimes perceived locally as separate programmes of activity, with a policing response and a local authority response, often not related to each other. In many areas that have received PVE funding this perception of Prevent being either a 'security' response on one hand or a "community" approach on the other has been a cause for differences in opinion. In some areas the delivery of CLG funded Prevent work is separated from police Prevent delivery, with many local authorities believing that because of Muslim community perceptions about being "spied" upon the involvement of policing has a negative impact upon community confidence and cohesion. This may be compounded by OSCT ownership of Prevent strategy objectives 2 & 3, and CLG ownership of Objectives 1,3, & 5.

6. Funding allocated to date through CLG has been based largely upon the size of Muslim population within an area and not sufficiently based on assessed "risk". A number of areas that will not have received funding according to this criterion have high potential risk of large scale national collateral damage. Whilst recognising that this is to an extent a Protect and Prepare issue, future funding that was also based upon potential target sites would be welcomed. In addition funding that also recognised risks associated with other extremisms would be welcomed.

7. There is a real sense amongst many police authorities that there is not a sufficiently co-ordinate message from central government departments. Regional Government Offices should be involving police authorities in strategic discussions to ensure that wherever appropriate local Prevent activity is delivered, and perceived to be delivered, in genuine partnership.

8. Reassurance is required that co-ordinate oversight ensures that relevant partners are contributing fully, and that this oversight process exposes situations where this is not occurring so that they can be addressed. The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process and an increased emphasis on the measurement of councils in relation to NI35 and NI36 should be the cornerstone of Government Offices being able to understand and address deficiencies in local delivery. Fundamental to this is the acceptance by partners that Prevent is a shared responsibility and not a police led issue.

9. From the perspective of policing the perception of a “security versus community” approach to Prevent is erroneous. Prevent policing extends from work embedded in neighbourhood policing, including community engagement, gathering community intelligence and working with the most vulnerable groups in communities, through to Special Branch and Counter-Terrorism Units and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Units, and necessarily covers all of the “Prevent spectrum”.

How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

10. It is generally accepted that there is not a single identifiable pathway to radicalisation and violent extremism, and the APA acknowledges that there are significant practitioner and academic research projects that have been initiated to gain a better understanding of this complex area. The Channel Project is one example where this “imperfect” understanding of vulnerability to extremism is being applied in a practical context. Equally, many local PVE funded projects recognise some of the socio-economic factors that may give rise to a vulnerability to extremism, including lack of educational or employment opportunities for communities, and have sought to address those. The APA supports an approach that does not adopt a simplistic understanding of factors related to vulnerability and could potentially lead to individuals being wrongly tagged with the label of extremist. We welcome approaches within Channel that seek to utilise robust intelligence and adopt a safeguarding approach with the equal input of partner expertise into the identification and referral process.

11. In terms of the targeting of the Prevent programme, much of the CLG work is felt to address broader issues of cohesion and provision of opportunity through, for example, the establishment of Muslim women’s groups or sporting activity for young Muslims. While this is considered valuable and has a relationship to Prevent strategy objectives 1,3 and 5, many police authorities feel that it does not address or tackle the most vulnerable or radicalised individuals. Prevent policing is more focused upon Prevent objectives 2 & 3 through, for example, Channel Project and CTU/CTIU activity.

How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?

12. Police authorities recognise that there is a complex and densely occupied landscape in terms of national stakeholders for government to communicate and engage with. Criticism is often levelled at government for engagement with those that some consider not to share liberal democratic values, but equally there has been adverse reaction to Government engagement with Muslim organisations such as the Quilliam Foundation.

13. The government’s strategy to devolve engagement activity to a local level through CLG funding is welcomed and considered the most appropriate response. More should be done through Government Offices to ensure that this engagement is co-ordinate across a range of different regional and local agencies, including police, police authority, local authority, and other partners. A number of police authorities have demonstrated significant levels of engagement that has subsequently informed the police in relation to Prevent.

Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

14. It is recognised that significant amounts of guidance advice has been developed and distributed to local authorities and other partners, and that significant learning and development work is ongoing around Prevent. The APA also recognise the contribution of the LGA and IDeA in seeking to develop learning in the sector. The APA has made its own contribution to enhancing the advice and expertise available to police authorities through the appointment of a Strategic Policy Adviser on Prevent. The recent CLG guidance, “Evaluating local Prevent projects and programmes” will prove useful for monitoring and evaluating local projects and programmes.

15. However, police authorities do feel that there are still gaps in relation to the performance management of Prevent, with too little emphasis on outcome measures of success. We are aware of ongoing work looking at success measures through various bodies such as CLG and ACPO, and would urge a concerted effort to jointly agree and develop robust performance management measures, in addition to National Indicator 35, to allow organisations, and more importantly the public, to judge the success of Prevent activity.

Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?

16. Central government has made repeated efforts to communicate the objectives, and this is supported on a day to day basis by RICU. Ultimately, many Muslim communities will not agree with the Prevent agenda and feel that they are being targeted. Ultimately communications efforts aimed at these sections of communities may not be successful.

17. The APA believes that the level of Prevent activity in any area should be proportionate and tailored to the levels and type of risk identified, be that Al-Qaida influenced ideology or other types of extremism, and supports government efforts to communicate this message effectively

18. The notion that Prevent is about surveillance and monitoring of Muslim communities is deeply ingrained in some communities and will be difficult to shift. This particularly impacts upon policing in relation to community engagement and neighbourhood policing.

19. More positively many communities have recognised that there are issues with extremism and have actively responded to and participated in the Prevent agenda.

20. The APA believes that there is an ongoing need to raise awareness of Prevent, and CONTEST more broadly, amongst all communities, both to reassure those communities and to facilitate effective community intelligence and the identification of risk.

Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?

21. The APA is satisfied that the Government has sought the views and advice of a very broad range of stakeholders in relation to achieving Prevent objectives. From a policing perspective there is input in to cross-governmental policy and programme development through ACPO, APA and the NPJA

22. The APA would urge central Government to ensure that this broad representation of stakeholder advice is replicated at a regional and local level.

How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

23. This relates to the point above about effectively measuring success, and the APA believes that while output measures can demonstrate value for money aspects, there is at present no satisfactory outcome success measure to adequately demonstrate value for money. Unfortunately, this has allowed organisations such as the Taxpayer's Alliance to publish relatively ill-informed reports on Government spending on Prevent.

24. The issue of assessing effectiveness and value for money is a particular problem for police authorities in relation to ensuring that the police deliver an effective and efficient service in relation to Prevent.

25. Whether or not reactions to the Prevent programme were adequately predicted or gauged by Government is a moot point. The important issue for the APA is that where specific concerns are raised by communities about Prevent they are listened to and addressed at the appropriate level. Recent controversy around Section 44 stops is a prime example of this.

Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

26. The APA is uncertain that there is general widespread understanding that Prevent has a specific purpose in reducing the threat of violent extremism, and that this differs considerably from broader cohesion and integration objectives. Much of the PVE funded project work in local areas does not have a specific enough focus upon preventing violent extremism, and many police authorities question whether, in practice, there is any real difference between Prevent and community cohesion. We feel that any future plans to submerge Prevent into broader community cohesion work are worrying. Some of the social science research shows that this will miss those individuals who may already be on a radical pathway and who can only be diverted by a bespoke individual intervention such as that provided by Channel projects.

Memorandum from Leicester City Council (PVE 29)

1. LEICESTER—CONTEXT

1.1 Leicester is a very diverse, multi faith, multi ethnic city and is amongst the most diverse ethnic minority communities outside of London. The city prides itself on this and the high levels of community cohesion that exists within and amongst its communities.

1.2 This uniqueness has attracted much national and international public and academic interest in the city and how it manages community cohesion.

1.3 Local intelligence indicates that approximately 60% of the city's population is ethnically white and 40% have an ethnic minority background.

1.4 In terms of faith, Leicester has a unique mix of Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The majority of the ethnic minority community are Hindu (approximately 61%), a quarter are Muslim (approximately 25%) and 4% are Sikh. (Leicester City Council estimates September 2009).

1.5 Faith seems to play an active part in the lives of many of Leicester's communities. There are approximately 150 places of Christian worship in the city, two Jewish synagogues, 36 mosques—majority of which are Sunni mosques, 22 Hindu temples, seven Sikh Gurdwaras and one Jain temple.

2. LEICESTER'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

2.1 Two thirds of Leicester's Muslim communities are of Indian origin.

2.2 Over recent years, particularly since the arrival of Somali communities from 2001, as well as asylum seekers and refugees, the Muslim population in the city has significantly increased. This growth is expected to continue as 26% of the school population is Muslim and 15% Hindu. (PLASC, 2006).

2.3 As well as our Muslim population increasing we have observed an increase in devoutness to the Islamic faith with an increase in symbols, the wearing of the headscarf by Muslim women and religious dress.

2.4 Another interesting observation is that our Hindu and Muslim communities are very spatially concentrated in Leicester: Hindus in the north of the city, and Muslims to the east of the city centre. There are no similar concentrations observed for other religions.

3. MAINSTREAMING MODERATION IN LEICESTER

3.1 During 2007–08, Leicester was identified as a priority local authority and became one of the government's 70 Pathfinder areas.

3.2 Following the launch of the Prevent Strategy, the city was provided with additional three year funding through the Local Area Based Grant in support of work to prevent violent extremism.

3.3 Leicester has questioned the government's use of "Preventing Violent Extremism" (PVE) language and has chosen to refer to it locally as a strategy of "Mainstreaming Moderation" which is more suited to the city's approach as it encompasses all forms of violent extremism.

3.4 We have built on the extensive work on community cohesion in the city, coupled with a focus on developing and delivering targeted work with our diverse Muslim communities.

3.5 Over the past two years our focus on Muslim communities has concentrated on work to further understand and engage our diverse Muslim communities, work with Muslim school-age young people and women and supporting vulnerable individuals identified at risk of getting involved in violent extremism.

3.6 In Leicester we continue to work to challenge and prevent violent extremism in all its forms and promote our city's shared values. This includes those inspired Al Qaida and linked groups, and includes the far right and animal activists etc.

3.7 Working hand in hand with our diverse Muslim and non-Muslim communities and partners, we are actively working to identify, challenge and expose violent extremist ideologies that attack and undermine our city's shared values.

LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS SET OUT BY THE COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM KNOWN AS "PREVENT".

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

1.1 A Prevent strategy and programme alone cannot and will not address the problem of violent extremism the UK faces. This is a multi layered, multi issue, complex agenda and the response needs to acknowledge and address this.

1.2 The current strategy has, intentionally or not, led to the stigmatisation and isolation of some of our Muslim communities. This has been unhelpful and at times even detrimental to the strong levels of community cohesion the city has worked so hard to achieve.

1.3 The current Prevent programme is heavily focused on tackling “extremism” and does not give enough importance to other social factors such as poverty, deprivation, alienation and conflicts of culture and identity which all are potential influencing factors.

1.4 By working with all our communities in a fair and transparent way we can build a greater sense of trust and confidence which will provide a stronger basis to bring about challenges and solutions to common issues that affect us all—such as the threat of violent extremism.

1.5 We all (Government, local authorities, the police, youth services etc) need to understand that a stand alone strategy is not enough. This is a real challenge and we need to be working across strategies and cross cutting agendas to see “success”—this means making sure all services are open and accessible and fitting to the diverse communities we serve, that all our young people have a fair chance to education and achieving their aspirations, that those identified as “vulnerable” or “at risk” and their families are suitably supported.

2. *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors that lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the Prevent programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

2.1 Our understanding of “terrorists” in that they lie in the shadows and do not identify themselves as “terrorists”.

2.2 The profiles of previous convicted terrorists paint a varied picture which cuts across ethnicity, culture, class, education and geographical boundaries and makes it difficult to effectively target work.

3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

3.1 *Broadening and deepening community engagement.* The government needs to broaden its engagement to include the UK’s diverse Muslim and non-Muslim communities, specifically smaller communities who do not affiliate themselves to larger representative organisations.

3.2 This lack of formalised link to Muslim representative opinion presents problems for government and us locally too, as it can allow for individual opinions and differences to sometimes dominate the debate.

3.3 Up until the recent refreshed version, the Prevent Strategy has focused on engaging with Muslim communities which has been at times unhelpful in engaging the “target” communities as they have felt that the finger has been pointed to them as the “problem”. The refreshed version supports Leicester’s approach of engaging with all communities to address varying forms and guises of violent extremism that undermine the city’s shared values, including those inspired by Al-Qaida and associated groups and far right extremists.

3.4 The Prevent strategy needs to deepen its engagement beyond the “usual suspects” and community gatekeepers. We need to reach out to and work with those that are not currently accessing service provision; those that are not writing letters to us or sitting on our various groups and committee. We need to be hearing and listening to the “unheard” voices.

3.5 At present in Leicester partners and key community contacts’ are aware of the strategy but the wider community is largely unaware, except for some negative perceptions about its intentions fuelled by media reporting and internet sites.

3.6 For Leicester our programme of work under this agenda will need to broaden and deepen, specifically work with Muslim parents, NEET young people and those not accessing youth provision, those of University age, and our Somali and Muslim convert/revert communities. We are also stepping up our work with our white outer estate communities, dispelling myths and perceptions and addressing grievances’ fuelled by the Far Right. We believe this could be a potential area of tension, ie between Far Right activist and those of Muslim faith in the city.

3.7 There needs to be less reliance on individuals advising at a national level and closer working directly with local authorities. Each area across the UK is very different in its makeup, structures’ and relationships and will therefore require localised solutions. We would like the Government to be much more open to varying approaches—and this includes the allocation of resources.

4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

4.1 Some are available and have proved to be useful. To assist us further, we would welcome clear and consistent guidelines, templates and case studies of what a “successful” programme or intervention looks like.

4.2 Specific guidelines around conducting a “risk assessment” of the Prevent programme would also be welcome and assist in mitigating risks such as funding groups/projects that advocate violence or that challenge our country’s shared values.

5. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

5.1 “Prevent” should be aimed at all of our communities and therefore the answer to this question is currently “no”.

5.2 It seems that those in the “prevent” world—practitioners’, policy makers, academics and community leaders are still focusing efforts on our Muslim communities.

5.3 In Leicester we have made conscious efforts to balance focused work with our Muslim communities as well as those from non-Muslim backgrounds. In the past we have come across some tensions with Government about our approach however with the recent refreshed version of the Prevent strategy now in place this has confirmed our approach and we will continue to build on this—for example by working specifically with our white communities from the outer estates and addressing far right tensions.

5.4 More effort is required to promote positive images and perceptions of what the strategy is striving to deliver and achieve. Communities need to understand that this is “our” (all communities) issue and not a “Muslim” issue.

5.5 Mainstreaming is key to achieving this. We need to have the objectives of the Prevent strategy clear in our minds and instilled in day to day work so that it become part and parcel of everyday planning and practice—rather than being a “add on”.

5.6 Increasing understanding and raising awareness is crucial to the delivery of the strategy—In Leicester we are encouraging frontline staff across public services, including police officers, youth workers, social workers, mental health staff and teachers to attend a two day awareness raising training around “Prevent”.

6. *Is the Government seeking and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?*

6.1 The Government have commissioned a number of research projects, reviews and inquiries into how we can best achieve the goals of the Prevent programme, but there seems to be a lack of conclusive information as a result. Further work to seek the views of communities and individuals on “the ground” needs to take place including Imams, Muslim young people and women.

6.2 There also seems to be a lack of evidence/critical evaluation of specific programmes such as “Channel”. Robust evaluation of Prevent programmes is required and this needs to be disseminated in a timely fashion so localities are able to plan and allocate resources based on “what works” at the beginning of the programme—rather than getting to the end of year two and still being asked for information relating to the previous year.

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

7.1 As mentioned, Government must improve the way it evaluates the effectiveness of the Prevent programme.

7.2 To date, this has been somewhat patchy and unclear with mixed messages being communicated regarding the effectiveness of programmes. In some cases this has led to a loss of community confidence and trust in the work we do and negative press coverage.

7.3 We need to have a much clearer understanding of what “success” looks like and be equipped to demonstrate that a project or programme has achieved Prevent related objectives—through qualitative and quantitative evidence including case studies pictures, one to one interviews, observations, interviews, questionnaires etc.

7.4 Further work around “value for money” also needs to take place—what will end/continue after the lifetime of the Prevent programme in 2011? To ensure best value, we need to be considering if and how projects can be mainstreamed, what additional and ongoing benefits may be reaped and identify any links to community cohesion objectives before funding is awarded.

7.5 Specialist units such as the Community Contact Unit and RICU set up by the government to facilitate the delivery of the strategy have made steps to engage partners. As we move forward, we hope that this continues and develops further.

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

8.1 On the ground there is still a lack of differentiation between “Prevent” and other related policy frameworks, specifically “Community Cohesion”.

8.2 It seems that practitioners working in the field and those who have been involved or have an interest in the “Prevent” world have begun to gain an understanding of this complex agenda, reflected in the way funding has been allocated to projects over the last year compared to the Pathfinder year.

8.3 The term “community cohesion” is relatively recent—further work with strategic leads, policy makers, front line staff and communities needs to take place to communicate the similarities and distinctions with other related policy areas including the prevention of violent extremism, in a clear and accessible manner.

September 2009

Memorandum from the LGA Group (PVE 30)

The LGA Group is made up of six organisations—the Local Government Association, Improvement and Development Agency, Local Government Employers, Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services, Local Partnerships and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. Our shared ambition is to make an outstanding contribution to the success of local government.

The LGA is the single voice for local government. As a voluntary membership body, funded almost entirely by the subscriptions of over 400 member authorities in England and Wales, we lobby and campaign for changes in policy and legislation on behalf of our member councils and the people and communities they serve.

We work with and on behalf of our membership to deliver our shared vision of an independent and confident local government sector, where local priorities drive public service improvement in every city, town and village and every councillor acts as a champion for their ward and for the people they represent.

In response to the questions posed by the Committee, we offer the following responses:

(1) *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

This is not entirely “new” territory—collectively national and local government have dealt with terrorism, extremist activity and unpleasant perversions of religious rhetoric in various forms before. However, we are all aware of the salience and scale of the particular threat from AQ-inspired extremism, and the need for a co-ordinated, robust and thoughtful approach to a complex and evolving problem.

Our focus within the LGA group is on the role of local government. We are concerned how the national Prevent policy meshes with local councils’ ability to deliver what they feel is best for their communities. Local authorities have a vital role in promoting safer, stronger communities; promoting ‘shared values’, and building resilience to extremist rhetoric and behaviour at a local level and we are pleased that this is recognised at national level. Over the past two years, the LGA has played a central role in challenging and shaping policy development, through championing and reflecting the views of local authorities as the Prevent programme has developed. Both IDeA and LGA have also been closely involved in supporting delivery at a local level.

We have not always agreed with the Government’s rhetoric—particularly at the outset, when the language was less nuanced, and the focus on Muslim communities at times felt heavy-handed and was felt by many to undermine cohesion work. Many local authorities felt that Government lacked consideration for the difficulties they faced in initiating a meaningful dialogue with partners and local communities to get understanding and buy-in to Prevent at a local level. And there was a genuine sense that Government was unclear about the precise nature of the role that local authorities should play—as opposed to the Police.

But we have come a long way since then. Both we and the authorities we represent and work with would acknowledge that we have had some difficult but useful debates, both with local delivery partners and national Government. We are, collectively, in a better place now in understanding some of the grievances, concerns and vulnerabilities we need to address within our communities.

Some key strengths of the programme to date include:

- Improved local partnership working between Police and local government, including development of Counter Terrorism Local Profiles (CTLPs).
- Greater confidence and trust from central Government in local capacity to deliver—evidenced, for example, through the expansion of the IDeA’s sector-led support and review programme; Challenge and Innovation Fund and continuation of delivery of Prevent funding through Area Based Grant rather than ringfencing.
- Good communications between national and local government through the Government Office network. In our view, Government Offices have made considerable and noticeable improvements in their key role as a conduit for information exchange between national and local government. Their role in NI35 self-assessments and support for CAA has generally been viewed as positive by local authorities and their partners, and both IDeA and LGA are grateful for the key role they played in identifying key areas for IDeA support and review for 2009–10.

- Government has shown a willingness to shift policy in response to dialogue with local delivery partners. The FCO's decision to explicitly acknowledge the impact of foreign policy and international events on local grievance was a good example. Supporting this with visits to local communities was also appreciated.

In our view some areas for further development include:

- Need for greater acknowledgement of the role of local councillors in leading, representing and supporting local communities. The LGA and IDeA have taken the initiative on working to improve support, training and communications specifically for councillors through development of a "councillors network". This work is being supported by CLG and RICU.
- Need for more confidence in engaging with controversial voices at a national level. Government needs to be more confident in its dealings with those with whom it does not agree, especially when they have broad support from within communities or in academic circles. Government Departments should also be consistent in their approach to relationships.
- Further discussion and clarity of understanding is needed on the relationship between Prevent and "other forms of extremism", including Far Right extremism
- Government must remain visibly committed to the line that focusing on preventing AQ-inspired extremism, and identifying and supporting vulnerable members of Muslim communities, absolutely does not and should not equate to "demonising" British Muslims. Strong and committed reiteration of these key messages at a national level is important to enable local authorities to rebut and address local grievances about the remit of Prevent. Ministerial speeches have gone some way in addressing this and we would want this to continue.
- Tension between OSCT and CLG on the nature of the focus of Prevent, and the activity which should flow from that, can be a problem at times. We in local government support John Denham MP's view of Prevent as distinct but necessarily situated within the broader context of community cohesion and equalities. We do not believe that this in any way dilutes Prevent, it simply sits it in the appropriate context. Police and the Security Services will necessarily see things from a different perspective. But as OSCT builds a direct relationship with local government delivery as well as local Police then these messages need to be properly aligned across Government.

(2) How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

Firstly we feel that the Government is committed to trying to identify potential risks and drivers through ongoing commissioned research. For example the research that has taken place at Manchester University, looking at commonalities in influences and behaviours among UK nationals convicted of terrorist offences.

Concrete analysis of potential risk factors is rightly different from developing a profile of the "typical extremist". Some of the early presentations from JTAC presented a continuum from grievance or alienation through radicalisation to violent extremism. We are pleased to see that this approach has been replaced by a more holistic view of potential risks and interventions.

There is an acknowledgement at both the national and local level that the ability to prevent acts of violence of this kind goes to the heart of some serious social, psychological and philosophical debates. However, there is also a strong, and we feel sensibly founded, sense that Prevent must be practically situated within a wider context of equality, human rights, social cohesion and social justice.

The local context is therefore of paramount importance and Prevent is quite rightly focused at the local level. LGA and IDeA have been key partners with national Government from the outset and we feel that this current balance between national and local leadership and delivery is about right.

One of the key issues identified at a local level was the quality and protocols for sharing key information on risks and vulnerable individuals between Police, local authorities and key community partners. LGA and IDeA therefore worked with OSCT to develop and introduce CTLPs. Early feedback is encouraging, although more could still be done to ensure that the appropriate information is being shared with frontline and middle-tier officers with responsibility for monitoring and delivering projects and Action Plans.

In our view, the objectives of the Prevent strategy have stood up through the difficult initial phases of policy implementation and have proved a useful framework within which to work.

(3) How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?

We feel strongly that engagement with communities is the business of local government, and we also feel that acknowledgement of this is one of the key strengths of the overall approach to delivering Prevent.

However, there are some key messages which national Government should take responsibility for delivering, for example in explaining the focus on Muslim communities. We also feel that it is crucial that national Government is absolutely clear—across all departments—on the purpose and remit of work on

Prevent. But what we feel is equally important is that local partners feel empowered and supported to communicate effectively at a local level, and we would agree that the Government has taken the right approach to working with local partners including local authorities and the Police.

We also support the mechanisms that Government and we as partners have put in place to enable local delivery partners and local communities to give feedback and seek advice, including web resources, guidance and groups such as the Local Delivery Advisory Group (LDAG), the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) and the Young Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG). Our work going forward will include closer work with local councillors who have not been central to the strategy to date.

(4) *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

Advice on implementation is generally strong. The scale of the programme comes with its problems—for example lack of agreement between Government departments, or speed of response to key international events (Gaza in particular)—but overall it has definitely been a strength in terms of having the resources to produce good, timely and well-written guidance on local delivery.

LGA and IDeA have been directly involved in delivering a wide range of advice and support to local authorities. In 2008/09 the IDeA delivered a CLG-commissioned programme of peer support to six local authorities (Derby, Preston, Peterborough, Hackney, Calderdale and Luton) to support the delivery of Prevent.

The aim of the peer support programme was to use teams of local government and voluntary sector peers, managed by experienced IDeA consultants/associates, to build knowledge, understanding, confidence and capacity around Prevent within the local government sector.

Peers were recruited, accredited and trained by the IDeA. Peers also came from a diverse range of local authorities including Tower Hamlets, Haringey, Rotherham, Burnley, Birmingham and Kirklees. There are also some VCS partners including Shaista Gohir from Muslim Voice UK and Hanif Malik from Leeds' Hamara Centre.

Following a successful evaluation from the participating authorities IDeA is expanding the programme this year. This will draw in a wider range of councils and sector-led learning.

"Peers were extremely useful in challenging what Luton had done and not done, eg deliberate decision not to work with councillors. The Member briefing they proposed has enabled some influential councillors to develop a good understanding of the issues."

Lead Officer, Luton

"The peer support and the events that took place mark a significant milestone between the local authority and Muslim communities"

Lead Officer, Hackney

LGA was disappointed by the Government's decision to introduce "Direct Support", now called the Prevent Exemplar Partnership Programme. We do appreciate that it can be difficult for Government to get first-hand understanding of how Prevent is being delivered on the ground, and to demonstrate value for money, but we feel a national-Government-led programme of this kind undermines the commitment to freedom and flexibility in local delivery.

LGA have led on setting up a "Councillors Network" to provide training and information to councillors on Prevent policy and implementation. Again the intention is for this to be primarily sector-led, with support and facilitation from LGA and IDeA.

LGA has also produced written guidance for councillors and run a successful national conference specifically for the local government sector. This is being followed up with a One Year On event on 10 November 2009.

(5) *Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

In terms of consistent messages and resources, we feel generally "yes". As noted above, the scale of the programme and the resources committed to it mean that the quality of published guidance is good.

We also feel that communication between local and national government has improved.

RICU has taken a time to establish but it is now starting to take a genuinely meaningful role in co-ordinating communication across and between national and local Government and with local partners.

There is still some way to go. We still see evidence of gaps at a local level, particularly between senior figures in the Police and local government and their frontline staff, and with councillors and community partners. We hope that some of the work around, for example CTLPs and the ongoing development of RICU's local focus, as well as ongoing local delivery support from IDeA will continue to strengthen local communications and information sharing. For example IDeA will be working with Rotherham council and South Yorkshire Police, as well as other South Yorkshire authorities this year to build on identified good practice on information sharing between partners.

Government Offices have improved considerably in their role as a key conduit for information between national and local Government.

Lack of consistency of message between key Government departments is the main source of confusion.

Open access to advice and guidance remains a key area for further work and we welcome CLG's planned redevelopment of its web resource to provide more accessible information to these audiences. IDeA and LGA are working closely with CLG to ensure that sector-led content hosted on their pages complements key Government content and information. We feel that there is a considerable lack of clarity about the purpose and audience for OSCT's recently launched website.

We welcomed the Government's two national conferences, and the strength of some of the workshops was encouraging. We welcome the proposed commitment to making this year's event less about plenary sessions and far more about interaction between both national and local delivery partners.

(6) Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?

Dialogue with local government and its partners has been good, and is evidence of a trusting relationship. However timeliness could be improved. In our view the Government could usefully do more to acknowledge the role the sector has had in shaping its current stance and the acknowledgement of the merits of sector-led learning.

A good example of sector-led learning was when, in April 2009, Slough council began a forum discussion on the IDeA Community of Practice about the use of council assets by groups with extreme political views. LGA and IDeA picked up and facilitated a meeting and ongoing discourse with about 20 local authorities, which led to the development of written guidance. This was an entirely sector-led discussion of a real and pertinent issue for local authorities. Councils both acknowledged and accepted that the approach depended on local circumstances, but also made an important commitment to offering mutual support and advice to one another when groups with questionable views or motives attempted to use council-owned premises to host meetings. National Government acknowledged the importance and value of this coming from local authorities themselves.

Government is in a difficult position in relation to monitoring and evaluating Prevent at a national level. The LGA group supports the discretion afforded local authorities through the use of ABG to distribute Prevent funding, but we are also aware that this does not satisfy Ministers in understanding precisely how Prevent money is being spent. We in LGA and IDeA support the view that local authorities should be seeking to evaluate the local impacts of their work on Prevent. However, because of the newness of this agenda, whilst we do not support close monitoring, there is a reasonable desire to collect good practice for further policy development and the IDeA Group can play a role in that. IDeA's Action Planning challenge and development sessions and its online networks will actively support this information-sharing. We also felt that the OSCT publications following their review of all of the Action Plans in May 2009 was helpful. We support the proposed review/refresh of Action Plans in October 2009. Within this context we feel that the "Tracker" is now an unnecessarily cumbersome and bureaucratic tool for capturing local delivery.

We think the Local Delivery Advisory Group (LDAG), National Muslim Womens Advisory Group (NMWAG) and the Young Muslim Advisory Group (YMAG) are all positive and constructive approaches to seeking advice from communities. We would perhaps like to see these groups refreshed and broadened a bit more than they are the moment.

Think Tanks have produced a huge range of research on the issue of Prevent, for example the NLGN report on broadening the focus or the Policy Research Centre's recent report on the views of young British Muslims. We would like to see Government taking a more active role in reviewing and debating the findings of these reports, rather than generally dismissing them. We feel we are more responsive on this and as the policy agenda matures and more research of this nature is published, we in the local government sector are already ensuring that that research is being adequately acknowledged, debated and analysed. One example of this is the IDeA which is currently revising its web pages to provide a greater degree of discussion and debate with key local government figures to support this.

(7) How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

Given the clear philosophical constraints on measuring the success of Prevent we feel that there have been some good, early attempts to measure the impact and effectiveness of work on Prevent.

The joint HMIC Audit Commission review was hugely valuable piece of work, and we welcome the inclusion of Prevent work in the CAA.

We also have confidence in the work that is being delivered between CLG, OSCT, LGA and IDeA to work with local authorities to challenge and monitor delivery Prevent at a local level through reviews of local Action Plans.

With regards to NI35, it focuses on processes rather than outcomes and therefore it is of limited value. We feel that there is a good emerging performance management methodology for Prevent emerging through other channels, for example the Tavistock evaluation recommendations and local authorities' own Action

Plan monitoring and we feel that NI35 could usefully be dropped from a revised indicator set without devaluing work on Prevent. This could be supported by a sensible discussion of how other indicators—for example NI2 (belonging) support and reflect effective Prevent delivery.

The ability of local authorities to agree what works for them locally and to monitor the impacts that they feel matter at a local level is an important one. We therefore welcome the Government's recent Prevent evaluation guidance, commissioned from the Tavistock Institute.

Gauging of public reactions has been less well-developed. We know that there is still a strong sense in some quarters that Prevent focuses unfairly on Muslim communities. More robust analysis and discussion of this would be beneficial.

(8) Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

In the early stages of Prevent there was considerable lack of clarity about what precisely it was the Government felt local authorities could and should take lead responsibility for in relation to Prevent. There was rhetoric about it being "distinct from community cohesion", but in reality it was difficult to place this and to work out what was the responsibilities of local authorities (as opposed to Police).

We feel that considerable progress has been made in resolving this—largely through considerable on-going dialogue and a shared acceptance of the complexity of the agenda. The Prevent objectives have been very helpful for this understanding. Objectives two and three are controversial for local authorities, but we feel that their inclusion in the Prevent strategy is crucial to promoting local debate and commitment to tackling the more hard-edged aspects of the Prevent agenda.

It should not be problematic that some aspects of Prevent overlap with community cohesion, integration, or equality. Local authorities are experienced and sophisticated about joining policy up at a local level, and in looking at diverse outcomes and impacts within their communities.

There is an inherent tension between delivering Prevent through ABG, and the way in which it clearly overlaps with other policy agendas, and a desire to ensure that money is being spent appropriately and effectively. However, we feel strongly that the way to resolve this is not through increased Government intervention and micro-management of local delivery. Local circumstances will be the key influence on how Prevent is both articulated and understood in each area.

Action Plans are a useful and welcome methodology for capturing local prevent delivery, and we think it is useful for councils and their partners to articulate what they feel impacts on Prevent in their locality, and how this is being addressed. The strong examples cited by the Home Office in their recent publications, for example those from Waltham Forest, Rotherham and Peterborough, demonstrate how a considerable range and diversity of projects and working relationships can be captured in a way that is genuinely helpful, useful and informative. The good examples of Action Plans also effectively demonstrate how Prevent is positioned within an overall mainstreamed approach to supporting and maintaining safer, stronger local communities.

September 2009

Memorandum from Muslim Council of Britain (PVE 32)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is an inclusive umbrella body that seeks to express and be a platform for the diverse interests of Muslims in Britain. The MCB is a non-partisan, cross-sectarian organisation that reflects the rich traditions of Islam, both Sunni and Shi'a, that exists in Britain today. Founded in 1997, it is pledged to work for the common good of the society as a whole.

2. The MCB is made up of major national, regional and local organisations, specialist institutions and professional bodies. Its affiliates include mosques, educational and charitable bodies, cultural and relief agencies and women and youth groups and associations. At present it has over five hundred affiliates.

3. The MCB welcomes this opportunity to submit its views on the Government's programme for preventing violent extremism. Such an appraisal is long overdue and we endorse any initiative that examines what has become, the central policy tool for engaging with Britain's Muslim community.

4. The response is based upon consultation amongst our affiliates and reflects a consensus of views amongst the Muslim community in Britain.

BACKGROUND

5. The Muslim Council of Britain has long spoken out against terrorism and violent extremism. Ever since the atrocities of 11 September 2001, the MCB has initiated statements and campaigns to speak out against the scourge of terrorism.

6. The MCB does not wish to sweep under the carpet the fact that more than half of Muslims arrested in 2007–2008 have pleaded guilty to terrorism offences. Our message—ever since 9/11—has been unequivocal and focussed—to call on all members of society to eschew criminality and participate positively in society. It is the job of the professionals to uncover criminality.

7. Significant amounts of public funds have been invested in the Prevent programme. The monitoring and intelligence gathering agenda of Prevent are matters that best reside within the National Security Strategy. It was an error to have contaminated the way a department like Communities and Local Government is publicly perceived by placing national security concerns in its orbit. Community development and cohesion policies ought to apply to all communities fairly and equitably, based on need.

8. While the focus should be on a criminal and policing strategic response, the MCB appreciates the need to explore the underlying causes. However, there seems to have been an expectation that community bodies, by showing “leadership”, can wave a magic wand and ask young people to remain oblivious to international political developments at the root of the frustration—not least the injustice in Palestine that has lasted well-nigh sixty years.

9. The Muslim Council of Britain echoes the widely held view that the “Prevent” policy, the subsequent strategic response adopted by the Government, has not minimised extremism but has instead proved to be counter-productive. It has flawed analytical underpinnings, as outlined above, and assumes that the Muslim community must be viewed through the prism of security. This has become known as the “securitisation of integration”.

10. The MCB has sight of the letter recently sent by Secretary of State for Communities and the Home Secretary to local authorities on the subject of Prevent (August 2009). We welcome the acknowledgement that “it is clear that the label ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ attached to the local Prevent funding stream has on occasion been a barrier to promoting good, community-based work”. We feel that by drawing attention to Government’s concern with “all forms of extremism, including violent extremism”, the letter is addressing concerns that the Prevent agenda views Muslims as the “suspect community”.

SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE

11. From the Muslim community perspective, “Prevent” programmes are providing the prism through which to see all public programmes—impeding even spiritual chaplaincy in hospitals, and adding student “monitoring” responsibilities to university authority duties. These are mainstream, service delivery concerns that are being hampered by the short-term, analytically flawed assumptions of the “Prevent” policy.

12. On 21 March 2009, the MCB convened a community consultation meeting on Prevent and (at the time) the proposed Contest 2 proposals, at the Birmingham Central Mosque. This was attended by over 200 mosque representatives and ulema (religious scholars) from across the country. Views expressed included:

- (i) from a representative of a Lancashire community body, “we have decided not to access PVE funding... the Prevent/Contest 2 is considering all of us as “extremists”.
- (ii) from a representative of a Blackburn community organisation, “Concerns on surveillance and monitoring are having a negative affect on the delivery of Prevent”.
- (iii) from a senior representative of the Birmingham Central Mosque, “How has PVE public money been spent? We need to know the results”.
- (iv) from a representative of a Glasgow mosque, “the Scottish PVE funding is not great, but there remain suspicions and misgivings—we have been debating our policy of engagement”.
- (v) from a representative of a Northwest England Ulama council, referring to the case of some students in Bradford who were tried and subsequently acquitted in March 2006 “We are seeing a climate of suspicion where young men going to the mosques on a regular basis seems to cause concern—Prevent seems to have made us fearful and anxious of each other...”.
- (vi) from a representative of a women’s group in Aston, “tell us the facts... there is not enough in the public domain”.

13. The MCB acknowledges that Muslim civil society bodies, including those affiliated to the MCB, have successfully bid for “Prevent” funding. However, many are now reporting themselves that the stated aim of the policy is not working. There is little or no evidence that the policy has reduced extremism.

14. Despite the vast amounts spent on the “Prevent” policy, a majority of Muslim organisations are not taking up the funding. New organizations, with no track-record in the community, are taking up funding without any rigorous measure of success. The Muslim Council of Britain was recently contacted by a group of Northampton Muslims who said “...we are fortunate that different communities co-exist peacefully in Northampton due to the tireless work of many individuals and agencies. The awarding of this money

assumes that ‘there is a problem in the town’ when it doesn’t exist. Muslims... are part and parcel of everything that goes on here. They are concerned about... issues that affect the wider community... [such as]...education, health, housing, youth provision... mainstream issues that need to be addressed by statutory agencies”.

15. Our experience, therefore, is that “Prevent” is conflating intelligence gathering and anti-terrorism with community services delivery. Prior to 7/7 and even 9/11, British Muslim civil society was evolving to make vibrant contributions to the mainstream third sector. Through active engagement with a range of funding bodies, Muslim community groups could deliver projects on par with other organisations of all faiths and none.

16. It seems that for many agencies and groups, access to funding now becomes possible if they take on a “Prevent” agenda colouring; the other side of the coin is that overwhelming section of the Muslim community which is law-abiding, will not identify with the Prevent agenda that brands them as a problem or suspect community.

17. Since the “Prevent” policy was instituted, the opportunity to access mainstream funding has diminished with those affiliated to MCB reporting that they are being directed to funding emanating from the “Prevent” strand rather than through previous sources of funding. We are now very concerned about the new grants funding given to Local Authorities, because Muslim Communities will be disadvantaged as there is no evaluation framework in place. We should caution that this is now leaning towards another extreme.

18. More importantly, the MCB underlines the point that far from preventing extremism, this policy has prevented cohesion. This surely goes against the ethos and purpose of the Department for Communities and Local Government. It is clear to the MCB that other minority faith communities in the UK are resentful of the disproportionate funding allocated to capacity building and education projects of one grouping in the way that has taken place.

19. Any evolution of the “Prevent” policy should move beyond and away from narrow security concerns. We strongly advocate the renewal of democratic processes to strengthen civil society as a whole. With the MPs expenses scandal and the downfall of the banking sector, the electorate has to be reassured of political processes and systems and inherently have faith of the political leadership imposed on them, be this local, regional and national. Without this there can be no vision of a cohesive society. Regardless of faith, race, social status, social upbringing, civil society and communities face the same problems in terms of education, housing, employment, health, crime etc. There has to be fresh and enlightened thinking on the renewal of democratic processes to make Britain a better nation by strengthening civil society and giving power back to the people, in terms of accountability.

20. As “Prevent” has become the primary tool of engagement between the government and the community, attention is diverted away from pressing issues that cannot be viewed via the prism of security. Britain’s ethnic minorities experience high levels of poverty and deprivation. This is acute for Muslims: a third of the ethnic population is Muslim, though Muslims themselves are of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Over a third of Muslims live in the top 10% of deprived local authority areas; more than half live in the most deprived 20%. Muslim households are most likely to lack central heating while unemployment rates are higher than other sections of the population.

21. In conclusion, we are supportive of this consultation in terms of providing the space for faith and community organisations to feedback on the effectiveness of “Prevent”. We are hopeful that you will take on board many of the views, recommendations and criticisms that have emerged from this policy. There is an urgent need to actively seek to rectify the damage done that has inevitably distanced the Muslim Community further from engagement on tackling extremism. As a new generation of young Muslims and young people enter civil society, we need to reframe the discussion so that they and other Britons are not criminalized, and are actively encouraged to become part of the public space.

September 2009

Memorandum from the West Midlands Police Authority (PVE 33)

SUMMARY

The role for police authorities

- Police authorities play a key role in the governance of policing and are “responsible authorities” on crime and disorder partnerships (CDRPs).
- Preventing violent extremism poses significant challenges because responsibility and leadership is shared both nationally and locally.
- Police authorities can play an important role in securing effective Prevent activity, thanks to their mixed membership of local councillors and independent members, and central role on CDRPs.
- Police authorities have oversight of partnership working, performance, and the intelligence and community data that is used to develop and commission preventing violent extremism projects.

- West Midlands Police Authority has developed an notably fruitful role in the development of local Prevent strategy and delivery.
- The role and potential for police authorities in this regard is not well understood and recognised, and recommendations from the committee in this area would be useful.

Preventing violent extremism: wider implications

- The Prevent strand of CONTEST II has generated interest far beyond its target audiences, and this wider impact has been closely felt in the West Midlands.
- The “shared values” section in CONTEST II offers little guidance to public bodies.
- The debate about how to best respond to the threat of radicalisation merits further detailed examination.

The evidence base for local preventing violent extremism activity

- Public policy is based on a set of assumptions about the causes and drivers for radicalisation.
- These assumptions shape service delivery, and so if they are wrong, the policy may not succeed.
- The current prevailing set of assumptions may not adequately cover the full range of drivers for radicalisation.
- “Local narratives” have not become central to the analysis of local circumstances.
- There is a need to understand the extent to which Counter Terrorism Local Profiles and community mapping are accurately reflecting local circumstances, and providing the evidence base for work to prevent violent extremism.

Effective local partnership working

- Local authority sensitivities about Prevent can drive a broadening of its terms of reference.
- There has been a dilution of focus in Prevent work away from immediate support of individuals and groups at risk of radicalisation, to weaker, longer term community cohesion initiatives.
- The distinction between “community cohesion” and “community safety” can be overcome by embedding police/local authority joint working at a number of levels.

The role of West Midlands Police Authority in preventing violent extremism

1. Police authorities are the governance bodies for policing. Their key responsibilities are:

- Securing the maintenance of an effective and efficient police service.
- Holding the Chief Constable to account.
- Achieving continuous improvements in policing performance.
- Obtaining the views of local people on policing matters and reflecting these views when setting local policing priorities.

2. West Midlands Police Authority (WMPA) has seventeen members made up of councillors drawn from the seven metropolitan local authorities in the WMP area, and independent members appointed from the community after a rigorous competitive selection process. WMPA is a “responsible authority” on seven crime and disorder reduction partnerships, separate from the Force. This gives WMPA a key role in both the governance of policing and the network of partnerships that bind policing to local government, probation, the fire service, and the NHS.

3. West Midlands Police (WMP) is the second largest territorial force in England, with 14,000 Officers and staff serving a population of 2.6 million. The Force hosts the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU). Birmingham City Council and the Black Country Partnership (led by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council) received Preventing Violence Extremism Pathfinder funding, and these two local authorities have adopted NI35 in their Local Area Agreements. There have been a number of terrorism related arrests in Birmingham and the surrounding local authorities, and the area’s complex and shifting demography requires the police and partners to give CT matters a high priority.

4. WMPA decided to make a submission to the committee’s review because of the risk that the success of Preventing Violent Extremism will be jeopardised by the fault lines that this work must straddle. First, Prevent relates to both community cohesion and community safety, strands of public policy arguably based on differing fundamental assumptions. Second, Prevent policy and funding is shared between two Government departments, DCLG and the Home Office—and there is a real risk that these Departments do not communicate as effectively as they might. Third, service commissioning and delivery is primarily the shared responsibility of Local Government and the police—and it is not obvious who is responsible for what. If these tensions are not addressed, then it is less likely that the Prevent objectives will be fulfilled.

5. We responded to the call for submissions because police authorities are well placed to cope with these tensions. They sit across the policing/local government fault line, thanks to their councillor members and “responsible authority” status on crime and disorder reduction partnerships. They can set the Force objectives around partnership working, and hold the Force to account if those partnerships are not performing well. They can also have a strong influence on local authorities through their councillor members, who can, for example, represent the Authority on local Prevent Boards. With “responsible authority” status on CDRPs come powers to set agendas, raise concerns and challenge partners on their “duty to co-operate”.

6. Police authorities can also have direct oversight of local partnership working. For example, at 1030 on 8 October 2009 the WMPA Community and Security Committee will be meeting in public at the Drum Theatre in Aston, Birmingham. Following the meeting there will be a question and answer session at which members of the public can quiz the committee members and WMP Officers. On the agenda are a number of items, including a report on NI35 in the WMP area; in essence the committee will be seeking an assessment of the effectiveness of the Force’s engagement with partners, and the progress in achieving the objectives set out in the Prevent Strategy. As a demonstration of the role police authorities can play in relation to preventing violent extremism, we would warmly invite members of the Communities and Local Government committee to attend this meeting and observe.

7. As explored below, the degree to which the public sector understands the communities it serves, and the reliability of the intelligence on which that understanding is based, is crucial. Again, police authorities are central here. Lead police authority members receive higher levels of security clearance, and have access to the intelligence information on which the counter terrorism local profiles are based. This enables police authority members to offer critical oversight of the assumptions on which local preventing violent extremism activity is based.

8. The unique social challenge posed by Preventing Violent Extremism has fostered a notably fruitful relationship between West Midlands Police Authority and operational CT staff. Direct interaction between Police Authority councillors, specialist independent members and CT police officers has served as an excellent sounding board for effective management of local Prevent strategy and delivery. Furthermore, academic engagement is strong in this arena with local universities working with the police on the Prevent agenda. There is also broad cooperation in seminars, academic networks and conferences, with which the police authority is closely involved. For example, WMPA hosted a national conference on radicalisation in March 2008, and summary paper from the conference is attached at appendix 1.

9. Unfortunately, the key role that police authorities can play in relation to Prevent is not well understood or recognised. For example, the Local Government Association paper, “Leading the preventing violent extremism agenda: a role made for councillors”, published in November 2008, fails to even mention police authorities. We therefore suggest that the role of police authorities in relation to preventing violent extremism is an area to which the committee should give attention, and make recommendations.

Preventing violent extremism: wider implications

10. The Prevent strand of CONTEST II is primarily addressed to the threat of Al-Qa’ida influenced terrorism, which in turn poses the greatest risk to Muslim communities. PVE activity by the police and local authorities should not, however, be considered as only impacting on Muslim communities; much more varied audiences regard this area of public policy as of interest.

11. The recent demonstrations in Luton, London and Birmingham should act as a reminder that efforts to promote community cohesion, and seek to protect the rights of Muslims, can be received in unfortunate ways elsewhere. Protecting the rights of individuals to protest at returning British soldiers, or proselytize in multi-ethnic, multi-faith city centres, is almost inevitably going to generate a response of some sort. These reactions, as distasteful as they may be, could well reflect a widely held strand of public opinion, based on a concern that public bodies are indulging Islamic extremism in the interest of abstract notions of community well-being. The consequences when these judgements go awry are well understood in the West Midlands, where a faulty decision to refer Channel 4 to Ofcom over the Dispatches “Undercover Mosque” documentary led to widespread condemnation and hefty High Court costs. Even more worryingly at a national level, the public space given to extremist preachers who “settled here” in the 1980s and 1990s, as CONTEST II puts it, possibly had even more deadly consequences.

12. The term “engagement” is often used to describe the process by which Prevent seeks to influence collective and individual attitudes among Muslims. The issue becomes whether engagement is taken to mean genuinely seeking a shared understanding of the values that underpin British citizenship, or, conversely, at best a watered down set of values that are the “lowest common denominator”, or at worst some communities simply being told what they want to hear. The “shared values” section in the Prevent chapter of CONTEST II offers little guidance here; in an attempt to reassure Muslims and to avoid drawing unhelpful dividing lines, the definitions of democracy, law and equality are almost painfully opaque. In just 37 words the section seeks to outline these shared values, and states that there is a duty to challenge those who do not accept the shared values. While the recent Ministry of Justice paper on the possibility of a Bill of Rights sets out some of the difficulties associated with this area of public policy, the lack of clarity poses real problems for the implementation of Prevent, particularly for local partners trying to develop effective services. The essential tension is between the approach of working with radical or fundamentalist Muslims—the language becomes

difficult here—who do not support the use of violence, and an approach based on working with those whose values are more in accordance with those of the British mainstream. More generally, Prevent runs the risk of insisting on engagement with individuals only on the basis of their religious identity, which not only misses the rich complexity of individual personas, but can reinforce social divides, and cede ground to the extremists who would happily partition us into theological and ethnic boxes. We consider these to be vital areas for further investigation and would be willing to provide the committee with further oral and written evidence.

The evidence base for local preventing violent extremism activity

13. Effective interventions to prevent radicalisation are based on assumptions about the nature of the problem. Local policy makers and service providers must have an evidence-based grasp of the issue with which they are dealing, otherwise money and effort will go to waste, and the problem will remain. Early incarnations of CONTEST saw radicalisation largely as a socio-economic issue, and placed an emphasis on deprivation, social exclusion and community cohesion. Prevent, in its early forms, was based on these assumptions.

14. More recently, and particularly in CONTEST II, the generally accepted view of radicalisation has shifted to one that incorporates the following themes:

- The experiences of first generation Pakistani Muslim immigrants as viewed by their children and grand children, such as racism and segregation.
- The conflict between the values and perceptions of second and third generation Pakistani Muslims and their parents.
- The attempt by second and third generation Pakistani Muslims to reconnect with a more theologically pure form of Islam.
- A sense of grievance around issues such as “The Satanic Verses”, civil wars in the Balkans and Chechnya, Palestine, and, more recently, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

15. Building on these assumptions, local authorities and the police have developed schemes and projects that seek to address these “generational” themes. Typically, these include projects working with Imams to enable them to better communicate with young people, school-based projects and projects working with young people. However, it is becoming clearer that these standard assumptions about the nature of the problem may not capture the full range of drivers for radicalisation. Most notably, there is evidence that the drivers for radicalisation vary between communities; perceptions in Somali, Kurdish, and Yemeni communities are likely to be very different, and, if radicalisation occurs, the patterns and causes are also likely to be different. With tens of thousands of Somalis now living in Birmingham, these questions are immediate. If Prevent is not responsive to these different pressures, then it will fail, talking past the problem rather than addressing it. This is a substantial challenge that the committee is recommended to investigate.

16. One tool designed to meet the challenge was the plan for “local narratives” in each area that seek to capture local circumstances as a guide for policy and service delivery. The need for these is included in the NI35 self-assessment framework. However, we are of the view that “local narratives” have not become the core guiding frameworks that they could be, and are little mentioned in CONTEST II. We regard this as an area of interest for the committee, where useful recommendations could be forthcoming. Furthermore, the Government’s green paper on policing tasked police authorities with having a detailed understanding of their communities, and we are developing more detailed community mapping, with important input from the seven Counter Terrorism Local Profiles (CTLPs) produced by WMCTU. The area of interest for the committee then is the extent to which the CTLPs and community mapping are being used by all the partners to guide decision-making, and the level of understanding of communities that local public bodies bring to bear.

Effective local partnership working to prevent violent extremism

17. Guidance on Prevent has stressed the shared leadership between local authorities and the police. The practice of this relationship has proved less straightforward. Preventing violent extremism work clearly raises a number of political sensitivities, given that, as has been reported elsewhere, some people regard it as overly focused on Muslims, and even a cover for investigative work by the police or other agencies.

18. It is our judgement that in some areas local authorities have been reticent about Prevent, and related threat assessments, perhaps on the grounds that acknowledging a problem would reflect badly on the area as a whole, or have deleterious electoral implications. There has been much local debate around the sensitivities of the PVE label and a belief that social cohesion policies are a more effective approach to undermining the narrative promoted by violent extremists. This has resulted in a number of programmes, projects and initiatives which have heavily diluted the Prevent responsibility into a weaker long term cohesion objective. This approach fails to address the immediate requirement to challenge and support the individuals and organisations displaying vulnerability right now. An effective Prevent programme will confidently and intelligently stimulate discussion and interaction on sensitive PVE issues from the outset, offering opportunities to debate, counsel and diffuse misunderstandings, tensions or grievances. These debates have produced interesting outcomes. For example, in order to reduce concerns that Prevent is focused exclusively on Muslims, there has been pressure to broaden Prevent’s terms of reference to include

a wide range of issues, such as far right groups, animal rights activism and other forms of religious extremism. We are aware that this pressure has also influenced local Channel projects. West Midlands Police Authority does not seek to minimise the seriousness of this wider range of extremist threats, but questions, a) whether such problems can be equated to the threat posed by Al-Qa'ida influenced terrorism, or b) the Prevent methodology is a suitable response. As a further area of possible interest, the committee might wish to explore the extent to which Channel is being employed to support individuals with learning difficulties or mental health needs.

19. More benignly, when some local authorities judge Prevent to be a sub-speciality of community cohesion activity, they regard it as falling within the purview of the local authority executive member for "equalities and communities" or the local equivalent, rather than community safety. In the West Midlands, we have sought to overcome these problems by placing seconded police officers as local authority Prevent leads—this approach is in use in Birmingham and Coventry. It has numerous advantages. First, and most fundamentally, it builds a link between the WMCTU and the local authority. Second, it creates a conduit through which intelligence information can influence Prevent spending decisions. This is particularly important, as it ensures that Prevent spending is more responsive to an evidence-based assessment of local circumstances, and gives access to information from other agencies. Third, it strengthens the link between local government and the work of the community based counter-terrorism officers, known by West Midlands Police as Security and Partnership Officers (SPOs). In WMP a SPO is attached to each basic command unit—of which the Force currently has 21—and they provide a uniformed link between WMCTU, Neighbourhood Policing, the local authority and the wider community. We would suggest that the committee might wish to consider the role of the uniformed, public-facing, community-based counter-terrorism police officers, and make recommendations.

September 2009

APPENDIX 1

NOTE FROM WMPA CONFERENCE "UNDERSTANDING RADICALISATION", APRIL 2008

UNDERSTANDING RADICALISATION: CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES

The issue of counter-terrorism is currently very high on the government's agenda. Its importance is reflected in the increasing volume of resources being devoted to this key area of policy. As one of the major national recipients of this public money, the West Midlands Police Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that it is spent wisely and properly.

During Autumn 2007, as part of its regular deliberations, the Authority came to the view that it would be helpful to develop greater clarity about the underlying causes of violent extremism in order to ensure that implementation strategies and interventions were well focussed and, therefore, likely to be effective. We were aware, on the one hand, of a huge number of largely un-prioritised suggestions from a variety of public and voluntary bodies, and, on the other, were struck by the sight of shelves in the larger bookshops groaning under the weight of a swelling popular literature on counter-terrorism. It seemed that there was a need to cut through all this and to get to the heart of the matter.

Our idea was to bring together the best academic experts and policy minds in Britain, and to invite them to present and debate their views before an invited audience of senior figures drawn from the Midlands region as a whole, who had political or executive responsibility for dealing with the phenomenon of al-Qaeda-inspired radicalisation in different institutional contexts (for example, Council Leaders, Local Authority Chief Executives, University Vice Chancellors, College Principals, as well as senior managers from the Prison Service, Strategic Health Authorities and the criminal justice system).

With that aim in mind the Authority, together with its partners, West Midlands Police and the Government Office of the West Midlands, organised two events. The first, held on 10 January 2008, was a seminar intended primarily for members of our sister Police Authorities across the Midlands. The second event, held on 17 March at Birmingham's ICC, was a much more ambitious affair. This paper, which is being distributed to all participants and speakers, is a synthesis of the presentations and discussions that took place at those two events. Preliminary discussions were held with a range of experts before the seminar and conference; points arising from these are incorporated, as well as insights extracted from the contextual reading undertaken while designing the programme. This added up to a large amount of rich material which, unavoidably, is drawn upon only selectively in this compressed summary, written with busy people in mind.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

The Special Nature of the Challenge

A common human reaction when confronted with a complex and dangerous challenge is to fall back on familiar ground: in this case, the UK government's experience in handling the security threat posed by the Provisional IRA. However, although there are some common features shared by PIRA and AQ-inspired extremism, the differences far outweigh the similarities. The PIRA did not use the tactic of suicide bombers.

Nor did it seek to maximise casualties (for example, warnings were typically issued prior to explosions, and there is no evidence that the PIRA was seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction). The PIRA had an intelligible nationalist agenda whose specific objectives were, at least in principle, negotiable. Al Qaeda-inspired terrorism, on the other hand, is driven by the ultimate aim of creating (or, as they would see it, reinstating) a world order (Caliphate) based on a divine unity (tawhid) between the direct word of God, as revealed in the Koran, and state institutions. In this sense, political groups or movements that spring out of such an all-embracing “world view” (or Weltanschauung to use the correct German expression) are “ideological” in a way that the IRA is not. The willingness of a small core of extremists to embrace personal martyrdom reveals a form of intense commitment that, in the jargon, is “existential” (a personal statement of faith and sacrifice) rather than “instrumental” (a calculated assessment of costs and benefits). For the PIRA, religion per se was only incidental. Catholicism defined the identity of the community the PIRA represented in its nationalist struggle. The religious precepts and language of the Roman Catholic Church were not mined and deployed in order to justify its actions.

In short, the need to understand the true nature of the threat to security that now confronts us in Britain takes us out of our intellectual comfort zone and requires a much greater leap of imagination.

The Historical Origins of al-Qaeda-Inspired Terrorism.

It goes without saying that Islam is one of the world’s great religions, and throughout human history it has had an incalculable impact on the evolution of civilised thought and values. Like other great religions, its traditions are highly diverse. Beyond the obligatory core of ritual and practice (reflected in the “five pillars” of Islam), many different sects and movements have arisen over the centuries, representing and promulgating distinctive interpretations of how religious truth applied to the real world and to human conduct. As the influence of Islam expanded throughout the Arab world and beyond, the powerful empires that emerged were, by the standards of the time, tolerant of diversity. They succeeded in nurturing Science, Medicine and the Arts to the highest levels, as well as acting as a crucial interlocutor between Europe and the achievements of ancient Greece. However, there were other historical strands at the margins of the broad sweep of Islamic thought which were much more insular and hard-edged. They can be traced back as far as the period of tribal conflict following the death of the Prophet Mohammed and, in particular, to the Mongol conquest of Mesopotamia in the 13th century. All this may seem a far cry from the current terrorist threat facing the West, but, in fact, the concepts, language, metaphors and imagery used by al-Qaeda draw heavily on this militant tradition of popular struggle.

It is understandable that any community with a proud history will resist when it feels it is under threat. In this context, the decline and final collapse of the Ottoman Empire (the “last Caliphate”) after the First World War was a critical event for the Islamic World. The Ottomans, late in the day, had tried to acquire the trappings of modernity in terms of foreign military techniques and up-to-date capital equipment. But they were competitively doomed because they could not reproduce the values and economic institutions that, as a result of the European “Enlightenment” and the Industrial Revolution, had evolved in the West over hundreds of years, and underlay its superior level of technological sophistication. All this came as a great shock. The event came to be viewed by many Muslim clerics and intellectuals not merely regretfully—as an example of the inevitable rise and fall of empires—but, rather, as a humiliation of the Islamic World as a whole. Secularisation had triumphed over divine truth. This constituted an historic wrong that had to be righted. These popular feelings of anger and powerlessness gained further momentum as the Western powers extended their influence over the governments and resources of Arab countries and the Indian sub-continent during the inter-war period, typically with the support or acquiescence of what was perceived as a growing class of Westernised elites.

There are a number of possible popular reactions to such feelings of powerlessness and resentment. One obvious response is to conclude that major cultural and institutional adjustments need to be made to traditional Islamic societies in order for them to compete and survive in the modern world (reformism). Another response is to reject many aspects of modern materialism and, instead, take refuge in spirituality and the quest for personal goodness (drawing on the Sufist tradition in Islam). Both of these reactions occurred. However, the reaction that most concerns us is here is the “fundamentalist” response. According to this view, Islamic states had declined not because they had failed to compete with the West on its own terms, but because their leaders had departed too far from the true word of God as revealed to the Prophet Mohammed. Rather than compromise or retreat into personal reflection, important writers such as Sayyid Qutb (Egypt) and Abul Ala Mawdudi (Pakistan), in particular, returned to what they considered the true values of Islam. On this basis, they began to outline the kind of political structure and social system that would embody those values, and the strategy and tactics that would be required in order to achieve this objective. Mawdudi envisaged a popular struggle (a jihad—but not a violent one) that would rid the world of its prevailing state of jahiliyyah (literally, the age of ignorance that existed in the Arabian peninsula before the Prophet). In this sense, these writers performed the same role in the development of Islamic thought as Lenin had done previously in turning Marx’s original writings into a practical programme of action. The term “Islamism”, currently in vogue, is intended to describe this overt and highly focussed politicisation of a more general value system. It is obviously very different in meaning from “Islam” itself. (However, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, we have chosen not to use the terms “Islamism” and “Islamist” in this paper).

During the inter-war period new political groupings arose across the Islamic world: the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna) and the Jamaat Islami Party in Pakistan (founded by Mawdudi in 1941) are notable examples. However, these movements were directing their efforts at gaining power within existing states in the Islamic world. The focus of their struggle was primarily internal, and had not yet been conceptualised as a generalised one against the Western world as a whole. That came later, and in circumstances that would have been difficult to predict.

The final catalyst for al-Qaeda-inspired extremism, as we currently experience it, lay in the events that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The eventual defeat of the Soviets by the mujahideen and the Arab volunteers who had joined them in their struggle, provided vivid evidence that powerful modern states with advanced weaponry could under certain circumstances be beaten. The crucible of war created a cohort of battle-hardened Arab fighters. Discussions among leaders in the training camps, (between Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, for example—fuelled by the former's supply of arms and money, which enhanced his influence over other groups and their political agendas), paved the way for a fusion of radical political ideas with the fundamentalist religious views of the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi sect. Above all, success in prevailing over the Soviets generated considerable self-confidence and hero status.

Given the American support for the mujahideen in their fight against the Soviets, it seems at first sight paradoxical that the leaders of Al Qaeda should turn against them so quickly. However, a closer analysis of the situation suggests that the Wahabbist element—not just al-Qaeda, but leaders of other significant groups—were virulently anti-Western from the outset. US money and arms came to them indirectly through the Pakistan Intelligence Service (ISID), who at this time had their own covert agenda. The immediate trigger for bin Laden's visible change in direction appears to have been the stationing of US forces in Saudi Arabia during and after the First Gulf War against Saddam Hussain. This "occupation" of the sacred lands of Islam was interpreted as a deep insult to Muslims, and evidence that the Saudi rulers were apostate. The response was to declare an international jihad against the United States and its allies—not just against their armed forces, but also against their people who, by implication, were guilty by association. Into this clarion call to potential recruits were rolled all the perceived hurts and slights of the past. A whole range of specific political and cultural grievances, (Palestine, Iraq, literary works, plays, disputes over dress, even cartoons), are now presented as part of a concerted attack by the West on an international community of Muslims (umma), which, (rather like the "international proletariat" in Leninist theory), is conceptualised as having a collective destiny. These individual grievances are thus woven into a coherent narrative, drawing deeply on the language of victimhood, collective shame and desire for revenge. It can have a powerful effect on impressionable minds, and can inspire some vulnerable individuals to commit acts of extreme violence.

The Tactics of Contemporary Terrorism.

In order to exploit the economic benefits of comparative advantage, modern societies are characterised by a highly developed and widely dispersed division of labour. Interdependence and free movement of goods and talent across national and regional boundaries are the wellsprings of economic life. Rapid communications, openness and mobility are, therefore, pre-requisites for effective functioning. Such highly tuned structures are potentially vulnerable to a variety of attacks.

"Terrorism is, ultimately, a form of social control when a less powerful actor seeks to exert influence over the norms, values and conduct of another more powerful grouping" (Black). It is the structural vulnerability of modern open societies that allows small groups of determined terrorists to pose an "asymmetric threat" in a way that less powerful nation states would not dare to attempt (unless they were acting through proxies). Such threats can take the form of attacks on infrastructure, including electronic attack. More generally, however, terrorists are seeking to disrupt normal patterns of life, to lower the level of social trust across different communities, to undermine confidence in authority, and to bring about a destabilising polarisation of attitudes. In this way, sporadic acts of violence can come to have a "disproportionate social effect" (Omand).

"Terrorism is a form of communicative action" (Karstedt) which is played out in front of an audience. That audience provides the oxygen that allows the terrorists to generate and maintain momentum; modern media, including access to the internet, can ensure that key messages and events have immediate impact. In the end, success in facing down terrorist threats depends on a battle of wills, and on who is psychologically the stronger. Being provoked into an over-reaction or miscalculation of the public mood can, of course, occur on either side.

The Scale of the Threat

The Director General of the Security Service has estimated that in Summer 2007 there were 200 groups or networks in Britain, totalling around 2000 identified individuals (up from 1,600 in 2006), actively engaged in plotting or facilitating terrorist acts in the UK or overseas. Last year (2007), 42 people were convicted as a result of their involvement in 16 operations. Half of these individuals pleaded guilty. 100 suspects are

currently under arrest awaiting trial. The official threat level, which was first published in August 2006, has remained “severe” since then (briefly raised to “critical” in August 2006 and June–July 2007). During 2008, we will see a succession of high profile cases brought to court.

As part of the government’s National Strategy, funding for counter-terrorism and intelligence rose from £1 billion in 2001 to £2.5 billion in 2008, and will rise to £3.5 billion by 2010–11.

Thought Before Action

In the following sections of the paper we shall be looking in more detail at the processes by which vulnerable young people become recruited and radicalised, and what the evidence suggests about the most effective counter-measures. However, a number of important principles are already clear.

The challenge we face is a complex one, beset with sensitivities and historic resentments. We are dealing, as Professor Shamit Sagar has described it, with “a subjective and imagined world” where those unfamiliar with the subject matter can sometimes have an unsure touch, and can thereby cause unintentional offence. There are no quick fixes that will help remedy this. Those involved, directly or indirectly, in implementing the government’s “Prevent” agenda need to immerse themselves in the subject, and will require proper support in order to do this.

Al-Qaeda-inspired extremism represents a long-term challenge to British society as a whole. It has been estimated that it may take as long as two to three decades to defuse. As the National Strategy rightly observes, this is not a responsibility that can be taken on by the government alone, because it requires us to confront “deep-seated ideas and grievances as well as immediate threats”. A coherent strategy involving creative partnerships between central government, the regions, and a wide range of social institutions, is imperative. The central thrust of the strategy is to build up public support and understanding within a firm framework of law and human rights, with proper parliamentary and judicial oversight.

Sir David Omand, a former UK National Coordinator for Security and Intelligence, has put his finger on the key challenge. It is worth quoting his words in full:

“To prevail in a long war we know that short term tactical successes must not be bought at the price of long term disadvantages in the decisive campaigns to come...If we habitually think in weeks and months and the terrorists think in years and decades, we will eventually wake up to find that the problem has taken deep root in unforeseen ways we lack the capability to counter. We could find, in particular, that terrorist access to more powerful techniques comes to threaten our vital national interests in ways that conventional terrorism, however devastating for the individual victims and their families, does not.”

RADICALISATION, RECRUITMENT AND RESILIENCE

Individual Radicalisation

In the early days, attempts by radical groups in Britain such as Jamat-e-Islami and Hizb-ut-Tahrir to grab the attention of potential recruits took place relatively openly, in or around Mosques, or even on the street. With the heightened attentions of the security services, however, this pattern has been disrupted. Initial contacts with potential recruits now take place in a variety of settings: cafes, gymnasias, universities, schools and prisons, for example. As a recent American report describes it, “radicalisation makes little noise”. Ties of kinship and friendship, as well as the role of a charismatic “bridging person”, appear to be important factors in drawing in individuals whose interest has been initially aroused.

Young Muslims can be attracted to radical movements as a result of a keen sense of injustice that they feel about incidents and disappointments in their personal lives, of concerns they feel about the moral decline of their own inner-city neighbourhood and its perceived capitulation to moral degeneracy in the name of “freedom”, of shame provoked by the images of attacks on Muslims that they view on the internet. In a more fundamental sense, second and third generation Muslims in Britain often experience a crisis of identity. They do not feel at home in the country that their parents and grandparents came from originally, and are impatient with the stultifying constraints imposed by many of their traditions; on the other hand, many of them feel that they have not been fully accepted in British society as equals. Under these circumstances AQ-inspired extremism can have a powerful appeal; it provides a political ideology that simultaneously addresses their gut concerns, gives them a definite identity within their peer group, and heightens their self-esteem.

In order to understand this kind of vulnerability more fully, and put it in proper perspective, we need to grasp the point that it is one variant of a much more widespread social phenomenon. As Professor Anthony Giddens has argued, “Post Modern Society” is characterised by the erosion of identities that were constructed around heavy industry, traditional communities, social classes and conventional households based on the nuclear family. In this kind of social order, identity and status are heavily ascribed; in a post-modern society, on the other hand, as these traditional structures relentlessly dissolve, identity becomes more a matter of individual choice. For some individuals, this process of existential choice, and the “disorder” they perceive around them, is deeply discomfiting and unsettling. They can feel rootless and see their lives as lacking in purpose. One reaction to these insecurities is to seek solace in a commitment to fundamentalist ideas—either political or religious or a combination of both. As Giddens puts it, “Religious fundamentalism...provides clear-cut answers to what to do in an era which has abandoned final

authorities... The more “embracing” a given religious order is, the more it “resolves” the problem of how to live in a world of multiple options”. Giddens, who was writing before 9/11, was thinking mainly about the phenomenon of Christian fundamentalism. The main point of this short excursion into contemporary sociology is simply to make the point that pressures felt by some young Muslims in Britain are not unique. They are experienced, in some shape or form, by their contemporaries in other communities. For many, experimentation with fundamentalist political or religious ideas can bring personal truth and illumination. Al-Qaeda-inspired radicalisation, on the other hand, combined with other factors, can lead a small minority down a path that ends finally in violent extremism.

A recent influential report by the New York Police Department identifies four distinct phases of radicalisation: (a) pre-radicalisation (where the individual acquires a general disposition to become interested in radical ideas); (b) self-identification (actively seeking contact with like-minded individuals); (c) indoctrination (where the individual, as part of an organised group, is progressively steeped in the concepts and narratives of the movement); (d) jihadisation (where the individual, as part of a small selected band, ceases contact with the wider group and is trained and systematically prepared for active operations).

This four-fold typology, based on scrutiny of the written profiles of known terrorists across the world, is helpful as a first step. However, it lacks empirical specificity and is based on a relatively small sample. It describes a wide range of potentially important factors in a general way, but it does not attempt to identify the core conditions that need to be present before a decisive psychological commitment to extreme violence occurs. The understanding of these conditions is key to any future policy that might be pursued. A final point to note is that the linear progression implied by this four-fold typology is oversimplified, and could be misleading if it were used mechanistically as a tool to identify potential terrorists. Individuals can move between these phases very quickly, or even jump some of the intermediate stages altogether.

A more sophisticated sociological approach developed by Professor Martin Innes focuses instead on the specific features of the social environment in which young Muslims find themselves, which, in combination, contribute to radicalisation. In order for the tipping point to be reached, all conditions have to be present. Some of the main ingredients within this multi-factor “situational model” are: (i) feelings of “anomie”, lack of purpose and disaffection; (ii) impatience with remote and ineffective community leaders, leading to psychological distancing from previous loyalties and social relationships; (iii) the existence of a compelling single narrative or ideology; (iv) strong social bonds of an alternative peer group. If these background conditions are present, particular deeply felt grievances can come to the fore and “trigger” acts of violent extremism. But, conversely, the “triggers” do not work if these conditions are not present. If we are looking for the main terrain on which to focus a long term “prevent” strategy, this would appear to be it.

The Dynamics of the Group

It was argued earlier that al-Qaeda-inspired movements are very different from the PIRA, for example. However, from an organisational point of view, they have much in common with radical Marxist groups. The comparison is illuminating.

Both kinds of political group are essentially “ideological” in character. They are both inspired by the inevitable realisation of an opaquely specified future utopia (A Caliphate based on Sharia law, on the one side, and the revolutionary triumph of the international working class, on the other). Rather than tolerating the uncertainty that comes from having to pragmatically reconcile different strands of conflicting evidence (as democratic parties are constantly having to do), they exhibit a highly drilled form of a priori reasoning, based on allegedly superior claims to truth. Typically, both AQ-inspired and Marxist political movements tend to identify and demonise some broad social category as their inferior and enemy (“kuffars” in one case, the bourgeoisie and their lackeys, on the other). This has the effect of hardening the hearts of activists, allowing them to put forward pseudo-justifications of their actions based on a form of moral relativism that side-steps universal values (“The end justifies the means”... “You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs” etc).

It is worth making these comparisons in order to illustrate how resilient this form of organisation can be, and, therefore, how difficult it is to engage such political groups in “rational dialogue”—as democrats would conventionally define it. Even the ordinary rank and file members, who may be unfamiliar with the finer points of theory, will nevertheless, by constant repetition, tend to be well rehearsed in its basic outlines. No naive “appeal to the evidence” or “search for common ground” is likely to cut much ice with hard core members.

The real areas of intellectual vulnerability in ideological movements of this sort lie in their highly selective and parasitic use of the host philosophy or religion on which they purport to be based, which can be exposed by those with a more profound knowledge of the subject. The haziness and practical implausibility of their future visions (especially when related to those existing societies in the world that come closest to them) is a potential source of embarrassment. Ideological movements are also open to the philosophical criticism that their superior truth claims are either self contradictory or patently subjective.

Organisation and Communication

This topic is primarily related to other strands of the government's CONTEST agenda, but a couple of observations are highly relevant to "Prevent" because they touch upon the changing organisational context of extremist groups. These points are noted briefly below.

The deployment of US forces in Afghanistan after 9/11 destroyed the safe havens previously occupied by al-Qaeda, and disrupted the operating patterns it had developed. It is no longer relevant, therefore, to visualise al-Qaeda as a conventional hierarchical organisation headed by visible leaders, issuing a stream of precise instructions to their followers. The evidence suggests that we should now see it more as a "brand", which inspires informal networks of jihadists who understand the general intent of their "commanders"; the latter appear on video from time to time to keep that direct link alive and suggest new lines to take. If we were thinking about this in business terms we might say that al-Qaeda had become a "franchise". Modern communications, the internet especially, help to provide the detailed technical and political information that members of the distributed network need. Before they can engage in a major operation, however, the evidence suggests that someone in higher authority needs to "spiritually sanction" it.

In practical terms this arrangement offers the advantage of greater organisational resilience. It is interesting to note in that connection that there is a long established Salafist (fundamentalist) tradition in the history of Islam in which informal networks were important for protecting their members—though not, of course, acting as terrorist cells. Recruitment was by personal invitation, and radicalisation took place through circles of friends in private homes, under an influential leader.

The Relationship between Extremists and the Broader Community.

Mao has described how his revolutionaries were fishes who "swam in a sea" of support from the surrounding society. Certainly, the analysis of revolutionary Marxist groups during the 20th century (some of which succeeded in capturing state power) reveals a characteristic pattern of a very small extremist core willing to carry out periodic acts of violence and terror, a broader circle of party members offering political and logistical support, and an even broader circle of "fellow travellers", recoiling from acts of violence themselves, but eternally anxious to be thought "progressive" and on the right side. In diagrammatical terms, we might visualise these relationships as a series of concentric circles radiating out from the core.

There is some empirical evidence that a similar series of concentric circles apply to AQ-inspired extremism in Britain. Beyond the small core of active or potentially active extremists, and the members of the radical political movements that surround them, there appears to be a much larger group of British Muslims who are morally ambivalent and who are unwilling to explicitly condemn the violent extremists. Polls carried out by a number of respected survey organisations indicate that this figure may amount to between 10–20% of the total Muslim population in Britain. It goes without saying that the vast majority of British Muslims, by any measure, are wholly innocent of any violent acts, either in thought or in deed. They are simply getting on with the practical business of life—and are probably thoroughly fed up with those extremists who bring their religion and their community into such disrepute.

Before we jump to hasty conclusions it needs to be said that much more work needs to be done in interpreting these statistics. The 10–20% figure referred to above could well represent little more than a diffuse expression of identity and community loyalty, rather than a firm indication of willingness to give any kind of direct support. On the other hand, these figures may well indicate a general cast of mind that could find expression in various forms of "soft support" such as sitting on the fence, deliberately ignoring signs of recruitment and radicalisation, and not cooperating with the police in their investigations.

The creative engagement of the Muslim community with the aim of rolling back the layers of ambivalence and "soft support", where they apply, emerge from this analysis as a key objective. However, such engagement is likely to be far from straightforward. Paradoxically, sociological evidence suggests that Muslim communities in Britain exhibit significantly higher levels of social capital and collective efficacy than do non-Muslim communities. They know a great deal about what is going on in their midst, but are tightly knit, and have a disposition to sort things out for themselves without interference from the outside. Disclosure of information to the police, for example, poses the risk of stigmatisation of individuals and members of their families. However, the very fact that the police and security services have been so successful in arresting terrorists and foiling potential plots suggests that this cooperation is forthcoming, and that we should take a much more optimistic view of cross-community cooperation.

The plain fact is that although there is plenty of journalistic writing and anecdotal evidence, there is a real shortage of rigorous research on relationships and attitudes within the Muslim communities in Britain, and on their complex internal diversity. Until we have such evidence, our judgements must be necessarily provisional.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES: WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS

It must be clear from what has already been written that we are dealing here with a very complex phenomenon indeed. Our evidence strongly suggests that there is a collective obligation on the part of all of us to understand the deep nature of this challenge. It is not a conventional management problem that can be addressed by the formulation of a few well-chosen targets and the issuing of official "advice" in the form of short bullet points.

The complexity of responding to the challenge of al-Qaeda-influenced extremism lies in the fact that many of us are having to come to terms with an unfamiliar subjective world in which it is all too easy to trip up. Furthermore, an effective response needs to take account of impacts on all communities in Britain, not just the Muslim communities. Resources and other non-material sources of reassurance (even symbolic ones) are scarce commodities that have alternative uses—and impacts. In any particular policy there will inevitably be difficult balances and trade-offs to be made.

No attempt is made here to explore these detailed trade-offs. The need for them is simply noted. Instead, we confine ourselves to some suggestions about high level strategy that seem to flow logically out of the evidence of our two recent conferences. Broadly speaking, they fall into two categories: the need to contest ideas, and the need to win the hearts and minds of communities.

Avoiding False Paradigms

It is not so very long ago that members of the British public were shocked to discover that they had “home-grown” terrorists in their midst. Prior to that, the prevailing assumption was that terrorists, if they struck at all, would come from abroad, presenting only an isolated and infrequent threat. This blind faith in the strength and unanimity of British society shows how damaging it can be to operate on the basis of a false theory. In the light of the growing evidence, we can now see that other theories relating to this area are misguided, and can lead us in the wrong directions if we pursue them uncritically. For example, AQ-inspired extremism is not simply a reaction to economic deprivation; the profiles of known and convicted terrorists reveal that many of them are middle class professionals who come from settled families. It does not arise as a result of lack of opportunity; Muslims of Asian descent, and young people from other Asian communities are, with a few exceptions, over-represented in the UK higher education system (it is white males who are under-represented). Lack of social cohesion is not the principal explanatory factor; as was noted earlier, Muslim communities in Britain exhibit significantly higher degrees of social capital and efficacy than do white communities. This is not to say that these factors are not part of the equation, but they all apply with equal or even greater force to other communities in Britain. As we have seen earlier, the challenge of al-Qaeda-inspired extremism is a very specific one, and needs a specific focus in response. It cannot be addressed in terms of conventional social policy agendas.

Polarisation of Identities

One of the aims of the leaders of al-Qaeda, which finds close parallels in other kinds of extremist movement, is to persuade their potential supporters that the underlying cause of the perceived injustices they encounter, and of their consequent victimhood, is the result of a cosmic “clash of civilisations” (to use the well-known phrase of Professor Samuel Huntington). The umma, it is asserted in this compelling narrative, are under attack on all sides by crusading kuffars, bent on their subjugation. These broad identities are, of course, constructs of the imagination, which have little in common with the complex patchwork of interests and values that makes up the real world of politics. However, if, as a result of particular social tensions and conflicts, communities come to conceptualise themselves in this simple way, the effects can be devastating. In recent times we have seen in the Balkans how communities whose members had lived together in harmony for many years began to kill each other. On a much larger scale, the same process could be observed in 1947, following the independence of India and Pakistan. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Professor Amartya Sen, who lived through this period, refers to this blinkered psychological state as “imagined singularity”.

The important practical conclusion to draw from this analysis is that in responding to AQ-inspired extremism and attempting to engage the Muslim community in Britain, it is imperative to “frame the issue” in the right way, and to avoid all unjust implications of collective guilt. Without departing from the truth and giving empty re-assurances, we need to be very careful to weigh the subjective impact of policies and, even, of the language we use.

Strengthening Community Leadership

A point made frequently by contributors to our conferences is the need for stronger leadership in Muslim communities that resonates with young people. If such credibility is not present, among leaders of Mosques and elsewhere, young people often have nowhere to go and nobody with whom they can discuss their concerns. It is precisely this vacuum that the extremists fill, aided by the wide availability of Wahhabist literature.

At present, many elders of Mosques are said to be too out of touch (sometimes, too, their knowledge of English is inadequate) to grasp this nettle. They find it difficult to exert influence and secure compliance. There seems to be a strong case, therefore, for upgrading the skills and qualifications of UK Imams, and strengthening the governance of Mosques by means of systematic programmes of formal training.

Alternatively, there are “leaders” of the Muslim community who are largely self-appointed—or, at least, widely regarded as such. It has been argued that as a consequence of this, few clear channels are available for hearing what ordinary Muslims in Britain today think. In that sense, the natural entry points for engaging with the communities are weak, and need to be developed.

Dangers in Underestimating the Radical Critique

It is often suggested that AQ-inspired ideas are a “distortion” or a deliberately “twisted” version of the true meaning of Islam, as revealed in the Koran. They are presented as a crude “cut and paste job” which the leaders of militant movements have fabricated in order to justify, and gain broad support for, their political agendas. However, although the charge of selective use of quotations is undoubtedly true, it should not be exaggerated. Whilst it may represent an accurate account of the rather hazy and formulaic knowledge of the ordinary “foot soldiers” of the movement, it certainly underestimates the sincerity and intellectual seriousness of earlier writers such as Qutb and Mawdudi, for example. To take a close parallel, some scholars argue that Lenin does not represent the true spirit of Marx. One would be on thin ice, however, in trying to argue that *What is to be Done* and *The State and Revolution* were superficial documents. They have weaknesses, they are overtly political, but they cannot be easily dismissed. It would give out the wrong message to try and do so.

Turning from theory to practice, it is also helpful to be clear about the fact that many of the criticisms that ordinary Muslims (as well as the extremists) level at Western societies—crass materialism, sexual immorality, drugs, drunkenness, selfishness, and lack of respect—are ones which many non-Muslims share in varying degrees. The real debate with the members of extremist movements is over the balance between freedom and authority.

The Need for Persistent Intellectual Challenge.

In confronting the mind set of extremists, and trying to peel away the layers of “soft support” that surround them, we can not escape the fact that we are involved in a battle of ideas, and one in which the Muslim community itself has a crucial role to play. Core beliefs of the extremists such as the “obligation” of all Muslims to engage in violent jihad in defence of the umma, or the moral acceptance of collateral damage to the innocent, can only be challenged effectively by those who have a deep knowledge of the Koran.

Outside the theological context itself, there are pointed questions to be asked about the real historical factors lying behind the decline of Islamic societies, why in specific terms this has not been reversed (even with, in some cases, the benefit of fabulous oil wealth), and why the extremists in Britain prefer to live in a society which is the historical product of the values they reject.

The Absence of a Coherent “British” Narrative.

Famously, the British “do not do flags on the lawn”. But, as Baroness Falkner has argued in a recent issue of the journal *Prospect*, the reason why many older British people, in particular, do not see the need for such symbols is that they remember a more homogeneous society when “we all knew who we were”; so secure was the British national identity that understatement became an integral part of it. Given the diverse nature of Britain today, circumstances have changed radically. There is a great deal of insecurity and confusion around, and a corresponding need for firm reassurance.

In the context of trying to “prevent” AQ-inspired extremism, there is a danger of a perceived cultural zero-sum game: of constant attention and disproportionate resources being given to the Muslim community, while members of other communities in Britain go quietly about their business, un-rewarded or, even worse, un-listened to. In order to remove any sensitivities about one-sided concessions, it should be made clear to all communities, including the Muslim community, that there are no special deals or special treatment on offer. To dispel any unrealistic expectations or potential sources of misunderstanding and resentment around the issue of “core values”, it would be helpful to set out unambiguously and confidently what the rules of the political game are in a parliamentary democracy in which the people are sovereign, and in which law is the product of that sovereignty. We also need to develop a clear narrative that explains where we have come from historically, and the struggles that British men and women have engaged in over the centuries to win us the rights and freedoms we enjoy today. A clearer narrative about the principles of UK foreign policy, which really does stand up to critical scrutiny, would also be helpful since this is an area where, as we have seen, deep grievances are felt.

Responsible Power

It follows that if, as a basis for engaging AQ-inspired extremists in debate, we develop a clear narrative setting out the political rules of the game in Britain, the agencies of law and order must be rigorously bound by them. The Harvard foreign policy guru Joseph Nye has written about “soft power” as a future guiding principle of US strategic thinking. Without ruling out “hard options” as a final resort, the emphasis here is on observance of international law, cultural diplomacy and civilised discussion based on a deep understanding of motives and interests.

A similar concept of “responsible power” can apply equally well in a domestic setting in which government, both central and local, is in constant dialogue with a variety of groups that are making claims upon it. Almost inevitably, government policy will be unpopular with one group or another. A firm political and legal framework, which binds the actions of government itself, establishes the clear process within which conflicts are resolved and initiatives undertaken. In the battle for hearts and minds this is a persuasive answer

to extremist groups who are seeking to use the threat of violence in order to extract concessions, gain redress for alleged “grievances”, or to exercise vetoes on particular policies that have been democratically determined.

The Value of Neighbourhood Policing

The police, above all, must act within the law and be seen to meet the real needs of the communities they serve. In this regard, the introduction of neighbourhood policing has been a major step forward in building trust and confidence. In the West Midlands, where WMP was the first major force in Britain to roll-out neighbourhood policing on a force-wide basis, a recent survey showed that 95% of those questioned felt safe during the day, even outside their own neighbourhoods. In longer term perspective, total recorded crime in the West Midlands, which has fallen by 25% since 2003, is at its lowest since 1998. The level of burglary, a key crime indicator which people feel strongly about, is currently lower than it was in 1979. All this creates a strong and secure platform on which to further develop good relationships with the public—a consequence of dealing competently with the full range of ordinary crime by means of “normal policing”—augmented now by Police Community Support Officers and new channels of communication.

Sociological studies carried out in Muslim communities in different parts of Britain, including the West Midlands, show that members of those communities do respond well to being consulted about their priorities, and do see value when the police tackle “signal crimes” that they are not equipped to tackle themselves: in particular, drugs, burglary, hate crimes and racial harassment. The trust that can arise as a result of this practical cooperation in addressing matters of “local injustice” can, over the course of time, provide a source of community intelligence—about changing patterns of behaviour and heightened community tensions, for example—which might not otherwise be available. A criticism sometimes levelled at the police National Intelligence Model (NIM) is that it tends to rely unduly on “professional” informants who provide specific tip-offs. For many crimes this approach may be entirely appropriate, but in getting to grips with violent extremism and undercurrents of radicalisation of vulnerable people, a more diffuse kind of intelligence may be a better way forward. It is perhaps worth noting that the mistakes made in the Forest Gate raid sprang from faulty intelligence; prior to the event, there were virtually no structures in place for community engagement and consultation. The government’s most recent paper on “Prevent” puts the matter in a nutshell: “The sharing of local information should be the consequence of good quality community engagement, and not the motivation for it”.

Building the Research Base

As we noted earlier, there is a great deal of published material now available on al-Qaeda-inspired violence. There are histories of al-Qaeda, biographies of leading terrorists, as well as a growing number of autobiographical accounts written by young British Muslims who are former members of extremist organisations. At their best, these sources provide anecdotal colour and illuminating perspective. What is lacking, however, is a critical mass of rigorously designed empirical research. The study of AQ-inspired extremism is by no means an evidence-free zone. It is, however, a social science-weak zone.

There are a number of strategies that might be pursued in order to fill this gap: (i) The commissioning of empirical, community-focussed, research to be carried out by professional social scientists; (ii) Formal government evaluation of its own strategies and interventions to find out ‘what works’ on the ground—this is critically important, but is largely absent at the moment; (iii) Greater access by accredited academics to government data (obviously, subject to agreement and strict rules); (iv) More joint working between the Security and Defence Studies profession and sociologists who are studying particular communities in a more finely grained way.

CONCLUSIONS

The West Midlands Police Authority, together with its partners the West Midlands Police and the Government Office for the West Midlands, have taken a deliberate decision to access the advice of some of Britain’s leading experts on counter-terrorism and radicalisation. We are in no doubt that these issues are critical ones for our region. With that in mind, we wanted to put ourselves in a position where we could make well-informed, independent, judgements. The foregoing account summarises what has come out of that exercise and, in particular, what the most promising strategic responses seem to be.

It is especially reassuring, therefore, that our conclusions appear to chime in so well with the government’s latest thinking about its “Prevent” strategy, developed by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT). The language is different in places, and there are some minor differences in emphasis, but the overall similarity is marked. The OSCT’s strategic priorities are expressed succinctly in the following 7 points:

- Undermine extremist ideology: support mainstream voices.
- Disrupt those promoting violent extremism: strengthen vulnerable institutions.
- Support individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists: create mechanisms for supporting them.
- Increase the resilience of communities to engage with and resist violent extremists.
- Effectively address grievances.

- Develop intelligence, analysis and evaluation.
- Improve strategic communication.

As a Police Authority having to grapple directly with the challenge of violent extremism in our region, we welcome the commitment of central government to work closely with Local Authorities and other stakeholders such as ourselves, and to use these relationships as a basis for shared learning. We believe that as the accountable intermediaries between police forces and local communities, Police Authorities have a key role to play. We are willing and able to play that role.

West Midlands Police Authority

April 2008

Memorandum from the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (PVE 36)

The following is a collation of all the responses received from members of the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG), which explains the varying writing styles throughout the document, so as to ensure authenticity and fair inclusion of every response.

The following were the frequently repeated responses to the questions posed for the inquiry:

1. Lack of overt police responsibilities and sensitivities in respect of minority communities undermine community liaison work done under the prevent agenda. Such as the permission given by the Police during the holy month of Ramadan to hold an anti-Muslim protest outside Harrow Central Mosque on Friday 11 September 2009.

2. The bias of civil servants, departmental advisors and local authorities (LA) undermine the prevent initiatives taken by the less 'favourite' stakeholders and organisations, who are also excluded from consultative meetings with decision-makers, Ministers and Councillors.

3. The funding decisions is not always transparent and often repeated for preferred organisations which deters new ideas to assist the prevent agenda particularly when favoured existing organisations have not necessarily achieved the requisite results to justify the repeated funding. Also, the funding application process is perceived to be a show-case exercise.

4. Minority Muslim groups, with track record for large output but without the backing of the favoured organisations (such as the MCB), are more often than not ignored and marginalised from funding opportunities and access to decision-makers and Ministers.

5. The indignity of travellers at airports (for instance women having to remove their outer garments) undermines community cohesion which in turn undermines the prevent agenda—more consideration needs to be given on how to meet the requisite security requirements.

Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?

6. There needs to be a clearer conceptual distinction between policies designed to prevent extremism and those to build community cohesion—even if some of the vehicles and levers for change might overlap. Indeed, some genuinely well-motivated attempts to foster a sense of belonging in British society by glossing over differences of outlook or ideology are in danger of fostering attitudes which could lead to more rather than less extremism.

7. This challenge is particularly acute at local authority level, where many leaders and chief executives of local councils have been reluctant to single out and challenge the ideology of one group of people living in their community. We needed to be clear about the purpose of any intervention, dialogue or funding and evaluate them against clear criteria.

8. There needs to be an effective kind of engagement with Muslim and other minority ethnic communities especially as traditional religious institutions and organisations have failed to connect with young people and deal with their sense of alienation from British society. The state could not rely on 'gatekeeper' organisations to speak for Muslim communities and government has to appreciate that the dealings they have with both individuals and groups can act to "legitimise" or "delegitimise" those individuals or groups as well as help build capacity therein. Therefore it is absolutely imperative that due consideration is given when selecting partners to implement programmes.

9. The above needs to be handled in a manner that does not exasperate the already perceived implementation of faith based identity politics. British Muslims need to be more effectively encouraged to play their continued role in enhancing British society. The current programme appears to be adding fuel to the rise in popularity and growing support for far right wing fascist organisations.

10. Local partnerships still do not understand the agenda fully and do not want to go beyond their usual working practices.

11. Most of this agenda has been addressed by being added onto people's normal day jobs, which has diluted the impact.

12. The funding has been spent on things which only very loosely address "Preventing Violent Extremism" (PVE) because local authorities have not traditionally engaged with Muslim communities or understood their issues and concerns.

13. A lot of the funding has been spent on the extensive so called "Islamic experts" industry which has been artificially created, often in collaboration to promote favoured ideologies.

14. Expectations have been raised in some areas, which invariably will not be met, which in turn will lead to the problems of tomorrow.

How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

15. There seem to be many contradictions in application of analysis. Some examples of these are based on the decision to work with organisations that share at the senior levels the same shared values that all UK citizens should buy into and yet not specifying what these shared values are in detail? Furthermore, there seems to be inconsistency when organisations (or senior staff) show support against these values. Government will promote by political engagement and funding of their favourite organisation who has acted contrary to perceived shared values whilst penalising the non-favoured organisations for challenging those notions.

16. There is a focus on Violent Extremism and not Extremism. There seems to be quite a significant amount of analysis into ideologies that are fundamentally the fuel for violent extremists and yet many organisations that have these same identified ideologues are not only being supported, but in many cases funded as well.

17. Yes and no because a lot of time was wasted initially in the complete denial of the role of foreign policy and the need to address grievances (which has now changed but people still do not have the tools or skills to address political grievances when they occur) and the denial has had a lasting impact particularly by ideologues who wish to refer to past examples.

How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?

18. Effectiveness is compromised when the individuals selected to be the departmental advisors and the civil servants leading on projects are favourable to particular Muslim organisations who have historically not been affective with the grass-roots.

19. When appointments go to historical "friends" and their sympathisers due to their lobby power and other Muslims irrespective of competence and knowledge are marginalised then the prevent agenda is necessarily compromised as it ceases to have legitimacy with the grass-roots and the policies and projects become ineffective and too politicised which is contrary to the objectives of prevent.

20. Government must not engage with people or organisations that give a platform to, deny, or are apologists for crimes against humanity, including all genocide even that perpetrated by Muslim countries or organisations.

21. Government must not engage with groups or individuals that present a threat to rights and freedoms protected by the ECHR and discriminate or advocate discrimination on the basis of religion, religious sect, race or gender in any aspect of public life or public policy.

22. Government must not engage with groups or individuals who support or condone terrorism anywhere in the world.

23. The programme must incentivise "good behaviour" and disincentivise bad behaviour (as per shared values which need to be clearly set out rather having them as vague notions).

24. There is very little data that has been issued by government as to who they are engaging with other than the organisations that seem to shout the loudest within the media.

25. A lot more work could have been done which would have ensured a much wider reach into the diverse Muslim communities with wider engagement rather than their favourites.

26. The entire labelling by PVE continues to set a negative context and agenda.

27. PVE funding often does not reach the organisations that apply for it—once local authorities are approved or allocated the funds they have on some occasions used it for other purposes.

28. Independent bodies that have been established to advise on the PVE agenda are often not given enough support to be effective within a reasonable amount of time as the bureaucratic process causes extensive delays.

29. Voluntary community groups are not well informed on prevent agenda/strategy, the work they are carrying out is from a purely voluntary basis, needs led, these community groups experience difficulty securing funding to deliver community cohesion projects.

30. More respect, acknowledgment and financial support would initiate community champions to work with the statutory sector to deliver the prevent agenda.

Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

31. When Independent bodies are given support, such as for eg marketing/communications team, they are restricted in relaying their objective and honest opinions when and if this does not compliment the government's agenda. The purpose of having independent advisors is sometimes to hear the honest and frank comments, as uncomfortable as they may be.

32. The plan to tackle extremism at local regional levels seems to be one that makes sense, however the skills advice and expertise is not available at local authority level to implement the programme.

33. There has been a recent mentoring programme run by IDeA that has seen the accreditation of peer mentors to advice on how local authorities can create their own plans and implementation programmes. However, there is very little real expertise within the peer mentor community on causes of radicalisation and how to prevent them. Also the accreditation process does not measure in any format the prospective mentors' understanding of Prevent.

34. Many local authorities are not clear on their own understanding of the programme and some do not have the motivation to work on the Prevent agenda per say and are free to spend the finances allocated in whatever manner they see fit—hence we have some councils allocating the funds to projects that do not fulfil the prevent objectives.

35. In some places the expertise and advice is available but is not usually taken or understood because local authorities are just paying lip service to this agenda or funding their preferred agenda through their preferred organisations rather than the most competent to deliver.

Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?

36. No, because there is still a tendency to talk to the so called "community leaders" who in reality are so far removed from their communities that they would not be in position to relay the relevant information. This is particularly evident at stakeholder meetings.

37. Feedback from individuals, community groups and professionals supporting Muslim families concur that the terminology of Prevent has been a barrier, it reflects a negative image of ordinary hardworking settled Muslims and newly arrived Muslims striving to settle in the communities. Language of Al-Qaida promoted by fundamentalists has led to the "Blacklisting" of Muslims. Government needs to find new language that effectively refers to violent extremism that is not linked to Islam or Muslim communities.

38. Finding the balance to promote the agenda positively for better community cohesion across all races, ethnicities and faiths is yet to be identified.

39. Communication between the prevent partners and the Muslim communities remain closed rather than open.

40. Muslim communities from their experience feel statutory agencies cannot be trusted due to previous communications when these communities have highlighted a problem to senior professionals on local matters and their concerns have been ignored without conducting a full inquiry into their concerns.

41. Mosques with dedicated committee members need support from statutory agencies in order to initiate and deliver community led Mosque activities. MINAB has failed to be the answer Government had envisaged for rendering such support and empowerment to mosques.

42. Mosque Management Committee members need legal guidance when confronted with "rogue" committee members. Such support is lacking. MINAB has failed to win confidence at grassroots level irrespective of their propaganda, too often, by the same old community leaders with vested political interests.

43. Engaging with Muslim communities for instance in Hertfordshire is currently at "light touch" stage. Ideally it would be more positive if high profile ministers visited Muslim communities, with low literacy, low income, as they are not well informed on the work of the CLG or any other department.

Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?

44. There appear to be stakeholder meetings asking for advice however most of them discuss items of policy after they have been decided and many of these meetings appear to be an exercise in "selling the ideas"—showcase consultation meetings with "old favourites".

45. Again, advice is sought but not always taken into consideration when making policy decisions.

46. From consultation feedback it appears that professionals are finding it extremely difficult to engage with Muslim communities as they do not have the links with strong community leaders. It is necessary to find and promote strong community leaders.

47. For instance, very little if any advice is sought from NMWAG on policies and the Prevent agenda—yet we are promoted by Government to its stakeholders as advisors. NMWAG members often learn of Prevent policies and agenda once they have been formalised.

48. The prevent agenda remains hidden in white Middle class localities, rightly or wrongly there are arguments from both sides, promoting the agenda can create hostility between the indigenous population and the Muslim communities.

How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

49. There appears to have been a flurry of activity that has been undertaken with regards to Prevent with very little or in most cases no data to look at the effectiveness of the outcomes.

50. All Prevent-related activity must be subjected to rigorous “Equality Impact Assessments”, which consider the activity by their impact on society as a whole.

51. There are a number of intervention centres that have been initiated and funded by government but there is little or no real data as to their effect and effectiveness. Work needs to be carried out to establish whether we are getting value for money. Perhaps a way forward is to look at attitudinal changes within the respective communities and the government bodies.

52. As long as we rely on local partnerships to self evaluate, we will never get a true picture because local authorities cherry pick the respondents who are likely to support their views.

53. “I think the label PVE is still causing grief and making those who want to request funding unhappy and uncomfortable – it has to be changed.”

54. Funding is all too often allocated based on the ability to present slick funding applications even though those applicants requesting funding have never delivered or worked with the marginalized group they are requesting the funding for and have no links or understanding of the needs of that minority group. Funds are then allocated with the stipulation that the organisation must work with the organisation which is directly linked with providing support to that marginalized group. The result is that most of the funding allocated is then usurped by the middle man being the funding applicant and lost to the group they advocate to be supporting.

55. Advisors would be better employed looking at such funding applications and, regardless of the applicant, look towards providing funding to those directly involved in the delivery of similar services and who have a good track record in support and delivery so that it goes directly to those funding is allocated to assist.

56. We have found that the success of the PVE agenda has depended upon it being initiated and led by the Muslim community.

57. There has been a lot of suspicion and to overcome this we have consulted widely with emphasis on asking the Muslim community candidly what they feel the vulnerabilities in the community are and addressing those through projects that we are main streaming through the council in partnership with the different organisations. This, I have found cuts out the politics of funding and make the projects more attractive and accessible to a wider community. It also bypasses the “gatekeepers”. This has been particularly successful with women and young people. These projects need to be long term and sustainable. We have changed the name of the funding to “building the bridge”—this has made a difference to how it is perceived. Although there is a great deal of suspicion around the agenda.

Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

58. Differentiation can only be achieved if organisations and grass roots understand and buy into the Prevent programme. It is here that the government has failed—to provide an effective differentiator and motivation at grassroots’ level to achieve this.

59. No, because a lot of people do not even understand what is cohesion and the fact that different Government departments are giving contradictory messages (ie OSCT and CLG) is just confusing practitioners.

60. The indigenous population along with Muslim communities need more appropriate education to alleviate fears and anxieties relating to integration and cohesion.

61. Government needs to address the extremism from the Far Right/Fascists to BNP without repercussions on Muslim communities.

62. Muslim communities need guidance and advice in how to tackle such backlash, how and from whom to seek support. Statutory agencies need to listen and act upon concerns raised by Muslim communities with urgency and not make Muslims feel “unheard” or “outsiders”.

September 2009

Memorandum from An-Nisa Society (PVE 39)

ABOUT AN-NISA SOCIETY

- An-Nisa Society is a women-led organisation working for the welfare of Muslim families since 1985. The organisation works to create a greater understanding of the wider Muslim community and has strived over the past two decades to address those needs. It has led on the campaign for religious discrimination to be outlawed. It develops groundbreaking faith based services and works on influencing policy.

We have developed groundbreaking faith based initiatives such as Islamic counselling, sexual health and Muslim fatherhood.

Trustees serve or have served on various bodies that include, the Commission for British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI), Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), Christian-Muslim Forum, various government working groups such as the PVE Task Force, Community Cohesion and Forced Marriage Working Parties, Muslim Women Talk Campaign.

- An-Nisa was funded for the Pathfinder Stage of Prevent to deliver a programme of personal development for Muslim boys and young men. From the start we expressed our concerns about the government’s approach of targeting the whole community as potential terrorists. Once we became alerted to the dangers of this strategy and experienced it first hand, we turned down any further funding.

The report of our project is attached as part of this submission. The recommendations we made were never taken forward.

SUMMARY

In response to our concerns about PVE and the Prevent Strategy we produced a report in February 2009 entitled “*Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Prevent—A Muslim response.*” In this report, we comprehensively highlighted why we believe Prevent fails in its aim to counter violent extremism. The issues addressed are:

- The whole community approach— viewing Muslims only through PVE.
- Increasing risk of discrimination & victimisation of Muslims.
- Blaming the victims.
- Wider issues of youth disaffection.
- Mainstreaming of PVE and Prevent.
- Intelligence through the back door.
- Erosion of civil liberties & human rights:
 - Mapping.
- Confidentiality.
- Muslim voluntary sector.
- Example of mainstreaming Prevent & implications of the lack of a Muslim voluntary sector.
- Implications of lack of experience of Muslim community in the Mainstream.
- Muslim groups will lose credibility and trust.
- Transparency & accountability.

The details are in the report, which is attached, and forms part of this submission. We will therefore not be addressing these issues in detail in this paper but highlighting particular areas of concern and making recommendations for the way forward.

MAIN TEXT

“Prevent is perceived to be Pursue in sheeps’ clothing”

Muslim Public Sector Worker

1. This submission has been prepared with input from Muslims involved in Prevent.
2. We welcome this inquiry, as the Muslim community has had no avenue to raise its legitimate concerns about Prevent. However, we question the premise of this inquiry, which assumes the problem lies in the strategy’s implementation. We fear that by seeking to tinker with the Prevent strategy’s delivery instead of looking at its inception, the inquiry has failed to grasp that the problem lies in it’s fundamental principles, which treat a whole community as a potential terrorist risk.
3. We believe that this ill-conceived strategy has further wounded and damaged the already vulnerable Muslim community exposing it to increased vilification, physical attacks and discrimination. It has given far right extremists ammunition to justify their attacks on Muslims, such as the recent demonstrations by groups linked to the BNP.
4. It has heightened tensions, created an Islamophobic backlash and given legitimacy to far-right extremists who have exploited the PVE agenda to further fuel the grievances of alienated white communities. There is an erroneous impression that Muslims are getting special treatment, funding and privileges, which has also left other minority communities feeling resentful thereby creating local tensions.
5. There is unprecedented and understandable interest in the PVE funding programme by the media and others as it claims it will build “resilience” to violent extremism in Muslim communities. This has led to paranoia in local authorities leading to disproportionate and heavy handed monitoring and security checks of Muslim funded organisations, regular negative media reporting and reports.
6. The vast majority of Muslims abhor and condemn violent extremism and support initiatives to counter it. They have sincerely taken part, for example, in the PVE Taskforce convened after 7/7. Many accepted Prevent funding in goodwill until they realised the full implications of the strategy that they were not working “with” the government, as they believed, but that they themselves were at the receiving end of a government surveillance programme.
7. This strategy is unprecedented in that the main stakeholders, the Muslim community, which it is targeting, have been ignored—it is certainly not community-led. The delivery of Prevent has been marked by secretiveness and lack of transparency and accountability. There are infringements of civil liberties and human rights. There has been a distinct lack of normal democratic oversight processes. It makes a mockery of government rhetoric and policies on equality, community involvement, stakeholder engagement, open government, transparency and accountability.
8. The government has been accused of social engineering the Muslim community by selecting whom it will interact with based on their support for present government policy.
9. The first stage of Prevent was to bring Muslim communities on board by offering them small pots of funding. The next stage is to “mainstream” Prevent in core council services and ultimately in all public sector services. Procedures, which will be difficult to dismantle, are already being put in place to monitor Muslims for signs of extremism when they use any public service. For example, we understand that information-sharing agreements with regards to identifying potential extremists have been developed between departments and agencies.
10. The government has announced that it will be *reframing the Prevent Strategy to take into account white far-right extremism*. We can only imagine the outcry if white working class communities were targeted as a whole community that is vulnerable to violent extremism. We would not wish any community to be subjected to the same treatment that has been accorded to Muslim communities.
11. The government is sending out mixed messages. Shortly after announcing the reframing of Prevent in September 2009 to include far right extremism, it announced a further £7.5 million is to go into improving the effectiveness of the Prevent programme in tackling al-Qaeda-influenced extremism. Part of this will mean more than 300 additional dedicated police posts being set up across the two countries. In 2008–09 the current posts were intended to support existing neighbourhood policing teams. In 2009–10 the new posts are expected to have a broader role, incorporating more aspects of the Prevent strategy.
12. The government relies heavily on representative bodies, advisory groups and advisors. A PVE industry has developed where lucrative contracts are being given to consultants and “experts.” Most of these are well established having worked in the Race and Equalities Industries They do not tend to have experience of the faith sector and specifically the Muslim sector. Consequently, a significant proportion of PVE funding is being wasted on ineffectual mapping, research and consultation exercises.
13. The Quilliam Foundation have been given considerable public funding and whose doubtful advice the government listens to—being a reformed extremist does not make one an “expert” on Muslim community issues. This has led, for example, to the Contest 2 controversy where Quilliam’s advice led to the government’s insistence on not “speaking” to groups who did not reject “extremist” ideology as defined by Quilliam.

14. The government's PVE and Prevent Strategies have diverted attention from addressing the legitimate needs of Muslims as citizens and as probably the most disadvantaged community in the country as social indicators attest.

15. There has been a historical failure of government policy towards the Muslim community. The most glaring example is the Race Relations Act 1987. The fact that the Act did not outlaw religious discrimination and make it a statutory duty to address faith equality and anti-faith discrimination has contributed to the social exclusion of Muslims. A faith-blind approach to equality and anti-racism has not delivered social justice for Muslims. The consequences have been extreme social exclusion, marginalisation, alienation and lack of engagement of Muslims in society.

16. Another policy failure is the Equality Act 2006. The government failed to address the lack of faith discrimination when they first came to power in 1997. It took until 2006 for the Equality Act to include faith in the equalities agenda. However, the legislation did not go far enough as there was no public sector duty to consider religion faith/religion issues when designing their policies, responsibilities and the delivery of services. Therefore, there has been no incentive for the public sector to address Muslim social exclusion institutionally and strategically.

17. The new Equality Bill, introduced into Parliament in April 2009, will bring in a single "public duty" requiring all publicly-funded bodies to proactively promote equality across seven strands, including faith, and remove barriers to fair service provision. However, at a consultation by the Government Equalities Office in London this month, there was a discussion on the urgency in getting the legislation through before a general election in spring. It was said that if it were not completed by April 2010 it would fall. In addition, the House of Commons committee and the House of Lords may delete or add duties. It may mean that the faith discrimination duty is taken out.

18. The faith public duty in the Equality Bill 2009 is essential to addressing Muslim social exclusion. It will be disastrous for the Muslim community if the Bill was to fall or if the faith duty is removed. If the Equality Bill was to go through without a public duty on faith or if it was diluted, the Muslim community will be in an even worse position than before. The government needs to take responsibility for its failure in getting faith equality on the statute books as soon as it was elected and when it finally did so in 2006 it did not make it a public duty. If the Bill falls and there is a change of government, it is unlikely to be put forward again in the foreseeable future.

MUSLIM VOICES—GRASSROOTS EXPERIENCES OF PREVENT

1. We have had a considerable amount of feedback from the Muslim community, which has been overwhelmingly against Prevent. They have recounted disturbing experiences of working on Prevent projects, either as workers in the public sector or as Muslim individuals and community groups involved in projects.

2. We have published a set of responses that are representative of the feedback we have received. The paper is attached is part of this submission—the extracts below are taken from the paper.

3. We have been asked to keep them anonymous because criticism of Prevent means marginalisation and exclusion from funding and partnership working opportunities, whereas "compliant" organisations are facilitated and favoured.

4. PVE is underlying both of the leadership/chaplaincy initiatives, and I have been increasingly shocked and appalled at what I see unfolding... University Lecturer

5. Although I was supposed to be part of the PVE scrutiny board after the first meeting...I didn't bother going back as it paints all Muslims under the same brush. One, which I am not comfortable with.

London Muslim councillor

6. I'm working on PVE in (a London borough) under Community Cohesion, and to be honest, I didn't understand the strategy until I came into post. It immediately raised my own concerns of the agenda, but I was reassured by the council that they are using the PVE agenda for "capacity building" and promoting civic pride for the Muslim communities in (London borough). However, the framework and nature of the agenda and partnership working with Police etc, contradicts this...

Muslim Worker—Employed in Prevent funded post in a London council

7. The chair of the group who is the council lead, and the (Prevent Board) as a whole, were reminded repeatedly at the monthly meetings that the issue of local narrative needed to be addressed before the group could proceed. It appeared that this was largely being ignored and that the council wanted to proceed on delivery without meaningful discussion.

Council Officer—North England

8. ...in (our borough), there has been no public consultation with the Muslim community and its voluntary sector. The Prevent Programme Board has no Muslim voluntary sector representation. In our area, Muslims are so ill informed and badly organised that we cannot make our local authority accountable to the Muslim community for such a sensitive area of work. This is replicated across the country.

Muslim Voluntary Group

9. Many of the programmes are aimed at Muslim women...the promotional material is deliberately misleading. Nowhere does it say “come to this workshop to prevent violent extremism”. The aims and objectives are false. Even if those delivering the projects believe they are trying to improve the prospects for Muslim women (which is in dire need), they never disclose the real aims, which come from the Prevent strategy.

Muslim Voluntary Group

10. Many women invited to workshops are vulnerable...they do not need to come to a PVE workshop to help themselves. Their more fundamental issues of education, mental health, marriage and extended family relationships need addressing first through community development initiatives rather than Prevent.

Muslim Voluntary Group

11. Participants (at Prevent projects) whether young or old are not told why they have been invited to the workshop or programme. They are systematically deceived. Most don't have the analytical approach necessary to question the organisers and ask uncomfortable questions like: Who funded this? What are the aims of this session? Where will our feedback go? Why were we invited? If they had an inkling of the Prevent Strategy—in simple terms, many would turn on their heels and head home.

Muslim Voluntary Group

RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe the government needs to undertake the following with the same robustness that it has with the Prevent Strategy.

1. An-Nisa Society believes that the government's Preventing Violent Extremism agenda (PVE) agenda and the Prevent Strand of its CONTEST strategy is fundamentally flawed and discriminatory and calls for it to be dismantled with immediate effect.

2. The government needs to facilitate the Muslim third sector, which will then be able to communicate with, and advise the government and service providers on behalf of genuine grassroots Muslim communities without recourse to expensive and ill-informed “experts” and consultants.

3. The government should cease linking community cohesion, capacity building, community development and addressing inequalities with PVE. This approach risks de-legitimising much needed community building of the Muslim community. Security measures should be separate and distinct so that there is no doubt as to their objectives. As the Taxpayers Alliance states, “Skilled policing and robust intelligence are the most effective ways of tackling violent extremism. Funding projects carried out by community groups is doomed to failure.”

4. Addressing inequalities, social and economic deprivation, social exclusion and fractured families as a common goal for all communities will be more productive to building “resilience” to social ills, including extremism of any type.

5. We believe the way forward is to engage purposefully with underprivileged communities to ensure cutting-edge services within communities to prevent grievances based on perceived inequalities based on ethnic, religious or socio economic factors.

6. A public debate needs to be held on the crisis in our most vulnerable communities and how we need to address this with sensible and just policies. There is general concern nationally about young people in all communities, the breakdown of families and fractured communities. Root causes must be investigated and addressed.

7. Bring together Britain's diverse communities to work to address the wider issues that are affecting all of us including what is causing large numbers of young people, from different communities, to feel hostile and alienated from society. This will do more for community cohesion than anything else.

8. Rethink and reformulate the equality and diversity agenda for the 21st Century. Review how communities are identified and how needs are met to incorporate faith identity and faith based needs.

9. Rethink its strategy towards the Muslim community. It should cease dealing with the whole Muslim community through the prism of anti-terrorism but rather as citizens who need the support of their government and through mainstream strategies.

10. Ensure that the faith strand in the Equality Bill is not diluted or removed. Furthermore, the faith public duty should be elucidated in government guidelines in more depth. The public sector lacks understanding of institutional Islamophobia in the delivery of goods and services. There is a need for comprehensive guidelines on faith equality for the public sector.

11. Prioritise addressing Islamophobia and Institutional anti-Muslim discrimination (Islamophobia) within the public sector. A robust faith duty in the Equality Bill 2009 will facilitate this.

12. Promote the mainstreaming of initiatives targeting Muslims as a socially excluded community, as separate and distinct from PVE, and make it core business. Prioritise community development, community cohesion, social inclusion and capacity building for the Muslim community through the mainstream. Set targets in strategies and plans both nationally and locally so that progress can be monitored.

13. Facilitate the building of local infrastructure in the Muslim community, for example, through investment in the development of a Muslim voluntary sector that will cater for a wide variety of Muslims needs. The voluntary sector will then have the capacity to formulate itself into community-led grassroots local advocacy and consultative forums and eventually national representative bodies. Such a programme will provide tangible relief to distressed local Muslim communities and directly affect their quality of life, increase engagement and give people a stake in society as citizens and not as 'pariahs.' This will enable the Muslim community to take the lead on its own issues and concerns and engage on an equal basis.

September 2009

Memorandum from Faith Associates (PVE 40)

1. PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

1.1 In response to the call for evidence Faith Associates would like the following evidence to be considered.

1.2 The Communities and Local Government Committee has resolved to undertake an inquiry into Prevent, the Government's programme for preventing violent extremism. The Committee will consider the current and likely future effectiveness of the Prevent programme.

1.3 In view of the community engagement and development work undertaken by Faith Associates this submission focuses on the "Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism" and "Address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting" strands of the Prevent programme.

2. SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION

2.1 The main points made in this memorandum are:

- increasing the resilience and building institutional capacity of Mosques to drive the community cohesion agenda, practically, spiritually and intellectually within the communities they serve;
- increasing the community capacity to self regulate and strengthen and broaden mainstream voices; and
- support Muslim community institutions to play a greater role in civic leadership and developing mainstream service provision.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Faith Associates was established in 2006 to provide services to develop the capability and capacity of faith communities in the United Kingdom and overseas, with a specific emphasis on Muslim communities.

3.2 The work of the organisation and its associates is predominately across the South East of England and in the major conurbations of the UK, providing services to build capability and capacity in Muslim institutions such as Mosques helping improve governance and their participation in civic life.

3.3 Shaukat Warraich, the co-founder of Faith Associates, has over the past 15 years been actively engaged with different local communities—more recently helping to establish local communication forums to support greater Muslim community participation and self governance.

4. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

4.1 The key aim of the Prevent strand of CONTEST is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. The revised HM Government guidance on Delivering the Prevent Strategy (August 2009) re-emphasises the importance of partnership working as being key to successful local delivery and the role of evaluation and research to support the development of an evidence base to inform effective practice.

4.2 Our experience to date suggests that effective partnership working is also being delivered across government departments and regional offices, ie Home Office; Communities and Local Government; Children, Schools and Families; and Business, Innovation and Skills.

4.3 The challenge of moving from single department/service delivery to multi-agency working at national, regional and local levels has taken time to embed. The challenge has been taken up and our experience suggests this now provides a good structure on which the aims of the Prevent strategy can be realised.

4.4 The consequent local structures now developed, ie local partnerships that include local authorities, local police, local community and faith organisation representation, will help ensure consistent messages on and co-ordination of local work.

4.5 We have seen that effective local partnerships, building the knowledge, confidence, trust and subsequent engagement of all local partners is a pre-requisite to establishing effective local Prevent work.

5. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

5.1 Study and understanding of the "radicalisation" of individuals into violent extremism is relatively new. A common definition of radicalisation is "the process in which a person gradually accepts the ideas and subsequent methods of expressing them". There are some key points to consider here:

- whether the ideas and narrative are within the law;
- whether the methods to express the ideas and narrative are violent or non-violent; and
- how the ideas and narrative further manifest, ie in joining an organised group or an individual taking forward a personal narrative with subsequent individual action.

5.2 The factors that will influence an individual during this process will be multi-dimensional:

- their own personal circumstances such as access to education, the labour market, personal or family finances;
- their own experiences in their locality and wider afield, from whether they are able to find a voice to engage others with their thoughts and ideas, able to engaged with others in discussing local, national or world affairs or whether they, their families or friends have experienced racial, religious or abuse;
- cultural factors such as how well they have developed and resolved their own sense of identity, including their faith, ethnic heritage or other beliefs; and
- group dynamics and peer influence.

5.3 For a government to have a one size fits all plan of what to do to stop individuals becoming radicalised is a task unlikely to succeed.

5.4 Our experience suggests that what may be achievable is training and supporting those who are responsible for the care of those in their community, from parents to faith leaders, teachers to youth workers, in identifying those who may be or are becoming vulnerable to violent extremism. Key is addressing early signs of vulnerability by supporting the development of the skills and confidence of those working with young people and the wider community and ensuring they have access to professional and culturally sensitive advice and support.

5.5 For those individuals that have become radicalised and require more intensive support than services in their local community can provide then the channel projects may offer some answers. These are in their early stages and their effectiveness will take time to judge, but without community centric support and rehabilitation there will be a danger that alienation could develop into criminalisation.

5.6 A consideration for all interventions is ensuring cultural sensitivity and upholding the ethos of a free society where extremist views within the law can be held and discussed by those not resorting to violent actions—a fine line. This broadens consideration to domestic extremism, most commonly associated with "single-issue" protests, for example, environmentalism, anti-globalisation or crime and public disorder linked to extreme left or right wing political campaigns.

5.7 For individuals, particularly young Muslims exploring their Islamic faith, there is the critical need for sensitivity to ensure the process of "spiritual awakening" to their faith is supported and not seen as the development of extremist views that will lead to violent actions. An inclusive and broader appreciation of youth development from Mosques could play a positive role in inspiring, motivating and channelling spiritual zeal into positive social currency.

6. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

6.1 This question needs to be considered at three levels: local, national and international.

6.2 Local government and government funded services delivering in localities are often building on community development and engagement practice. The challenges are ensuring the voices of a cross section of communities are heard, from elected members or leaders of faith and community based organisations to those involved in women's and young people groups. Where localities do not have a broad representation of voices then this is an area of initial and often considerable work in building the trust and confidence of all concerned. Engagement through the commissioning of innovative initiatives are opportunities that have been sources of great community renewal, but this requires brave and visionary leadership on the part of strategy or commissioning groups.

6.3 At the national level, particularly looking at Islamic/Muslim organisations, political leadership and financial support has been forthcoming and work is now in progress. For example:

- the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) is now developing into a standards setting and regulating body for the majority of the 1,400 or so Mosques and their imams in the UK; and
- ministerial advisory groups of Muslim women and young people have been established.

6.4 At a national level the investment and case for sustained investment in these various channels of engagement will be what advice is sought from the groups by government and whether the advice given impacts on government policy and practice at home and overseas.

6.5 Internationally, the UK has a good reputation for supporting, through a range of means, the development of civic participation, equalities and human rights. The recent and current conflicts the UK and others have been engaged with will have impacted on this reputation and resolve will be required to bring the benefits to the localities over time.

6.6 Pulling these three domains of engagement together in terms of how effective now and in the future they are and will be will be a challenge for the Committee. If respectful and peaceful coexistence in a pluralist society is the aim, the ground has been prepared and the initial sowing of seeds done for the Muslim communities in England to be better organised, more confident and more participatory in civic life. How this grows is dependent on continued government engagement over the next 10 to 15 years and, most critically, Muslim individuals and communities engaging and rising to the opportunity.

7. Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

7.1 The Prevent initiative is relatively new for the majority of local authorities and has created a new cadre of staff—Prevent practitioners—across a range of delivery services, including community safety, education, youth justice, youth work, community development and leisure. There is not currently a minimum skills and knowledge set for such staff.

7.2 From our experience, with particular reference to the engagement of Muslim communities within a locality to build resilience, staff require the understanding of cultural complexity, sensitivity to the nuances of engaging with the range of formal faith and community organisations and informal groupings such as women’s groups and youth groups. Key to their success is their ability to build the trust and confidence of local communities to effectively identify needs and work with them in meeting identified and mutually agreed outcomes.

7.3 The majority of local implementation we have seen is often driven by the multi-agency approach to the delivery of Prevent. To establish, implement and evaluate Prevent funded programmes takes time and the nature of the evaluation is often short term outcomes related. For example, the local engagement of women and young people through positive services/activities that meet identified local needs. The medium term (say three to five years) outcomes of projects—build the resilience of communities and reducing the threat of individuals becoming radicalisation—will in all likelihood only be known by the intelligence/Police services. A key concern is the short-term nature of funding support for activity to be embedded in a sustained way that can ensure the medium term outcomes are achieved.

7.4 Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?

7.5 Our overall experience to date is “no” in response to this question. For Prevent there remains substantial suspicion and concern that it is no more than asking community members to “spy on each other”. To take communities from this starting point to an understanding of what positive engagement with Prevent can achieve requires a range of strategies from engagement on a one-to-one basis with leaders of local faith institutions and community organisations and then the opportunity to present and engage in discussion with community members across the spectrum of local Muslim communities in each locality.

7.6 Muslim communities are focussed on a range of issues linked to treatment in the media following 9/11 and 7/7, the reported rise in popularity of the far right, foreign policy and its effects in home country or region—from Iraq, to Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

8. Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?

8.1 We can add no comment other than our response at six.

9. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

9.1 Concerning evaluation please see our response at seven.

9.2 On value for money we do not have the evidence to offer a judgement. A consideration here will be identifying what similar activities could value for money be benchmarked against?

9.3 The assertion we can put forward is that the Prevent activity being funded has the potential to build resilience, civic participation and reduce the risk of alienation and radicalisation. With the Muslim population of England likely to be between 4–5 million at the next census (2011), the positive engagement and provision of services can only help build a more cohesive society for future generations.

10. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

10.1 In addressing this question in our work we present community cohesion rather than being “related” as part of a continuum. Effective local and national work on community cohesion and inclusion will identify opportunities for targeted Prevent work based on the assessment of need in each locality.

10.2 Further we would suggest that the work of organisations such as the recently formed Equalities and Human Rights Commission will become increasingly important in celebrating effective inclusion practice and identifying areas for greater focus.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

11.1 From our experience we propose the following recommendations for consideration by the committee for inclusion in its report to the House:

- for the government to promote yet more vigorously security, justice, participation in democracy and opportunity for all;
- for all to work towards resolving the political conflicts and injustices which lie at the root of the anger, frustration and despair which breed the foot soldiers of terrorism;
- for all promoting socio-economic and human development; including continued work on eradicating poverty which exacerbates conflicts and addressing gender, youth and child issues;
- continued emphasis is given to inclusive education;
- continue working towards diminishing the growing trend of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims by fostering dialogue and comprehension through intercultural and inter-faith working and projects;
- targeting resources to develop expertise and specialism’s to increase community resilience and help to strengthen community institutions;
- developing contingency planning for the intergenerational exchange and handing over of community assets in order to direct and foster greater civic participation and developing community asset mainstreaming; and
- institutionalising standards based community development which fosters greater inclusiveness.

September 2009

Memorandum from Forward Thinking (PVE 49)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This submission is based on our work with diverse communities and grassroots organisations over the past five years.
2. The attached dossier provides feedback from some of the community groups whom we work with.
3. These observations do not distinguish between Prevent as implemented by the different government departments CLG, Home Office, CSF, FCO and Local Authorities. The community perceptions and experiences are based on the view of the Prevent policy as a whole.
4. Forward Thinking believes that Prevent has contributed to a sense of alienation within communities rather than their empowerment.
5. Prevent forms part of the governments counter-terrorism strategy but the guidelines to local partners encourages the connecting of Prevent with other related agendas such as cohesion, cultural, leisure, education and youth services. This has helped to create suspicion and mistrust within the communities where any interaction with the state or non-state actors is seen as information gathering or intelligence services led.

6. “Prevent” has become highly counter-productive: it communicates, to Muslim communities, that the only line of engagement between them and their government concerns terrorism. Muslims need to be engaged first and foremost as British citizens.

7. The Prevent policy raises the question among Muslims as to whether the government is attempting to prevent violent and extremist acts or promote a “state-sanctioned” version of Islam.

8. Key community members whose engagement is vital to the success of PVE are reluctant to be associated with such policies.

9. The awarding of funds for projects by local authorities and central government has been opaque and the criteria on which projects are deemed effective seem unclear and inconsistent.

10. The stigma attached to PVE funding and its rejection by many grassroots organisations has created a vacuum which is being filled by groups and individuals who lack any real constituency within the communities but who are repeatedly being awarded funding for projects that appear to have little merit.

11. There is a lack of a standardized mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of projects in contributing to PVE and their value for money.

12. In communities where PVE funding has been accepted and where Muslims and non-Muslim communities have been aware of this, it has led to tension and hostilities between communities. This also appears to have fuelled the far-right and Islamophobic agenda both locally and nationally.

INTRODUCTION

13. Forward Thinking is a proactive, demand-driven, facilitative organisation, founded in 2004 as an independent non-denominational charity that works:

- To promote in the UK greater understanding and confidence between the diverse grassroots Muslim communities and the wider society including the Media and the British establishment.
- To promote a more inclusive peace process in the Middle East.
- To facilitate a global dialogue between the religious and secular worlds.

14. As a non-denominational, non-governmental, multi-disciplined organisation, Forward Thinking is uniquely positioned to provide their experience and knowledgeable assistance to Muslim community groups who are seeking to develop and improve their work within the community.

15. The combination of our team’s knowledge of Islam, our access to the diverse grassroots Muslim communities at a regional and national level, our expertise in organisational capacity building at a community level and our track record of working with such groups over the past five years, enables us to provide real insight about the impact of Prevent policy and an authoritative voice about the issues and concerns of the culturally, religiously and regionally diverse Muslim communities in the UK.

16. We understand that the Select Committee inquiry’s remit will focus on Prevent in relation to the Communities and Local Government department and any findings will relate to this. However we feel that as Prevent is a cross-departmental policy that was designed to work across different departments of government and has resulted in being the primary, and at times, only way arms of state interact with Muslim individuals or communities, it is important that we look at the sum of the parts of the policy so that we do not obscure its impact.

ADDRESSING THE INQUIRY’S QUESTIONS

17. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

18. Violent Extremism as defined by Prevent seems to focus mainly on Muslim communities, though lip-service is paid to threats posed by animal rights campaigners, all funds that has been administered to support Prevent has been administered to or focused on dealing with Muslim communities.

19. This approach criminalizes Muslims and Muslim communities by association rather than having a policy that is based on robust facts and evidence. It’s a blanket approach that at best ignorantly lumps diverse Muslim communities together, simplifies that nature of the threat and creates alienation and disenfranchisement which contributes to the very threat it aims to counter.

20. Prevent will always be a problematic policy because in the fundamental questions of what leads people to commit acts of violence in the name of an ideology cloaked in a religious theme have yet to be answered by policy makers. Please refer to Dossier item one: “Toward a Holistic Strategy to Counter Violent Radicalisation in the United Kingdom”.

21. Prevent places a disproportionate amount of responsibility for citizens’ security on communities and their local authorities. This is particularly problematic when local communities do not engage with their constituents on a faith basis and therefore do not know who their “Muslim Constituents” are. In addition, traditionally many Muslims communities particularly recently settled communities are unengaged with local authorities either by choice or due to structural inequalities.

22. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

23. Prevent's five objectives to address the causes of radicalisation which are believed to lead to radicalisation seem clear enough but their practical implementation become problematic when:

24. "Supporting mainstream voices"—the diversity of Muslim voices and opinion makes it difficult to define "mainstream" voices. Although there is general agreement on the principles and spirit of Islamic practice there is great linguistic, cultural, theological, regional and denominational diversity. In addition, from the communities' perspective, "supporting mainstream voices, has become a euphemism for apologists for government and those who are seen to be too close to government.

25. "Disrupting those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate"—here there is the unintended risk of shutting down public debate and freedom of speech, particularly since communities feel that it is unfairly targeted as the Muslim community. Similar measures have not been seen again far-right groups and others. Some communities have become afraid of talking about any issue relating to theology, foreign policy and politics for fear of being accused of promoting the "wrong ideology". This has the knock on effect of driving those who wish to recruit and incite violence to do so underground away from the communities' gaze and leadership who may have an influence in curbing such practice. In addition, this creates a vacuum where such views and ideologies go unchallenged because their people are afraid of being wrongly accused of promoting violent extremism or because they are unaware of it going on in the community and therefore cannot address them.

26. "Supporting individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment or who have already been recruited by violent extremists"—our interactions and feedback from communities, particularly that in Dewsbury has illustrated that there is a real lack of expertise and best practice in this area. The quality of services and access to support is not uniform across the country and in some cases is extremely poor leaving vulnerable individuals at greater risk. Again the interaction with the state is always avoided by communities and individuals simply because there is a lack of trust and understanding.

27. "Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism"—a vague statement that has resulted in a variety of projects being funded from interfaith singing to playing football and media training. Again there is a lack of consistency of standards and application.

28. The two supporting objectives of: "Developing supporting intelligence, analysis and information and improve strategic communications" are reasonable in themselves but when Prevent is mixed with agendas of community cohesion, empowering communities and includes departments such as DSCF, Youth Justice Board, prisons, health and UK Border Agency this feeds to the already existing sense of mistrusts and defensiveness within communities leading in some cases to paranoia and the use of conspiracy theories as a prism of understanding policy and government action.

29. Please refer to paragraph 3.2 in Item two of the dossier which gives the perspective of a community group in Birmingham.

30. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed*

31. Prior to the tragic attacks of 7 July 2005, the government's interaction with Muslim communities was through a select number of organizations that did not reflect the diversity of the Muslim communities in the UK. This is exemplified by engaging with umbrella organisations like the MCB. However, there has now been an extreme shift so that organisations like MCB and those who seem to be critical of government on issues whether it be domestic, foreign or cohesion and security policies are in some cases actively excluded from consultation and dialogue.

32. It is also clear that government departments and associated bureaucracies find it extremely difficult to access and engage grassroots communities and those with authentic constituency. There is the initial obstacle of knowing where to go and also developing relationships that are based on trust and mutual understanding. This therefore creates a vacuum of grassroots voices and those who can affect real change (whether small or significant) on the ground. Engagement is therefore with individuals, representatives and national organisations who do not fully reflect the age, gender and generational profile as well as the cultural and theological diversity of the Muslim community in the UK.

33. Very often the people and advisers engaged by government are disconnected from the realities of those very vulnerable individuals and communities the government is trying to reach. This may be simple due to the fact that the most vulnerable are more likely to be isolated and hidden from mainstream society and state institutions. Therefore the information gained, analysis made and solutions offered are not targeted, accurate or engage the people who need the most help and support.

34. Recognising this gap in engagement and understanding Forward Thinking has over the last 18 months devised a programme of community engagement with the OSCT team in the Home Office where new inductees to the department take part in a 1.5 day visit to a community in either the south east, the Midlands or Northern England to meet with grassroots groups, activists, Imams, women, young people and professionals living in the Muslim community to learn from them about their lives, concerns and issues of

they face in education, the workplace, wider society etc. It has proven to be a successful mechanism of learning and trust building on both sides. Neither CLG nor FCO have a similar programme of engagement with communities.

35. A recent report by the Tax Payers Alliance, published on 8 September 2009, provides comprehensive details of spending on Prevent showing how much each organisations received individually in the financial year for 2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09. The data reveals that Manchester City Council had funded only two organisations with its PVE budget, with one receiving a total of £125000 of tax payer’s money. Surely the Muslim communities of the metropolitan city of Manchester cannot be reached through only *two* organisations. Similarly in Dudley, only *one* Muslim organisation received PVE funding totaling £260,801.00 over a two year period. Can it then be accurately stated that Dudley L.A reached out widely and effectively to its Muslim constituents?

36. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme? & Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme.*

37. The Local Government Association has produced a document aimed at local authorities and local councilors which provides a guide to Prevent and its practical implementation/implication. Whether this has been of any assistance is unknown.

38. As PVE funding is administered to local authorities through Local Area Based Grants, the reporting and evaluating feedback given to central government is not as robust or thorough. Local authorities are then vulnerable to misunderstanding and confusion with regards to implementing and evaluating Prevent. In some cases this has resulted in PVE funding being channeled towards cohesion projects.

39. Implementation and evaluation requires sound knowledge of the Muslim communities and constituents in the local authority. The plethora of consultative and research organisations employed by local authorities to “map” Muslim communities in the locality suggest that even the most basic knowledge about the ethnicity and social profile of the local Muslim communities is unknown. This not only hinders engagement but results in weak and superficial implementation and evaluation.

40. As a result of this knowledge deficit, local authorities have tended to fall back on long term partners and stakeholders for advice, guidance and implementation of projects, whose traditional expertise has been in race, equality and diversity work. Though some of this is relevant to Muslim communities, on its own it is not adequate to understand the national and local nuances of the Muslim communities.

41. The remainder of the enquiries questions are quite similar and are linked. We have therefore chosen to list them below and provide the following response:

42. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

43. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

44. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

45. The government’s own guidelines state that “local Prevent partnerships should make connections between Prevent and other associated and related agendas. Local partners can give Prevent work different titles, but irrespective of the way Prevent is presented, it is vital to retain a focus on the Prevent objectives.” Page five, Delivering the Prevent Strategy: An updated Guide for Local Partners, HM Governemnt August 2009. This clearly illustrates the confusion that has arisen and the potential lack of transparency when engaging with communities under the Prevent agenda.

46. Please refer to Items three and four in the dossier that provide feedback from two community leaders who are Christians working with Muslim communities in Bedford and Luton and their experience of how the wider community has reacted to Prevent; the lack of clarity on whether Prevent money can be used for cohesion projects and the communities’ perceptions of the objectives of Prevent resulting in further isolation and intra-community tension.

47. Item five of the dossier is a letter from a prominent Muslim leader in Batley that discusses his experience of a PVE funded event and the community’s perception about the mistrust of PVE funded projects and lack of effective evaluation of such projects in reaching the objectives of Prevent.

48. Paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 in Item two of the dossier also provide a regional perspective of effectiveness, evaluation and related agendas of cohesion/integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

49. Engagement with Muslim communities at a grassroots level must be a priority.

50. Engagement must be inclusive of the diversity of the Muslim communities in the UK. It must incorporate the multiplicity of voices, theological, ethnic, linguistic, gender, generational and political backgrounds. Selective engagement has not worked in the past and will no bare fruit in the future.

51. Preventing violent extremism must not be the only driver for engagement with Muslim communities.

52. A paradigm shift in engagement is needed, from one that perceives communities as harboring potential terrorist and therefore dealing with them as a 'problem' to seeing them as valuable and worthy tax-paying citizens who are integral to the democratic health of the political system.

53. Prevent policy should not target communities, rather individuals who have or could potentially commit criminal and violent acts.

54. The under investment in Muslim communities must be tackled without creating tensions between other faith and community groups and away from the Prevent agenda.

55. Empowering impoverished communities should be seen as worthy in itself rather than dependent on the extent to which disadvantaged communities can help the state do its job of protecting citizens.

September 2009

Memorandum from JUST (PVE 50)

SUMMARY OF JUST'S EVIDENCE TO THE CLG INQUIRY

JUST has long been highlighting the adverse impact of the government's Prevent agenda (which is part of The UK's CONTEST 2 Strategy for Countering International Terrorism) on community and social life.

JUST's concerns about the Prevent programme are based on the following grounds:

- It has led to the disproportionate criminalisation of BME and particularly Muslim communities
- It locates the burden for fighting terrorism on the Muslim community despite the fact that the majority are peace-loving citizens of the UK
- It has led to the curtailment of civil liberties in society as a whole
- It has drawn statutory bodies into the "securitisation" agenda thereby dismantling the traditional relationships of trust and confidence between public bodies and service users
- It has led to the abandonment of funding for traditional community development, capacity building and empowerment work with BME communities, replacing it instead with community cohesion, anti-extremism and anti-terrorism approaches which have put Muslim communities under the intense spotlight of the far right and the press and media.

JUST therefore calls on the Preventing Violent Extremism programme to be withdrawn as a matter of priority.

JUST has long been campaigning against the government's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda which is part of The UK's "CONTEST 2" strategy for Combating International Terrorism.

JUST's objections to the Prevent programme are based on the following grounds:

- It has led to the disproportionate criminalisation of BME and particularly Muslim communities
- It locates the burden for fighting terrorism on the Muslim community despite the fact that the majority are peace-loving citizens of the UK.
- The current usage of the terminology of violent extremism is discriminatory as it ignores the very real threats from far-right and other forms of extremism.
- It has drawn statutory bodies into the "securitisation" agenda thereby dismantling the traditional relationships of trust and confidence between public bodies and service users.
- It has led to the abandonment of funding for traditional community development, capacity building and empowerment work with BME communities, replacing it instead with community cohesion, anti-extremism and anti-terrorism approaches which have put Muslim communities under the intense spotlight of the far right and the press and media.
- It reinforces negative stereotypes and associations of Islam with terrorism and views the British Muslim community through the single issue of terrorism.

1. JUST condemns the London bombings that led to the death of 58 innocent civilians and the injury of many more. The attack on the London transport system was a heinous crime and JUST echoes the widespread public calls, including those from the families of the victims of 7/7 for a full and comprehensive independent public Inquiry; we feel this will go a long way to identifying the causal factors and preventing any such further occurrence.

2. Although it is estimated that there are 2000 potential terrorist targets (Head of M15 reporting to the intelligence and Security Committee in May 2009), JUST believes that efforts to combat terrorism should be kept within the strict purview of the security and intelligence agencies. Recent attempts to conflate the Prevent element within the CONTEST 2 Strategy, alongside the Protect, Pursue and Prepare strands is counter-productive. It has resulted in the securitisation of public services and community and voluntary organisations and undermined civil society, civil liberties and human rights.

2.1 The Crown Prosecution Service's definition of violent extremism is:

The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

1. foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
2. seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
3. foment other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
4. foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.
(<http://www.cps.gov.uk/Publications/prosecution/violent>)

3. The presumption within the Prevent section of the CONTEST 2 strategy is that combating violent extremism is contingent on taking a grassroots-led approach, or in other words using intelligence-gathering, neighbourhood policing and information from front-line public servants, community and religious leaders to identify potential violent extremists.

4. The complaint from the police and MI5 intelligence officers that their efforts to eradicate radicalisation have been compromised because they are not trusted by Muslim communities, implies overt collusion with violent extremists. This assessment is deeply flawed as it tars the entire Muslim community with the same brush of extremism.

5. Likewise, the framework posited by the CLG in relation to the Inquiry on the PVE, calling for respondents to comment on the effectiveness of the programme's reach, presumes that efforts to combat extremism have been circumscribed due to ineffective targeting. JUST's stance is that this position is erroneous and is replete with assumptions that violent extremism within Muslim communities is pervasive.

6. JUST believes that the problem of Muslim extremism has been overstated and "extreme" assumptions have been made about the levels of radicalisation within the Muslim community. This is further exacerbated in an environment where repeated negative media representations of Muslims in the UK and globally adds to a sense of victimisation, demonisation and creates social exclusion as well as fuelling mainstream public suspicion and mistrust of Muslim communities.

7. The figures released by the Home Office suggest that as of March 2008, 75 of the 125 currently in prison in England and Wales were British and the rate of charging and of convictions has remained broadly stable now for each of the seven years since 9/11 covered by the Home Office figures. The figures clearly highlight that the overwhelming majority of Muslims are peaceful law-abiding citizens. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/may/13/terrorism-suspects-britain-uk>).

8. Despite the investment of nearly a £100 million of public monies into PVE initiatives, the reconfiguring of statutory services as extensions of the security arm of the state together with the development of performance management frameworks (NI 35, 36, PSA 26, APACS 63 and Comprehensive Area Assessment) there is little evidence that violent extremism or radicalism has been eliminated or minimised. JUST calls for an open and transparent demonstration of how funded activities and programmes have resulted in the reduction of violent extremism in the Muslim community from a clearly identified baseline and how funded agencies are competent in achieving these changes.

9. The government's failure to make a case for the PVE programme owes to the lack of robust evidence about its efficacy in tackling extremism. Auditing arrangements continue to be weak and the failure of the government's own watchdog—the Audit Commission—to scrutinise the programme represents a stark omission that ought to be reversed in the interest of openness, transparency and accountability.

10. Likewise the government's failure to subject the programme to rigorous value for money yardsticks—normally applied in relation to other investments in public monies—in terms of assessing the de-radicalisation dividend against the investment, suggests that the pursuit of the PVE policy is driven by rhetoric rather than reality.

11. Furthermore there are major concerns related to the transparency and fairness with which funds were allocated to particular organisations and the assessment and procurement arrangements made in relation to these allocations. In particular we echo concerns about the substantial funding directed to handpicked organisations despite widespread opposition expressed by many sections of the UK Muslim community as well as other civil society organisations.

12. The consensus among the global security community is that terrorism will continue to be a modern-day scourge—however the presumption that extremism leads to terrorism and that violent extremism pertains only to the Muslim or Al-Qaeda version of terrorism (as defined by the government) ought to be debunked outright in view of recent evidence of violent far-right activity and the burgeoning of far-right support both within the UK and across Europe.

13. The evidence of the bias and disproportionality in relation to the application of the PVE programme is particularly evident when comparing the government's response to Irish terrorism and far-right extremism. Neither threats were accompanied by the overwhelming securitisation of public services, the burgeoning of the state security apparatus, the doubling in the number of intelligence officers and the attribution for the blame for extremism—presumed to be the penultimate step in the journey towards active terrorism—on all Irish or all White people in the way that Muslim communities have been maligned. If as the government

contains, the battle is truly for Muslim (and BME) hearts and minds then the government is advised to return to those paradigms of public policy which effectively built trust and confidence between BME communities and the State.

- Community cohesion alongside PVE approaches represent sledgehammer approaches to preventing violent radicalisation. Instead capacity building, community development, anti-poverty, anti-discrimination and social justice responses—paradigms that have been effectively abandoned—offer more plausible alternatives to tackling the marginalisation, disengagement and disenfranchisement of BME and especially young people.
- In a context where BME and particularly third-generation Muslim communities, continue to be disproportionately represented in poverty, exclusion and deprivation indicators, the goals of common citizenship are best achieved through tackling systemic and structural discrimination. The restitution of Race measures within funding, policy, strategy, service delivery and performance management frameworks such as the LAA and inspection regimes offer constructive pathways to achieving equity in life-chances between BME and White communities.
- The move towards an Equalities approach to public service delivery following the demise of the Commission for Racial Equality and the controversy around single-identity group funding have led to the effective dismantling of the BME Third sector that used to be a critical inter-face between minority ethnic communities and government and statutory agencies. The pursuit of an Equalities agenda at the expense of Race is already relegating larger numbers of disaffected BME communities and particularly young people to the margins. A sustained investment in BME 3rd sector and community-based organisations is critical to re-engage them and bring them into the ambit of mainstream service provision.

14. The concern of government that the programme has achieved only limited results because it may not be talking to the right people is an erroneous analysis of the problem. In its relationship with Muslim organisations, the government has chosen a pick and mix approach in terms of which organisation it chooses to speak to and which it marginalises. This approach has been unhelpful as it has divided the Muslim community and created a partisan stance on the issue. JUST demands that any approach to Muslim community engagement is broad, representative and multi-layered and engages Muslims both as a faith community and as secular civil society organisations. We also demand that it truly engages women and young people in particular those who are most vulnerable to disaffection and are systematically disenfranchised.

15. Likewise the formulation of the PVE policy along religious lines has created both inter and intra-ethnic fractures that have undermined the politics of collective action, solidarity politics and social justice approaches that have only served to exacerbate the politics of “Us and Them.”

16. It is not the business of government to speak to the right people—it is the business of government to develop equitable, fair and anti-discriminatory policies and practice. The interface between communities and government should be facilitated by the statutory and Third sector. The loss of race equality officers within local authorities and the lack of sustained funding to grassroots and BME Third sector organisations have effectively stripped away a critical layer of communications between government and communities.

17 Likewise the downgrading of the RRAA and the legal duties incumbent on public bodies for an Equalities approach to public service delivery has meant that the BME community consultation frameworks that were an integral part of the Race Equality Impact Assessments and Race Equality Schemes have effectively been lost.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

JUST calls for the PVE programme in its current form to be urgently withdrawn for the following reasons:

- The execution of the programme has had a disproportionately adverse impact on Muslim communities.
- It is discriminatory in its application as it disregards far-right and other forms of extremism.
- It has failed to present robust verifiable evidence that the programme has resulted in combating Muslim extremism.
- It does not offer value for money as there is little evidence that the investment in public monies has yielded commensurate dividends.
- It has exacerbated inter and intra-community divides and thereby undermined a central tenet of the Race Relations Amendment Act that places a clear legal duty on the government and public bodies to promote good race relations.
- It has led to the attrition of our civil liberties which has profound implications for civil society and BME disengagement and disenfranchisement from politics and democratic processes.

In the interest of openness, transparency and accountability JUST calls on the government to undertake the following:

- an independent audit to measure the effectiveness of the PVE programme;
- a rigorous qualitative and quantitative research study measuring the extent to which the PVE programme have in fact led to a reduction in extremism and de-radicalisation; and
- a series of round-table focus groups across the UK measuring the extent to which the PVE agenda has led to the breakdown in confidence and trust between BME communities and the State.

JUST's position is that tackling extremism and terrorism should be under the sole jurisdiction of the security, police and intelligence services. The securitisation of the public services agenda should be stripped away and public bodies should revert to their traditional role as service providers.

JUST believes that the problem of Muslim extremism has been overstated. It supports the observations—made by a number of leading security commentators—that climate change, pandemic flu, flooding and cyber attack are likely to have a more profound impact on society than terrorism. The sooner the government stops raising the bogeyman of the Muslim extremists the sooner the government can start bridging the breakdown in trust and confidence that the government's PVE policy has engendered with Muslim (and BME) communities across the UK.

Memorandum from ACPO (PVE 60)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ACPO submission makes the following recommendations:

1. The need for greater coordination of research relating to Prevent.
2. The need for a process to ensure that research routinely assists in the development of policy.
3. The need for a central depository for Prevent learning and emerging practice.
4. The Prevent programme to remain dynamic in response to violent extremism from wherever it emerges.
5. That, once operational, the ACPO NPDU internet referral unit undergoes a process of evaluation to assess effectiveness and determine the need for future funding.
6. The need for a national assessment of community engagement, looking at mechanisms and outcomes. This needs to be wider than Neighbourhood Policing and should seek to identify outcomes of engagement specifically addressing the Prevent strategy.
7. The need to exploit learning from Channel referrals to inform our understanding of the drivers of radicalisation and help identify those most vulnerable.
8. Further refresh of the joint Police and Audit Commission learning and development exercise. This should complement the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.
9. To consider a process of regularly reviewing those we engage to offer advice, the quality of the advice and the cost.
10. That we develop a better understanding of the Prevent activity occurring abroad enabling comparisons and joint learning.
11. That Government voices and policies make it clear that preventing violent extremism is more than building cohesive communities.

2. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

2.1 Sir Norman Bettison has had a 37 year career in policing encompassing three major police forces and a number of national responsibilities.

2.2 He joined South Yorkshire Police in 1972 as a police cadet where he remained until his appointment as Assistant Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police in 1993. In 1998 he was appointed Chief Constable of *Merseyside Police* until his appointment as Chief Executive of *Centrex* in January 2005. He rejoined the police service in January 2007 as Chief Constable of *West Yorkshire Police*.

2.3 He received the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished service in the Millennium Honour's List and a Knighthood for services to policing in 2006.

2.4 In addition to his role as Chief Constable, he is a Vice President of ACPO and leads the Prevent programme for the police service.

2.5 He is currently:

- (i) A member of ACPO (Terrorism and Allied Matters),
- (ii) The ACPO lead on Protective Services,
- (iii) The ACPO lead on Prevention of Violent Extremism,
- (iv) A member of the Police Counter Terrorism Board (PCTB), and
- (v) Chairs ACPO Prevent Programme Board.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Policing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is led by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). This is an independent, professionally led strategic body which works in the public interest to coordinate the direction and development of the police service.

3.2 Preventing Violent Extremism is managed through the Terrorism and Allied Matters (TAM) business area. Sir Norman Bettison QPM (ACPO Vice President) leads the strategic Prevent programme supported by Assistant Chief Constable John Wright as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

3.3 The police response is set out in the ACPO Strategy and Delivery Plan and the Prevent Implementation plan.^{51,52}

3.4 The ACPO National Prevent Delivery Unit (NPDU) incorporates the National Community Tension Team (NCTT) and consists of centrally seconded officers and police staff. The role of the unit is to manage the delivery of various projects key to the successful delivery of Prevent and to act as a focal point for policy, support and guidance. Whilst the police service is an active partner in supporting all of the objectives of the Government's Prevent strategy, it has a particular contribution to make in relation to objectives two, three and six namely to:

- (2) Disrupt those who promote violent extremism and strengthen vulnerable institutions,
- (3) Support individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists, and
- (6) Develop Prevent related intelligence, analysis and research.

3.5 The policing response to Preventing Violent Extremism has been developed to respond to threats from all areas of extremism wherever they may occur and can be summarised as:

3.6 *Protecting vulnerable people, communities and establishments from harm.*

3.7 This approach supports the core function of the police service which is to prevent and detect crime and protect people and reassure the community.⁵³

3.8 It recognises that Community Cohesion is necessary in preventing violent extremism and terrorism, but it is not sufficient by itself.

3.9 The Prevent strategy provides the focus to support those who are perceived as being vulnerable to radicalisation and violent extremism. This requires long term engagement with communities, seeking to gain their support to counter radicalisation.

3.10 Although early in the implementation of Prevent within the police service, the aspiration is to embed Prevent within Neighbourhood Policing through:

- (i) Accurately understanding the communities we serve through the development of Neighbourhood profiles,
- (ii) effectively engaging with those communities through, Neighbourhood Policing teams,
- (iii) listening and acting upon their concerns through adoption of the Policing Pledge,⁵⁴
- (iv) working in partnership with the community to achieve sustainable solutions; and thereby
- (v) contributing to the single police indicator of increasing trust and confidence.

3.11 This ensures that the policing response to Prevent is complementary and supports other core areas of police business.

3.12 Whilst the police service has made significant progress as outlined within the HMIC report, "Prevent: Progress and Prospects," it continues to develop its approach and has set the following priorities for 2009–10:

- (i) Embedding Prevent—Ensuring that Prevent is mainstreamed within everyday policing.
- (ii) Partnership Interventions—Developing effective activities to support those who are vulnerable to violent extremism.

⁵¹ The police Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism – A strategy and Delivery Plan—April 2008

⁵² PREVENT—The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism—Implementation Plan V1.2—RESTRICTED—September 2008

⁵³ National Community Safety Plan 2008–2011

⁵⁴ Policing Pledge

- (iii) “Prevent”/“Pursue” Overlap—Developing a range of proportionate tactical options to support or deter those either involved in or supporting violent extremism.
- (iv) Information Sharing;—ensuring that partners have the information they need to develop effective plans and activities.
- (v) “Prevent” Capability and Capacity Building—ensuring that we have the resources to successfully deliver the ACPO Prevent strategy and that they represent value for money.

QUESTION 1

4.1 *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors, which lead people to become involved in violent extremism?*

4.2 It is recognised that there is no single cause of radicalisation or way in which people are drawn or encouraged towards violent extremism. As a result, the police response to Prevent has been developed to be flexible and adaptable to changes in threat. The threat from “home grown terrorists” and “lone wolves” is very apparent, as is that from extreme right wing and or single-issue extremism.

4.3 A number of research projects and academic studies have been commissioned through the “*Prevent Research Oversight Board*” supported by the “*Prevent Research Working Group*”. Such projects are prioritised against areas of vulnerability or threat.

4.4 Many of these projects are still in their infancy and have yet to be made available to practitioners. The demand for such products has inevitably led to some forces and regional Counter Terrorist Units commissioning their own research. This has impacted on the level of coordination and possible duplication of effort and expense.

4.5 Whilst a process exists to analyse the factors leading to involvement in violent extremism, there is little evidence to suggest that this process is encompassing and robust. More needs to be done to ensure that learning is efficiently disseminated to practitioners and to ensure that it informs policy development.

4.6 There are a number of current processes in existence to disseminate learning although there does not appear to be a single repository for such information making it difficult for practitioners to access.

4.7 *Recommendations*

1. The need for greater coordination of research relating to Prevent.
2. The need for a process to ensure that research routinely assists in the development of policy.
3. The need for a central depository for Prevent learning and emerging practice.

4.8 *Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

4.9 The Government’s Counter Terrorism strategy (CONTEST) focuses on international terrorism. The current threat has been assessed as coming from those who claim to act in the name of Islam. As a consequence, Muslim communities are assessed as being the most vulnerable to this strand of radicalisation and incitement to violence. The Police strategy acknowledges that a single focus could lead to the perception of targeting a particular community and is careful to ensure that the Prevent agenda retains community support. The Police response to Preventing Violent Extremism is wider, encompassing all forms of violent extremist threat.

4.10 However, any “threat based” approach must be flexible enough to adapt to change. The Police response to Prevent is intelligence led, based upon the National Intelligence Model (NIM) which has been adopted by the Police Service.

4.11 An example being the transition from “home grown terrorists” to those secreted into the UK from abroad to undertake attacks who have not previously come to the attention of law enforcement or intelligence agencies. Our engagement with communities and partner agencies needs to be able to identify “normality” so that abnormal situations can be identified.

4.12 The internet has been shown to be a source of material which can either contribute to self radicalisation or used by those intent on radicalising others. Work is currently underway within the NPDU to develop an internet referral unit, the intention being to deny the internet as a vehicle to distribute such material.

4.13 *Recommendations*

4. The Prevent programme to remain dynamic in response to violent extremism from wherever it emerges.
5. That once operational, the ACPO NPDU internet referral unit undergoes a process of evaluation to assess effectiveness and determine the need for future funding.

QUESTION 2

5.1 *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities?*

5.2 The Government's CONTEST strategy, the ACPO Prevent strategy and the ACPO Prevent Implementation plan are clear that engagement with communities is at the heart of the Prevent agenda.

5.3 The now established counter-terrorism maxim "communities defeat terrorism" is at the centre of the ACPO approach to Prevent.⁵⁵ Whilst there is no overall Government community engagement strategy, the Home Office has placed community engagement at the forefront of policing as highlighted by the single confidence indicator. The police service undertakes a wide range of engagement activities at a variety of levels both independently and in partnership. Nationally through the NCTT, regionally through Counter Terrorist Units and Government Offices and locally through the "Policing Pledge", Neighbourhood Policing programme, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).

5.4 Existing engagement activity is the bedrock of successful Prevent delivery and the NPDU drives focused engagement through:

- (i) Schools and colleges,
- (ii) Muslim women's groups,
- (iii) Young people, and
- (iv) Muslim communities via activities such as Operation Nicole and Act Now.

5.5 Consultation at the national level is primarily through strategic bodies such as the Muslim Safety Forum, the National Association of Muslim Police and various Muslim community organisations. For specific work-streams the NPDU will work with other organisations such as the Young Muslim Advisory Group and UK Youth Parliament. At Force and Basic Command Unit (BCU) level, consultation will be done with local groups and organisations.

5.6 *Has the Government been speaking to the right people?*

5.7 In response to this question the phrase "the right people" is difficult to quantify and can be segmented into numerous subgroups. For example, there are those who can assist in speaking out against the "single narrative" often used by those wishing to inspire others towards embracing violent extremism. There is a drive to identify and support these "credible voices" within communities that can rally against this narrative.

5.8 Additionally, engagement with those that hold unpalatable views to our own shared values can offer a valuable insight in countering terrorism. There is an acceptance within community engagement that such engagement is rarely "comfortable" and is often extremely challenging.

5.9 However, there has often been criticism from the wider Muslim community of a perception of engaging with those on the "fringe" or previously involved in violent extremism at the exclusion of their views. There are many pitfalls in blanket engagement as outlined within a recent Policy Exchange document.⁵⁶

5.10 The police service adoption of the "Policing Pledge" focuses on engagement with all communities and listening to their concerns, which is a cornerstone of effective Neighbourhood Policing.

5.11 *Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

5.12 The initial stream of Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) Prevent funding was based on perceived threat and vulnerability and that methodology continues. The funding was intended to increase capacity within the 23 police forces identified as having "Priority Areas" within their boundaries. The Metropolitan Police Service received separate funding. In addition to this, further funding was made available via the NPDU to build Prevent capacity within the remaining forces and regional CT structures.

5.13 The NPDU also led on the development and introduction of new Counter Terrorism Local Profiles (CTLPs), which has assisted in the local assessment of threat and vulnerability. Additional funding was allocated through the NPDU to analytical resources to ensure the timely production of these local profiles. CTLPs are shared with local partners to ensure joint ownership and a coordinated response.

5.14 Although the initial phase of CTLPs are still being delivered, a review is already planned to refine the process including an Ipsos MORI poll to ensure that they effectively contribute to informing local debate around Preventing Violent Extremism.⁵⁷

5.15 The Channel project is a multi agency referral scheme developed to support those who are viewed as vulnerable to radicalisation. The NPDU is working with the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) to develop a practitioner's guide in relation to Channel which is due to be published shortly.

⁵⁵ Briggs *et al.* 2006

⁵⁶ Choosing our friends wisely—Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups

⁵⁷ National Guidance on Counter Terrorism Local profiles for BCU Commanders and Local Authority Chief Executives

5.16 Channel was initially piloted in 11 areas and has now been expanded to 28, covering 12 Police Forces across 63 Local Authority areas. To date 228 referrals have been made, the majority being males under 25 years who are inspired by the AQ ideology. Although, the process has received referrals from those attracted to right wing extremism. An evaluation of Channel was carried out by OSCT on the 11 original sites. A redacted report on the key findings is due to be published shortly. The NPDU have produced guidance to both BCU commanders and Local Authority partners on the Channel referral scheme. This is due to be published imminently.

5.17 *Recommendations/Managing Learning*

6. The need for a national assessment of community engagement, looking at mechanisms and outcomes. This needs to be wider than Neighbourhood Policing and should seek to identify outcomes of engagement specifically addressing the Prevent strategy.
7. The need to exploit learning from Channel referrals to inform our understanding of the drivers of radicalisation and help identify those most vulnerable.

QUESTION 3

6.1 *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

6.2 The primary role of the ACPO NPDU is to develop policy and provide support and guidance to police forces on the implementation of Prevent. In addition, the NPDU offers guidance and support to partners, publishing a “partner’s guide” in October 2008.⁵⁸

6.3 The NPDU have hosted a number of events catered for partners to outline the police approach to Prevent and develop partnership engagement and support. The last event being held in Bristol on 1 September 2009.

6.4 Activity against the Police Implementation plan is monitored through the ACPO Prevent Regional Coordinators meeting where emerging practice is discussed and disseminated.

6.5 The issue of “understanding what works” in relation to Prevent activity and sharing best or emerging practice was highlighted within both the Learning and Development Exercise,⁵⁹ and HMIC Inspection.⁶⁰

6.6 Only very recently, August 2009, CLG published guidance on how to evaluate Prevent projects and programmes.⁶¹ Whilst the report does not specifically mention the ACPO NPDU, it does refer Local Authorities to a wide range of peer and mentor support including the IDeA website.

6.7 The NPDU is currently exploring opportunities to accredit a number of police officers and staff involved in the delivery of Prevent to become peer mentors in support of the above CLG initiative and the NPIA peer mentoring scheme.

6.8 *Recommendations*

8. Further refresh of the joint Police and Audit Commission learning and development exercise. This should complement the Comprehensive Area Assessment process.

QUESTION 4

7.1 *Are the objectives of the ‘Prevent’ agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

7.2 To ensure effective internal and stakeholder communication of the implementation of Prevent, the NPDU published the ACPO Prevent Communications Strategy April 2009.⁶² This is supported by a detailed delivery plan.

7.3 Externally, the National Community Tension Team (NCTT) had already gained considerable experience in engaging with a wide range of communities and leads on engagement at a national level with Faith Communities, Education, Young People and Muslim Women.

7.4 In addition NPDU delivers “Operation Nicole”, an exercise, which brings communities and CT specialists together. They work through a scenario designed to highlight the challenges and perceptions of CT operations. This exercise has received supportive feedback and helps to promote openness and honesty in CT policing.

⁵⁸ PREVENT—The Policing Response to the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism—Implementation Plan—A Summary for Partners—V1.0

⁵⁹ Preventing Violent Extremism—Learning and Development Exercise—Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government—October 2008

⁶⁰ HMIC—Prevent Progress and Prospects—June 2009

⁶¹ Evaluating local PREVENT projects and programmes Guidelines for local authorities and their partners and Resource pack for local authorities and their partners.

⁶² ACPO (TAM) National Prevent—Communications Strategy—April 2009

7.5 To date 21 events have been held, the majority within priority areas and a further 14 events are planned. These events are independently evaluated and 90% of participants felt that the event was either; good, very good or excellent. In addition, the unit regularly seeks new projects to ensure that the objectives of the Prevent agenda are effectively communicated to those at which the programme is aimed. An example is the Act Now project.

7.6 Such engagement activity is focused on those communities facing the highest level of risk using currently available assessments.

7.7 The ACPO NPDU also works closely with the Government's Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU) to develop its communication strategy and audience segmentation activity, developing a more sophisticated and focused means of communication with key audiences.

QUESTION 5

8.1 *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the Prevent programme?*

8.2 The Prevent sub-board, report to the overarching CONTEST board, and is responsible for overseeing delivery of Prevent. Membership includes representatives from across Government, the Police and other agencies and ensures that the government is given advice on how to achieve the goals of Prevent.

8.3 Outside of this "professional network" it is often difficult to assess who can give "appropriate" advice, or indeed what the term "appropriate" means. As previously stated, it is often those that do not share our values that have the most to teach us about our approach to countering radicalisation and terrorism.

8.4 As with many new initiatives there is often a desire for quick answers and a deeper understanding of the issues. This often leads to the demand for advice outstripping supply. There is also a perception that some organisations see Prevent as a "growth industry" and are looking to fully exploit the available funding. Care should be taken to regularly review those with whom we seek to engage and the quality of advice they offer against its cost.

8.5 Due to the emerging nature of Prevent and the quest for knowledge it has been difficult to coordinate the search for advice and to identify credible organisations. This has led to some sweeping generalisations and engagement with organisations mistrusted by the wider Muslim community.

8.6 The NPDU has encouraged Police forces and basic command units to engage with existing local organisations and groups with which a mature relationship has already been formed. Examples being local community groups and faith and diversity groups. As part of this mature engagement, the NPDU has seconded an officer from the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMPP) to obtain independent and timely advice and assess the impact of policy and tactics.

8.7 Recommendation

9. To consider a process of regularly reviewing those we engage to offer advice, the quality of the advice and the cost.

QUESTION 6

9.1 *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money, which is being obtained from it?*

9.2 It is accepted within ACPO that Prevent is a long-term engagement strategy. In October 2008 the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published the findings of the learning and development exercise (LDE) to draw out the learning from the first year of Prevent.⁶³ Further work on the progress and prospects of Prevent within the Police Service was published by HMIC in June 2009.⁶⁴

9.3 The latter report identified that Prevent as a strategy is still in the early stages of delivery but stating; "*both police and partners are progressing on trajectory to full delivery*".⁶⁵

9.4 Both of these reports recognised that the "Assessment of Success" within Prevent was underdeveloped. This, coupled with the apparent lack of evaluation of Prevent initiatives has made the "Value For Money" assessment of Prevent difficult.

9.5 During the research for both these reports, practitioners voiced frustration as to the perceived lack of coordination and clarity around the projects available, funding opportunities and visibility of emerging best practice.

⁶³ Preventing Violent Extremism—Learning and Development Exercise—Report to the Home Office and Communities and Local Government

⁶⁴ HMIC—"PREVENT": Progress and Prospects

⁶⁵ HMIC—Prevent Progress and Prospects—June 2009—Section 1.2.1

9.6 In response to these reports, the ACPO NPDU is currently progressing work in relation to effective performance measures for Police Prevent activity and a value for money exercise in relation to the CSR funded intelligence and community engagement posts.

9.7 As previously stated, the recently published CLG guidance on the evaluation of Prevent projects will undoubtedly contribute to this area.

9.8 *Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

9.9 The NCTT, within the NPDU, has been monitoring tensions within communities for a number of years. The analytical product of this monitoring is circulated to forces via the “Element” report.

9.10 This mature process is being refined to provide a more focused and timely method of monitoring the changes in community tensions as a result of Prevent activity.

9.11 ACPO, local forces and BCUs also undertake a Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which involves consultation with a wide variety of stakeholder groups to assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practices. This is supplemented at the tactical level by the completion of a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) following operational activity, which helps inform the impact of such Prevent activity.

9.12 In addition to the above there have been a number of surveys conducted by independent companies that can be used to gauge public opinion in relation to the police response to countering terrorism. One such survey was conducted by CELLO MRUK concerning the Anti Terrorist hotline. This showed that an overwhelming majority of the public thought that the police were working hard to prevent terrorism.

9.13 In learning to understand communities within the UK, we often have to look at the links with families and communities abroad. To do this the ACPO NPDU has funded a post within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), International Liaison Section (ILS). The aim being to better understand these international networks and to enable Prevent activity abroad to be harnessed to support the domestic effort. It will also allow us to compare Prevent activity within the UK with other countries and to increase our knowledge of what works.

9.14 *Recommendation*

10. That we develop a better understanding of the Prevent activity occurring abroad enabling comparisons and joint learning.

QUESTION 7

10.1 *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

10.2 In October 2007, HMG announced a new cross-Government Public Service Agreement (PSA 21) for building cohesive, empowered and active communities. The CLG vision for community cohesion was based on: people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities, people knowing their rights and responsibilities and people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly. In addition it emphasises; a shared future vision and sense of belonging, a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity and strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds. Integration aims to bring people from different backgrounds together around shared interests and issues to increase understanding.

10.3 Community cohesion is a necessary strategy in Preventing Violent Extremism and terrorism, but it is not sufficient in itself. This is reflected in the police service response to Prevent, which complements and builds upon effective community cohesion.

10.4 This is demonstrated by the fact that the four suicide bombers in 2005 were nurtured in cohesive communities. They had not previously come to the notice of the Police in any significant way and so something additional to the community cohesion strategy is required.

10.5 Prevent is focused on those individuals and communities that are perceived as being “vulnerable” to radicalisation and violent extremism. A failure to recognise this vulnerability and deliver the necessary support may fail to prevent further attacks. This will have a detrimental effect on both community cohesion and integration.

10.6 The community engagement element of Prevent is delivered through Neighbourhood Policing and the associated neighbourhood profiles. The promotion of problem solving and partnership working with all communities through the Policing Pledge will contribute to building safe, secure and cohesive communities.

10.7 Historically, some Local Authority areas have had concerns about how Prevent may be viewed by their communities. At the heart of this perception is the belief that community cohesion may be damaged as a result of acknowledging the threat to radicalisation and violent extremism and the implementation of overt Prevent activity.

10.8 On 28 August 2009, Communities Secretary John Denham highlighted the need to avoid “crude labels” which discourage wider participation. There is the potential that Local Authorities who feel uncertain about their support for Prevent could interpret this message as an opportunity to minimise their focus.

10.9 The ACPO NPDU is conscious of the overlap of these two programmes and potential benefits afforded from running them in parallel. The unit is currently considering the secondment of a senior officer from a Local Authority to ensure a complementary planning approach is adopted.

10.10 *Recommendation*

11. That Government voices and policies make it clear that preventing violent extremism is more than building cohesive communities.

September 2009

Supplementary information from ACPO regarding Channel to the CLG Committee Inquiry on Prevent (PVE 60A)

Thank you for your assistance in facilitating my appearance before the above committee on Monday 11 January 2010. You will recall that during my evidence, the chair requested further information concerning the Channel referral process which is aimed at those considered vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism.

The figures that I quoted covered the period 1 April 2007 to 31 December 2008 and were based on 11 Channel funded sites. A total of 228 individuals had been referred to the scheme ranging in age from seven to 50 years, the majority being within the 15 to 24 age bracket. In total 93% of these were male.

As outlined in my evidence, the ACPO response to preventing violent extremism looks to support all those considered vulnerable regardless of their ideology or motivation. Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of those individuals supported by Channel are inspired by AQ’s ideology, the scheme also supports a small but increasing number of individuals who are not. This approach illustrates that the scheme focuses on an individual’s circumstances rather than collating data regarding their religion.

Channel is still an evolving process which continues to develop and mature. Whilst the majority of early referrals were initially recorded as coming from the police service, this may have included referrals from either the public or other agencies. An increasing number of referrals are being received from partners as they become fully engaged within the process. Indeed, as Channel matures it is the aspiration of ACPO that it becomes formally embedded within the wider partnership safeguarding agenda.

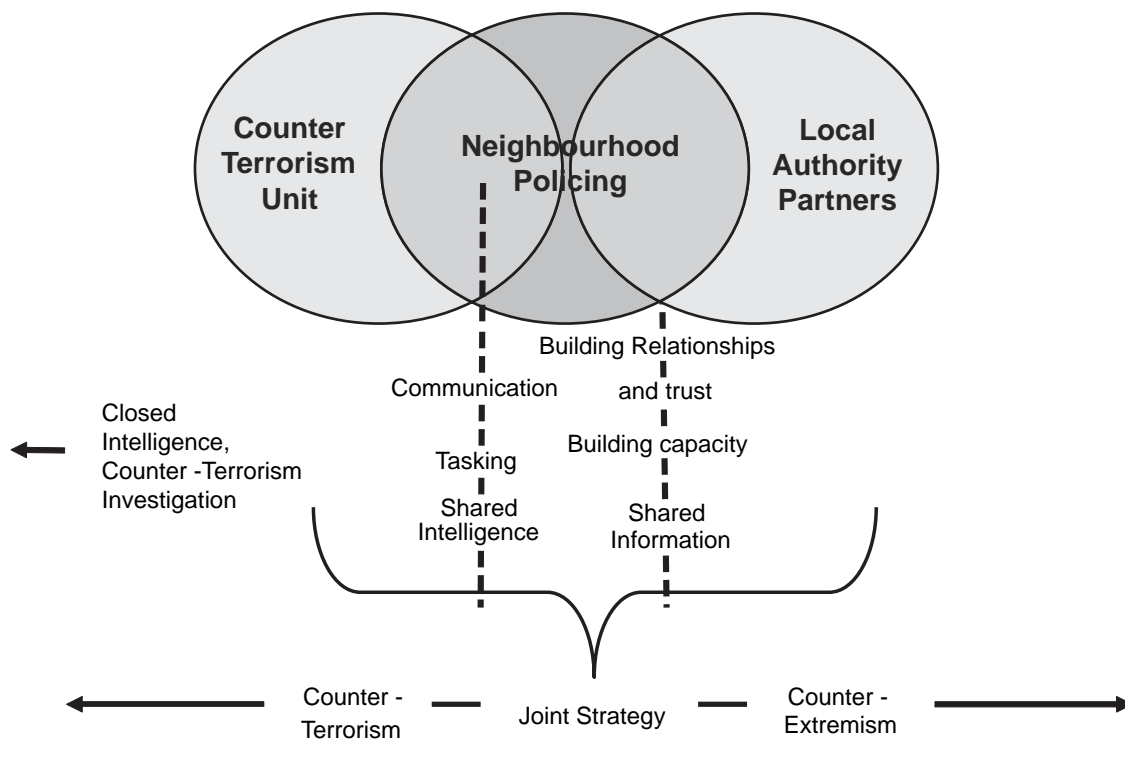
You will notice that the published data is up to December 2008. The 2009 data is in the process of analysis, involving both ACPO and OSCT. It is hoped that we would be able to offer a more sophisticated analysis of this data once the work is completed over the next few weeks. Please make contact again if the data requires further analysis in the future.

Sir Norman Bettison

18 January 2010

Supplementary memorandum from ACPO (PVE 60B)

Not A Job For The Police Alone



Memorandum from the Islamic Society of Britain (incorporating The Young Muslims UK) (PVE 61)

SUMMARY

The consultative strategy adopted by the Government in the aftermath of 7/7 was the right approach, but what became Prevent has created much more mixed feelings.

The Government’s analysis of violent extremism has developed over time, and its latest thinking is not reaching people. Such analysis acknowledges a complexity but now needs a wider canvas of analysis. This must also be seen to happen.

Inconsistent and generalised language or loose terms weaken public confidence and hamper the debate around Prevent. In addition and more specifically, they also provide opportunities for Muslim Rejectionists at the grassroots.

Prevent funding marks institutions as partners in civic efforts for a safer, cohesive Britain, but the role of established organisations has been undervalued or poorly utilised. While Prevent funding has been a useful measure of directing resources and building capacity among some organisations, Prevent funding has also been seen to stigmatise the Muslim community on the one hand and, on the other hand, to alienate other communities, creating a potentially detrimental impact on cohesion.

There is inadequate differentiation between Prevent and other policy frameworks such as community cohesion, capacity building and integration. For example the twinning of the “shared values” agenda with Prevent risks a rejection of both by communities and confuses the shared values agenda with a security paradigm.

Confusion also affects local authorities, including local police, who in turn do not feel empowered to consider effective projects.

Communication across most levels has been ineffective and remains key. Central Government has been over reliant on local partners/authorities to carry Prevent “thinking” and aims, without it putting in place adequate support.

Genuine and sustained capacity building is key to a gradual shift for Prevent’s broader aims to be realised in other important policy frameworks.

A. PREAMBLE: ABOUT THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

1. The Islamic Society of Britain was established in 1990 after a process of dialogue and initiatives, all of which had a central aim: to *inspire* British citizens who belonged to the Islamic faith (and who were chiefly a post war migratory group of Asian descent) to live their lives in commitment to both country and faith without reservation or feelings of compromise. Individual members make up the Society. The Islamic Society of Britain was then, and remains today, an organisation that is focused on developing a *British* Muslim presence. It values dissent and free exchange of opinion amongst members, providing equal opportunities at all levels.

2. The purpose of the above brief description of the Islamic Society of Britain is to suggest it is suitably positioned to furnish this inquiry with perspectives that can help yield progressive policy frameworks four years on (from the 2005 PET Working Groups). This position may not seem so obvious today when a colourful array of Islamic organisations can be seen on many lists, but the Islamic Society of Britain has been a forerunner in several respects, for at least two decades. Indeed, the quest for and questions concerning integration, loyalty and cohesion were central drivers of our messages many years before such became common in our socio-political discourse.⁶⁶

3. The Society's debates marked a turning point in Muslim discourse and gave countless individuals the impetus and confidence to participate in civil society. These included many members of the Society and many more individuals who had come into contact with it (or its youth section The Young Muslims UK). Many have gone on to make a positive contribution to the cause of democracy, policy, government and social cohesion. Others, both through the Society's works or independently of it, have added genuine value to the nation's social capital by being an important part of many concerns and projects—usually on a completely voluntary basis. Such giving of time, skills and energy has continued throughout “the PVE years”. It is this rubbing of shoulders and sharing of notes with many gifted individuals that has given us what we think is valuable insight into the Prevent agenda.

B. PREVENT

4. From the outset of Prevent funding being available the Society has continually advocated a positive attitude to be adopted by Muslim institutions towards Prevent funding as it believes funding marks institutions as partners in civic efforts for a safer, cohesive Britain (so long as the Islamic teachings against greed, narrow interests and jealousy are adhered to).

5. We believe the consultative strategy taken in 2005, resulting in the PET Working Groups, was an admirable approach, and the right one for the time and for the circumstances. We believe that what became the Prevent programme, however, created a very mixed reaction among Muslim communities and the wider society. In some respects Prevent was a useful balance to Pursue, Protect and Prepare, in that Prevent was designed to be the “soft” and community orientated arm of the Contest strategy. However, calling the initiative Preventing Extremism has, in the minds of many, stigmatised Muslim organisations and the very partners that are needed to defeat extremism. The communication by the Government of such collaborative efforts between the Government and British Muslims, to Muslim Britain and to Britain at large was and remains a key challenge.

6. Terminology was a challenge in itself, and the outcome was to name the programme by its very aim. It sought to prevent ideas (leading to violent action), and so it was named: Prevent. By its full title, “Preventing Extremism” and then a little later “Preventing Violent Extremism”, it also sought to focus on the criminal act of violence and distance itself from the problem being a religious problem *per se*. Whilst we believe this direction was the right approach, it is questionable whether the term “Prevent” itself achieves that. The term Prevent lends itself to the idea that there lies a dormant terrorist within Muslims; that somewhere, entwined in their instincts and licensed by their religious beliefs, there is the possibility that some, albeit very rarely, will turn to terrorism against the state. And so we must do everything to “prevent” that from happening.⁶⁷

7. Such can not only stigmatise Muslims, it can redirect attention to Islamic teachings being the identifying factor, and this has created vicious cycles of mistrust and demonising, in a language of otherness.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ In 1995, when tensions were very high (post Rushdie; massacres in Bosnia), and during a period when British radical and/or rejectionist thought took root and began mushrooming: Hizb-ut-Tahrir's strident rejection of parliamentary democracy and calls for a supremacist superstate, the establishment of a “Muslim Parliament” by pro-Iranian activists, the rejectionist dogma with a call to emigrate or isolate from a society of disbelievers by Saudi-Wahabbi led organisations, the call to arms to defend the honour of “our sisters in Bosnia” (who were being mass raped) by departing for war or supporting the fight financially—these examples set the scene during the early 1990s; it was the Islamic Society of Britain who, riding above hostile criticisms thrown at them of “compromising” religion and allowing men and women a “westernised” freedom, took the case for the full participation in the democratic processes to the debating floor, culminating in a well publicised London Conference. The case was won for mosques and mainstream institutions, as well as for citizens, who all remained suspicious of the various rejectionist ideas but found themselves in a state of mental paralysis.

⁶⁷ Using the example of an analogy to help explain this, consider the merits, cooperation level and stigma attached to all men in a national “Preventing Rape” programme that sought to channel “pathfinders” through the general male public, in order to reach and disrupt the very few men who would rape a woman.

⁶⁸ 3 The core term Prevent is necessarily negative language and by way of an example, the City Council of Leicester adopted a more positive take in naming their PVE campaign “Mainstreaming Moderation”.

8. The term “Violent Extremism” was however useful in drawing a clear line to separate general extremism from violent, criminal, terrorist acts—we believe this is a crucial distinction to be made across all levels of communication. However, the term did not always succeed in separating general extremist ideas from violent acts, and this is partly the impact of the action word “prevent”. It resulted in a flawed logic that asked, “how do you prevent violent extremism?” and answered, “you go further back and stop extremism, because one (extremism) will lead to the other (violent extremism)”. This is not only flawed logic, it is a dangerous logic in the hands of opportunists.

9. From early on, Central Government’s communication streams were left wanting: the broader context of Prevent, the thought streams leading to the Prevent programme, the rationale for special funding and for attention to Muslims, the central aims and targeted people of the programme (Muslims), and how such Prevent “thinking” is to be differentiated from cohesion, equality and integration issues, all became difficult to separate out. The mesh of what Prevent is (or is not) became more entangled with time, as pressure for delivery built up on the desks of local government officers and local police officers, as well as on the ground. Even where staff had served the community for 20 years through their jobs, it was like an unknown in their job description had appeared overnight, and they were to be evaluated on their effectiveness. So much was unclear about Prevent and what it would mean to make it work.

10. Government offices leading the counter terrorism programmes did not build on the PET Working Groups through a creative series of direct communication methods and utilising technologies, that could have reached young Muslims in particular more speedily. Instead, Government placed an unrealistic emphasis on local service delivery and was over reliant on its (often Muslim) partners, without effective support. This played into the hands of Rejectionist thought, who would offer competing narratives of what Prevent was.⁶⁹

11. This enquiry asks how robust the Government’s analysis of the factors is? The question presupposes such analysis is knowledge that has been communicated. In our experience, what the Government thinks the factors are and what the Government’s analysis of those factors is, remains unclear in the minds of local delivery partners, local police, mosques, and Muslims young and old. It may be found in official documents, but that has not been effectively communicated to most people. When such basic ingredients are foggy in the minds of most, perceptions and suspicious take root more easily, and the rejectionist discourse is offered an advantage.⁷⁰

12. The Government has a fairly robust analysis of the factors, in that it acknowledges the complexity of factors, the limitations of any such analysis, and it steers away from simplifying the problem in its publications. But whilst the Government’s analysis may be robust in terms of its realism, it is questionable as to whether the Government’s analysis is based on a sufficiently wide view. The urgency of terrorism fears has naturally prioritised national security issues, the result of which means that the complex interplay of social, economic, historical, migratory, racial, educational and religious issues has been examined almost exclusively through the lens of national security. There remains however a narrowness in the scope of our analysis that needs our attention in order to enhance our understanding to date. In this respect, at least, there are no “terrorism experts”, but a great many experts of many different disciplines who can and should help widen the canvas of analysis. Such widening must also be seen to happen.

13. The Government also acknowledges, in theory at least, that some factors, or paths into those factors, are not appropriately addressed through the direct application of the Prevent programme. It is this area which needs greater and closer analysis, workable channels of funding and support, and greater articulation as to the needs, aims and purpose of such support. In our experience, we encounter the reverse in practice: local delivery plans and subsequent programmes built on those plans seem to be eager to accentuate a Prevent dimension in order to “be prevent enough”.⁷¹ This stretching of project designs in order to make them worthy of Prevent consideration can lead to hit and miss results for the central aims of Prevent. Moreover other project proposals that can achieve the very forms of indirect inoculation from hate messages that Prevent is seeking to achieve, do not receive due attention because they may not “be prevent enough.”

14. Such selective analysis of what can and cannot be considered based on a narrow assessment of its Prevent merits, and not on its impact on the identified factors (even where the project proposals are supported by academic research) points to the mistaken thinking in our view that, whilst a complex interplay of factors can lead people to become involved in violent extremism, the Prevent programme is the most appropriate means to address those factors—it isn’t necessarily. There is then, inadequate differentiation

⁶⁹ Rejectionism is not the same as extremism and, like extremism, does not lead to violence as a rule. It seeks to undermine a discourse on integration and social cohesion, by repelling it with religion based arguments. Political rejectionist language will feed off a perceived sense of victimhood or notions of a hidden agenda. Rejectionism can therefore reach and affect both religious and non-religious Muslim minds to create mental barriers in attitudes towards the Government.

⁷⁰ See Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s “What does Kelly mean by a ‘British Version of Islam’?” (13 April 2007) at <http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/resources/issues-explained/what-does-kelly-mean-by-a-britishversion-of-islam.html>

See also “British Islam”: UK Government Policy to create a new religion (12 July 2009) at <http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/resources/issues-explained/-british-islam-uk-government-policy-tocreate-a-new-religion.html> More strident versions were distributed at over one hundred British mosques on Friday afternoons, when mosques are typically full to the brim. The timing and repetition of these kinds of messages will coincide with alarmist news and announcements. The primary effect is to knock the confidence of the Muslim public in the Government and its delivery partners (especially its Muslim partners).

⁷¹ In one local council where a Society member was directly involved, the phrase “to be prevent enough” was routinely used by the police to reject otherwise workable ideas that would have a positive impact.

between what should be achieved through Prevent and through other important policy frameworks. And yet the need for a dedicated Prevent fund is justified, and so is its spending on vulnerable Muslims—the underlying problems and associated risks to the state remain.

15. If the aims of Contest through the Prevent strand are to be more achievable, Government has to communicate a clearer distinction between what Prevent is aiming to do and what other policy frameworks are aiming to do, all in line with the overall aims of creating a more integrated, safe and secure nation. This requires, not necessarily, the negation or downgrading of Prevent—which brings a vital sense of balance and pragmatism to the hard-edged facets of Contest—but a more concerted and visible effort to address the many issues of integration and social cohesion, together with, but distinct from, Prevent. Government must also communicate, more directly, more clearly and more creatively,⁷² its broader analysis of the factors and its approach to addressing the problem of violent extremism. In so doing, the Government must communicate more clearly (especially to local delivery arms and partners) that some factors will take more time and a sustained progression of initiatives to yield results—but are no less important.

16. The challenges of communicating are exacerbated with what seems to be a steady decline in the general public's trust in the Government, politicians and those in charge generally (a decline that accelerated with the War in Iraq and later the downturn in the economy). Such perceptions are arguably more acute in sections of British Muslim thought. Moreover, the thorny subject of the impact that “foreign policy” issues have or are allowed to have has, for many Muslims, received a poor amount of attention in the Government's communication. Notwithstanding “Contest 2” adding more meat to the bone to enhance our understanding of terrorism, views of Government insincerity in this area are widespread.⁷³

17. There has been inconsistent communication as to whether the Government is concerned with and targeting extremism per se in its counter terrorism discourse. Similarly, the loose term “Islamist” has been used inconsistently, despite clear and widespread anxiety from British Muslims from the street level up.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the Government's own analysis shows that the general public cannot adequately differentiate between terms such as “Islamism” and “Islam” in public discourse. This leads many to see the Government as acting much less on a robust analysis of the factors and much more in response to periodic political pressure. The logic of preventing extremism per se is not only flawed, it is seriously damaging to trust and cooperation and to defeating the terrorist's narrative. Tackling extremism per se (which is impossible to define and a relative term) through the Prevent programme will malign orthodoxy and conservatism, both of which are common given the migratory patterns of British Muslims. The impact will have several negative effects including exacerbating a sense of victimhood, triggering a defensive attitude and fuelling the call of rejectionists.⁷⁵

18. The Government should communicate more clearly its focus on *terrorism* by turning away from imprecise terms that attach themselves to the core of Muslim communities. We are seeing a gradual shift in the right direction, but this is insufficient and needs more effective communication.⁷⁶

19. Trust is also eroded by suspicion that arises from what are viewed as conflicting or inconsistent signals from Central Government, that have stemmed from the Government seemingly picking and dropping its working partners in an “out with the old, in with the new” fashion. Accordingly, arousing suspicion in this way creates further negative undercurrents as a critical eye is cast upon chosen Prevent fund (or other counter terrorism fund) recipients. Established institutions, both small independents and larger organisations, have tended to be surprised by previously unheard of names receiving grants on the one hand, and established voluntary bodies not featuring even in consultation. The meteoric rise of some organisations, “out of nowhere” and lauded uncritically by some Government departments in the eyes of the Muslim public, would be one example. Such episodes add weight to feelings of a general bias in overall fund recipients. A perception has developed that while some organisations have to fill in forms and show due diligence (quite rightly) in attaining grants, other favoured organisations are simply “given money” to spend and in some considerable sums.

⁷² President Obama's Government for example has made concerted efforts to utilise modern methods to communicate directly at broad levels. Communicating the Government's analysis more clearly must not however be seen as telling people what to think. In this regard, the CD issued by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office aimed at Muslims was inappropriately titled “Think Again”. As one recipient put it, “They're bombing the hell out of Iraq and asking us to think again!”

⁷³ There remain, from the 2005 PET Working Groups onwards (Community Security Working Group: Recommendation 2, p.76), calls for a public inquiry into the terrorism of 7/7 and 21/7, with unsatisfactory explanations as to why such hasn't taken place.

⁷⁴ David Cameron wrote on *The Guardian's* Comment is Free “What I learnt from my stay with a Muslim family” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/may/13/comment.communities> (13 May 2007):

“Many Muslims I've talked to about these issues are deeply offended by the use of the word... ‘Islamist’ to describe the terrorist threat we face today... There's too much denial of it in the Muslim community. But our efforts are not helped by lazy use of language. Indeed, by using the word ‘Islamist’ to describe the threat, we actually help do the terrorist ideologues' work for them, confirming to many impressionable young Muslim men that to be a ‘good Muslim’, you have to support their evil campaign.”

⁷⁵ Unlike peaceful conservative Muslims, rejectionists can appear visibly moderate (eg men clean shaven and in modern clothing) and so come across as not holding intolerant views, and would thrive under a focus on extremism per se.

⁷⁶ “Contest 2” (2009) does not use the term “Islamist Terrorism” unlike the earlier Contest 1 (2006) which uses it throughout the main text, relying on a footnote to avoid a misunderstanding—a footnote is insufficient. Contest 2 also qualifies the use of the term “extremism”, referring to violent extremism, religious extremism and domestic extremism. This is clearly better practice but neither document was or continues to be supported by effective communication. Additionally, despite many improvements in Contest 2, the Government's intentions raised suspicions when it said, “Government will... challenge views which... are within the law, but which reject and undermine our shared values” (p87).

20. As Government has looked to get to the heart of local communities, and find new working partners—both of which we feel are positive aims—it has not been very successful in getting the feel good factor across concerning fund recipients generally, a factor that is an important component of public trust. The delivery partner mix between the “tried and tested” and the “fresher” organisations was not well balanced in our view. This resulting imbalance could be partly explained by an emergent narrative that undervalued the role of larger organisations and/or the influence of periodic attempts to pressure and sway government thought wholesale away from organisations with a certain heritage.⁷⁷ Because so much rests on a basic framework of trust and cooperation, this imbalance ought to be examined as we move ahead and the perceptions of bias need to be tackled through.

21. Overall, and onwards from the terrorist attacks of 2005, there is little doubt that, building on the PET Working Groups, Prevent has yielded a range of important initiatives that have also given voices to and energised different parts of Muslim Britain. The establishment of a national women’s advisory group, a young Muslims advisory group and MINAB are positive collaborative outcomes for civil society and for Muslims in particular, notwithstanding their shortcomings. Much positive can also be said of the many beneficial and constructive projects at local community levels. In some cases, established networks or programmes could have been utilised, where a good track record for delivery and a reputation for transparency exists.⁷⁸

22. Whilst numerous projects may have got off the starting blocks, and whilst the willingness within local communities remains high, the general capacity level across local communities is far from adequate. The Prevent programme hit the ground running but, on that ground, many were unskilled. This is one main reason, we believe, for the sustained success of the Islamic Society of Britain because it is where ordinary people can stay, work alongside and gradually develop skills and capacity, all on a completely voluntary basis. The projects Prevent funds made possible need to develop self-sufficiency skills, as they cannot, and should not in our view, be over reliant on Prevent funds. Prevent therefore ought to develop strategies to help projects and organisations it has identified as partners, and others it will identify, to build know-how and capacity.⁷⁹ Key areas to support would be marketing, internet solutions, cash flow and cost control, equalities policies, incorporation and constitutional development, etc. These support structures can yield real benefits as they “teach a man to fish”. Such provisions will also, over time, distinguish the walkers from the talkers.

23. There is a tremendous amount of readiness latent within social networks that can be found within traditional mosques and among women (who can rarely be accessed through mosques), within voluntary sector organisations and in countless young people. Genuine and thorough capacity building is key to the combined activism that will sustain a gradual shift for the broader aims of Prevent to be realised within other important policy frameworks.

October 2009

Memorandum from the Mayor of London (PVE 62)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Mayor of London welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry, which he sees as an opportunity to highlight the unique needs of preventing terrorist attacks in London. While he shares the goals underlying the Government’s agenda he has concerns about the effectiveness of the strategy.

2. The current Prevent Strategy concentrates on Islamic-based violent extremism and fails to address other forms of terrorism that could seriously impact on London. The strategy could alienate London’s Muslim communities, who feel that they are being stigmatised with violent extremism. The Mayor believes that this undermines the relationship with Muslim communities whose support is crucial to the prevention of terrorism. There is a wider point too about “single group funding” which breeds resentment—not just by Muslims who regard themselves as being unfairly targeted—but also by other communities who see Muslim problems as being unduly favoured over their own problems. Therefore the current approach alienates people on all sides of the divide.

3. The Government should be clear on the criteria with which it will decide who to engage with and support moderates to drive out extremists. At present there are no criteria for engagement, meaning decisions taken can sometimes appear whimsical and inconsistent.

⁷⁷ Some of the individuals who encouraged the creation of the Society in 1990 were members of the Jamat-e-Islami religio-political party of South Asia. However, the Islamic Society of Britain is an independent British organisation that is also indigenous in terms of its ethos, thought and work.

⁷⁸ In the case of the Islamic Society of Britain for example, its network of young people in The Young Muslims UK, could had been utilised more effectively as part of the Government’s goals to reach the individuals who matter.

⁷⁹ The support already given to some projects by providing access to a marketing support company to develop important marketing skills is a good example.

4. Substantial resources have been allocated to the Prevent programme, yet there is little evidence that Value for Money considerations have been applied at local and national levels. It is important that public money not be used to fund groups that promote extremism—as has sometimes happened.

OVERVIEW

5. London is the focus of political protest, demonstrations and processions. It hosts national and international sporting events, including the forthcoming 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. It contains many diplomatic premises. The Parliamentary and Government institutions of Westminster and Whitehall are based in London, as too are the financial districts of the City and Canary Wharf, making it a global financial powerhouse. London is the hub of the country's road and rail networks, has two important airports within its boundaries—London City Airport and Heathrow—and the largest urban transport system in the country. Many of the largest companies are headquartered in London, as are a number of key utility sites. Numerous iconic heritage sites adorn the Capital.

6. Consequently, London is an attractive target for those who wish to cause serious disruption and the loss of life. In the last few years, examples of these include the failed bombing attempts in London's Haymarket and the Ministry of Sound Nightclub, and the suicide bombing on London Underground and buses that resulted in the deaths of 52 people, 700 injuries, psychological trauma and infrastructural transport problems, which were carried out by radicalised Muslim terrorists and neo-jihadists.

7. London has been repeatedly warned that it faces a high level of threat from terrorism. The Government's response has been to develop a counter-terrorism strategy, a strand of which is Prevent, aimed at tackling the radicalisation of individuals and deterring those who facilitate terrorism or who explicitly encourage others to become terrorists in the name of Islam. Whilst the Mayor recognises that the threat of such terrorism is significant, growing and evolving, he believes that it is imperative that the Government also address other forms of terrorist threats. Northern Irish Republican splinter groups responsible for mass terrorism in London over the last 25 years have not altogether disappeared. Extreme right-wing groups such as Combat 18 remain active, and anarchists and single-issue extremists such as the Animal Liberation Front persist, as was evident during the recent G20 Summit London demonstrations. Future violent extremists comparable to the London nail bomber David Copeland who carried out attacks against ethnic minority communities in Brick Lane, Brixton and Soho cannot be discounted. The Mayor would therefore welcome debate as to whether the Government's Prevent Strategy should overly focus on violent extremism, or whether alongside this, another strategy should be developed specifically addressing extremism in all its forms.

8. The Mayor is committed to put in place systems and communications mechanisms that will facilitate the best possible response to any future terrorist incident. That is why, in his capacity as Chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority, he is working with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to address the safety and security of Londoners and those who visit the Capital. As Deputy Chair of the London Regional Resilience Forum, he also seeks to improve the response not only of those agencies for which he has statutory responsibility—the police and fire service—but also other partner agencies to minimise the impact of future terrorist incidents in London. The Mayor would welcome debate in the near future on a greater role for London's Government, the Greater London Authority, on the prevention of extremism and terrorism within its borders. It is in this context that his submission to this consultation has been made.

RESPONSE TO THE PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM QUESTIONS

Q1. Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?

9. The Mayor shares the underlying goals behind the Prevent Strategy but he has concerns about its effectiveness. First the strategy cannot only focus on preventing violent extremism, but should look at all forms of extremism. The strategy requires a long-term approach.

10. The Government's Prevent strategy budget is substantial. The cost of the key deliverables in the Prevent Delivery Plan for 2008–09 totals over £140 million. However, the global economic crisis will inevitably impact upon public spending. The Government has already announced a £5 billion reduction in public spending from 2011 onwards. The Mayor regards it as imperative that the Government adopts a rigorous approach to ensure value for money is achieved in the allocation of Prevent monies. It is important that public money should not be used to support organisations that support extremism in any form.

11. The Mayor believes that Prevent initiatives have too often been prepared to engage with ostensibly non-violent Islamists, regarding them as a useful bulwark against their more violent counterparts. This is a fundamentally flawed approach as it bolsters an Islamist narrative that is at odds with the professed values of the liberal British State. The most obvious way of addressing the problem is for the State to create a strong values-led initiative at the heart of Prevent based around inalienable and non-negotiable values such as equality for women, homosexuals and religious minorities.

Q2. How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors, which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

12. In order for the Prevent programme to be comprehensive, the Government needs to address the political context within which the UK's Muslim population overall suffers extensive forms of social exclusion, limited economic success, high levels of unemployment and being under-represented in public life, as these can manifest themselves into:

- A sense of alienation among younger Muslims;
- perceived misrepresentation of Muslims by the mainstream media;
- perceived victimisation by the police, courts, other law enforcement and security agencies;
- experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and inequality;
- a feeling of exclusion from the political system and other civic processes;
- the resulting perception that their views are not reflected in policy and legislation; and
- belief in conspiracy theories.

13. The Government also needs to consider the impact of international events and foreign policy, which are perceived by the Muslim community as evidence that the UK is complicit in attacks on Islam.

14. The Mayor believes that addressing these issues is crucial. A failure to do so could result in radicalisation, whereby the activities of terrorists are deemed by some to be justified. The Mayor is minded that whilst this circle is small amongst the UK's Muslim communities, it demonstrates a breakdown of trust between the Government and a number of its citizens that could be exploited by extremist groups and terrorist organisations at home and abroad.

15. The Mayor recommends that the Government work more closely with communities to collect and disseminate good practices and lessons learned locally, nationally and internationally not only on the process of radicalisation but also the factors which prompt withdrawal from violent or radical groups ie disengagement and de-radicalisation, to inform the development of initiatives and programmes.

16. Finally the Mayor strongly believes that the Government needs to address other forms of extremism, which pose multiple threats to London and the UK. Extremism of any form is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated.

Q3. How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?

17. Whilst the Mayor supports the Government's rhetoric on community engagement, he believes that it is flawed. This is premised upon the fact that currently there is no clear and precise framework for local partners (ie councils and police) to engage with local communities. There are a number of Government objectives and aims, as well as minimalistic criteria regarding this issue but insufficient advice has been provided to local councils and police who have been given the responsibility to decide which community groups or individuals they should engage with. This is further compounded by many government funded activities—whilst they help Muslim communities engage in cohesive activity, particularly those involving women and young people—CLG has conceded that "very few projects engaged with individuals or groups specifically glorifying or justifying violent extremism."

18. The Mayor believes that it is also incumbent upon Government to acknowledge and address concerns that in several local authorities some Muslim communities have refused to engage with or seek funding under the Prevent programme, as they feel stigmatised with its associations to violent extremism.

19. Government has also traditionally given too much credence to supposedly "gatekeeper" organisations that profess to represent the Muslim community. Yet, there is no organisation that can truly claim to speak on behalf of British Muslims, reflecting the diversity of opinion among British Muslims.

20. Another point is that the government seems obsessed with engaging Muslims only on the basis of their confessional identity. Why has it not explored alternative means of reaching out to young Muslims through cultural and social platforms? More Muslims attend the Bradford Mela—a festival of South Asian food and music—every year than go to events such as IslamExpo or the Global Peace and Unity conference.

Q4. Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

21. The Mayor recognises that the Prevent programme is relatively new. Consequently, current Government advice and expertise on how to implement and evaluate the programme, available to not only local authorities, but also police, partners and other stakeholders is only just emerging. The Mayor advises that a National Support Framework is needed, that engages with all stakeholders. Support should take a range of forms, both direct and indirect, including advice, guidance, toolkits, diagnostics, dissemination of best practice, mentoring and peer support. The development of these must be based on input from stakeholders and should be subject to review to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

22. This is one area where there needs to be greater centralisation, with the creation of a due diligence unit at the heart of government which is able to advise and inform local authorities about how best to proceed with difficult issues. The reason for this is that it can be a daunting task to build the requisite knowledge and expertise to understand the ever changing carousel of radical leaders and their front groups.

Q5. Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?

23. If it is the Government’s intention that Councils and the police take the lead in communicating the objectives of the Prevent agenda, then a framework to help local partners develop and implement local Prevent communication strategies is needed. Such a strategy must contain the aims, objectives and key messages of the Prevent programme. It should also detail key audiences, the responsibility of each partner agency; resources, links to engagement, and systems for review and evaluation. The Mayor is minded that effective communication is an essential part of mobilising local communities in the fight against terrorism. It will be difficult to make the right connections and build the far-reaching partnerships that can help address radicalisation and extremism, without such communication strategies. More importantly, the Government must challenge those who want to disrupt a peaceful and just democratic society through extremist activities.

Q6. Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?

24. It is critical for the Government to ensure that it seeks advice, input and review from statutory, voluntary, community and business sector stakeholder agencies, representative groups and individuals to assist in achieving the goals of the prevent programme.

Q7. How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money, which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

25. The Government needs to consider and evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of the Prevent programme with rigour. It is concerning that the current assessment of Preventing Violent Extremism funding, measured through performance indicator NI:35 is largely concerned with only the methodology and process of Prevent, rather than actual results. This is reinforced by the HMIC-Audit Commission Report which found that “outcomes were mostly measured by monitoring spend against budget and the timeliness of the completion of projects”. They found few performance or success measures to judge the outcomes and achievements from preventing violent extremism projects. As a result it is difficult to measure and define what works in preventing violent extremism. The Mayor is of the view that this must be urgently addressed. He is also concerned that National Indicator 35 (NI:35) which was an initial requirement for local authorities to adopt if they were to qualify for ring-fenced preventing violence funding has been altered so that payments are now administered through Area Based Grant, resulting in money that was supposed to be focussed solely on preventing violent extremism is now being spent on broader areas.

26. The fact that local authorities are no longer required to accept NI:35 as a precondition for Prevent funding could be seen as the Government moving away from the original aim of Prevent funding and hence a dilution of the criteria used to assess the effectiveness of local authorities.

27. The Mayor is also anxious that there does not appear to be a national system in place by which the Government keeps track of Prevent grants once they have been disbursed to local authorities that use the money to fund projects carried out by community groups. This is further compounded by a lack of knowledge by the Government and local councils as to the extent to which community groups are possibly linked to extremist groups and how the money will be used once given to them.

28. The Mayor does not feel in a position to comment on whether the reactions to the programme have been adequately gauged. However, the Mayor sees it as important that the Government respond to the findings and recommendations of the joint HMIC-Audit Commission report on preventing violent extremism. The Mayor would welcome a Government response to the concerns expressed in the HMIC Prevent Report which found that only seven police forces have established mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of Prevent interventions and that only 10 forces has established an assessment framework in partnership with local authorities, to assess delivery against NI:35 aimed at “building resilience to violent extremism”.

Q8. Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

29. There is confusion in this area. The Government’s “Updated Guide for Local Partners”, states that: “work to promote community cohesion and to prevent violent extremism are separate but related policy areas”. Yet the Government has permitted local authorities to use associated Prevent funding such as the Area Based Grant as part of community cohesion, sustainable communities and safer neighbourhood agendas. Initially when the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund (PVEPF) was launched in October 2006 its aim was to “support priority local authorities in developing programmes of activity to tackle violence at the local level”. By altering the administration process of PVE-PF payments this means

that such monies are no longer ring-fenced to focussing solely on preventing extremism. The Government also concedes that some local authorities in receipt of Prevent funding have in some areas chosen not to use the term Prevent or Preventing Violent extremism when delivering specific interventions.

30. The Mayor is concerned that Prevent's focus on Islamic-based extremism is having a perverse outcome, in that it is having negative effect on some sections of the Muslim community who feel stigmatised by association with violent extremism. This not only undermines the relationship with the community on whose support delivery of Prevent agenda depends, but also the Government's community cohesion agenda. The Mayor would welcome a full debate on whether and how the Government should and could integrate the Prevent and community cohesion policy areas.

October 2009

Memorandum from Communities and Local Government (PVE 63)

The Government is pleased to respond to the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry into Prevent. Prevent is a cross-cutting policy that is led across Government by the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) which is part of the Home Office. This memorandum focuses on elements of the Prevent strategy led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). The annex gives a list of documents on Prevent referred to in the memorandum—these documents provide a rich source of detail on the strategy and will help the committee understand the background and some of the history of the strategy.

SUMMARY

The aim of Prevent, as one of the four elements of the Government's counter terrorism strategy (CONTEST), is to stop radicalisation, reduce support for terrorism and violent extremism and discourage people from becoming terrorists. The Prevent strategy has had real successes. Many more people are engaged on this agenda, including people with different perspectives who do not necessarily agree with each other or with the Government but are willing to work with us on the issue. There has been a remarkable coming together of central and local Government, police forces and communities; for example we have supported the independent Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board which has brought together different sunni and shia traditions within the Muslim communities to improve standards in mosques. We are talking and constructively debating Prevent and finding solutions to the challenges around Prevent as never before. And we are collectively making a difference to the problems we face. Prevent will continue to be a key part of the Government's long term strategy to tackle the threat from international terrorism.

We are clear that the threat from al Qa'ida influenced extremism remains the most significant terrorist threat to the UK, although we have recently been able to downgrade the official threat level from "severe" (an attack is highly likely) to "substantial" (an attack is a strong possibility). To address the continued threat we must engage with a range of communities. However, the Government does not want terrorism to define, or be perceived as defining, the relationship between Government and Muslim communities. As with all communities, the Government has contact with Muslim communities across the full range of public activities and policies. We are clear that the vast majority in our Muslim communities are against violent extremism and want to work with the Government to tackle the terrorist groups who target the vulnerable.

Prevent is a vital part of CONTEST so it is important that the Prevent programme is working as effectively as it can. We are keen to learn and adapt what we do in response to feedback and emerging evidence. We have listened to partners in communities and authorities and have taken on board the views and concerns of Muslim communities over the communication of Prevent and how this defines their relationship with the Government. As a result we have recently revised our guidance to local authorities about Prevent acknowledging that the term "Preventing Violent Extremism" attached to local funding can in some areas be a barrier to promoting good community based work. We have acted on this by removing the label from the funding and will support local authority decisions to position programmes within the wider context of work with their communities. We do not want labels to get in the way of strengthening communities and keeping everyone safe. We have also provided more funding and greater flexibility to local authorities to deliver Prevent within their wider work on cohesion and building shared values.

We are working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a safe, prosperous and healthy community. Prevent contributes to this as do a number of other related but distinct programmes, including promoting community cohesion, tackling hate crime and other forms of extremism. We are developing a more consistent and proportionate approach to those that undermine the shared values of all communities. We are doing this by promoting cohesion and shared values more clearly and strongly across our society. We are determined to support communities by increasing their capacity to tackle the philosophy or practice of violence in their own communities. We will encourage a wider public debate about the values that communities share and the role such values can play in creating safe, fair and empowered communities in which we all want to live.

PREVENT

1. We remain firmly committed to the Prevent strategy and to maintaining funding for it. We also want to promote cohesion and shared values more clearly and strongly right across society. We want to see a wider public debate about the values that communities share and the role values—including the value of understanding and respecting difference—can play in creating the safe, fair and empowered communities in which we all want to live.

2. Through Prevent we aim to stop radicalisation, reduce support for terrorism and discourage people from becoming terrorists as part of a cross-Government strategy. Today's threat to the UK from international terrorism is different from previous threats. There are a range of terrorist groups currently operating within the UK, however, the greatest threat comes from al Qa'ida influenced extremism, and this is reflected in the number of arrests, trials and convictions in the last eight years. Between 11 September 2001 and 31 March 2008, 196 people were convicted of terrorist or terrorist related offences.⁸⁰

3. Prevent is led across Government by the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) and is delivered by a number of departments and agencies who all have specific policy interests in the Prevent strategy. CLG contributes to the delivery of all elements of the strategy and leads the community based response to violent extremism. Prevent can only be successful if it is delivered in partnership with community organisations and wider society. Many other Government departments are involved in Prevent and some projects are run jointly across departments. For example, CLG has joint projects with the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills including developing and delivering citizenship materials for madrassahs (Islamic evening schools); and developing a faith leadership qualification for all faith leaders.

4. Government funding on key Prevent deliverables in 2008–09 was over £140 million. CLG funding for Prevent totals £86 million across the current spending period (April 2008 to March 2011). CLG's contribution to Prevent is measured against PSA 26 (Reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism).

5. We are clear that the response to violent extremism should come from the entire community and have recently made it clearer that funding should go to build the resilience of those communities where it is most needed, reflecting the nature of the current threat; cross-community activities can both strengthen community cohesion and the community's capacity to resist support for violent extremism

6. We do not want terrorism to define, or be perceived as defining, the relationship between the Government and Muslim communities. We make clear in public statements that the vast majority in our Muslim communities are against violent extremism. All Government departments engage with a wide range of faith and non-faith communities in the development and delivery of their policy responsibilities. CLG plays a co-ordinating role in these relationships, in particular through the Faith Communities Consultative Council which draws together representatives of the Church of England and other faiths and is the main forum in which Government meets faith communities collectively.

7. CLG's work on Prevent is organised into the following three work strands:

(i) *Broadening and deepening our engagement with community groups*

We recognise the diversity that exists in Britain's Muslim communities and are broadening the range of groups that we engage with and fund to further build resilience to violent extremism. We have done this by: engaging with a wider range of key strategic partners across the UK's diverse Muslim communities; building the capacity of key partners to have a national impact through the Community Leadership Fund⁸¹ which will have funded 55 projects £5.1 million over three years; establishing the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group and a Young Muslims Advisory Group; and increasing our engagement with communities previously under-represented in our work, including Somali and Turkish organisations.

(ii) *Working with local places to foster civic capacity/leadership to support an increase in effective delivery at the local level*

Tackling violent extremism is a national priority but the nature of the challenge can vary greatly from place to place. That is why working with local authorities and partners is critical. We have strengthened the dialogue between national and local Government through the creation of a Local Delivery Advisory Group (LDAG). This group meets regularly to advise the Communities and Home Secretaries on the development of the Prevent agenda at a local level.

We are working closely with local authorities and with groups like the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

⁸⁰ Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 13/05/09

⁸¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/preventingextremism/communityleadershipfund/>

(iii) *Strengthening communities through supporting faith based institutions and leaders; and to improve understanding of Islam*

We are working closely with Muslim communities to build capacity and improve teaching and governance standards in mosques and to equip scholars and leaders with the skills, confidence and space to confront violent extremism. This work is structured into the following three areas:

- improving standards in mosques;
- supporting Muslim faith leaders; and
- strengthening theological understanding of Islam.

8. These overarching delivery priorities are underpinned by strategic objectives which aim to:

- take account of the international context in working with UK communities;
- improve strategic communications to help build communities' resilience, empowering them to stand up to and reject extremism; and
- develop our knowledge and evidence base.

9. To support these workstreams the Government set up the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU), jointly owned by CLG, the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. RICU was established in June 2007 to ensure that HMG communicates effectively to reduce the risk of terrorism, by:

- advising CONTEST partners on their counter-terrorism related communications;
- exposing the weaknesses of violent extremist ideologies and brands; and
- supporting credible alternatives to violent extremism using communications.

RICU plays a central co-ordinating and supporting role on Prevent communications across Government in addition to carrying out its own Prevent campaigns and media work.

10. Prevent remains a vital part of our efforts to counter the threat from international terrorism. We have ensured that the strategy evolves to meet the threat and is flexible enough to adapt to what our partners tell us is most effective. This is why we have made more money available and revised the guidance to provide local authorities with more flexibility in delivering Prevent within their wider work on cohesion. Local authorities will be able to do even more work to bring communities together to condemn violent extremism, supported by an increase in funding of £7.5 million.

11. This greater flexibility was set out in new guidance issued to local authorities in August 2009. The guidance also acknowledges that the effectiveness of the programme can be reduced if the labelling of local activities or their restriction solely to Muslim communities discourages some groups from becoming involved.

12. Although the most significant terrorist threat comes from al Qa'ida influenced groups, there is a perception that the Government is only interested in violent extremism of one kind. This is not true. We are working to address all forms of extremism, including far right groups. Over the coming months, we will be developing a more comprehensive strategy to strengthen resilience to such extremism. However, this will not be resourced from the Prevent budget and is not part of the CONTEST strategy.

Q1. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

13. This is a highly complex area to address and so we are continuing to work to get the best evidence for why people become involved in violent extremism. When significant attention was given to preventing extremism after the London bombings in 2005, there was very little evidence on violent extremism. The first steps were to build the intelligence base and to run the "Preventing Extremism Together" process to share knowledge and identify recommendations. The first stages of Prevent were shaped by evidence from these processes.

14. By 2007 a broad consensus had been reached on the process of radicalisation and on some individual vulnerability factors, based on Government and academic examination of case studies of individuals.

15. The CLG-commissioned study by Tufyal Choudhary summarises the academic consensus on the radicalisation process: personal vulnerabilities are targeted by charismatic radicalisers pushing a specific ideology, in an environment where violently extreme ideologies are largely unchallenged by alternative explanations or contradictory evidence.⁸² The Prevent strategy addresses these factors by prioritising:

- Identifying and supporting the vulnerable;
- Disrupting the radicalisers;
- Environments in which ideology is challenged and alternative explanations are considered; and
- Understanding and responding to widespread concerns.

⁸² See, for example *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation* (a study in progress) by Tufyal Choudhary, University of Durham, 2007. Pp 21–22

16. Cross-governmental understanding of key factors also began to develop significantly from the end of 2007. A number of departments analysed their own data sets and academics, such as Edwin Bakker and Marc Sageman, examined the nature of radicalisation. Therefore in 2007, in collaboration with other Government departments and the Devolved Administrations OSCT revised the earlier Prevent strategy. Using the intelligence and open source material which had by then become available and working closely with international counterparts and local and community partners a new strategy was developed based on a more comprehensive understanding of the factors driving radicalisation in the UK and overseas. Collectively this research had highlighted a number of vulnerabilities to radicalisation, the use of religious justifications by radicalisers, and the protective function of a firm social identity. Evidence also revealed a low religious knowledge and observance amongst radicalised individuals. Our Prevent programme evolved to reflect this work, for example reflecting the findings on faith by prioritising the “developing a stronger understanding of faith” strand of work. Key findings and more information on radicalisation may be found in Annex I of the Prevent Strategy—A Guide to Local Partners in England (May 2008).

17. As well as sharing academic research with local partners we have supported the development of OSCT-led Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles: classified documents developed by the police, which are intended to be shared with local authorities and others to inform the development of local programmes of action. We have also supported the dissemination of Central Prevent Analysis documents which provide thematic analysis on issues such as radicalisation.

18. The established evidence appears robust, but is far from complete and the challenge is itself evolving. Research remains a significant priority and is taken forward across all the key Prevent departments:

- OSCT leads on research to develop increased understanding of radicalisation and has recently commissioned two rapid evidence reviews on “push and pull” factors in extremism, drawing on research on gangs, cults and political violence.
- CLG has prioritised research on the roles played by communities in both driving and preventing extremism. A CLG-commissioned literature review on levels or drivers of community attitudes towards extremism in the UK notes the lack of evidence pre-2005 and the continued paucity of robust evidence.
- CLG is finalising a rapid evidence assessment on “what works in changing community attitudes towards violent extremism”, drawing on evidence from within and outside of the UK, which aims to highlight lessons about the most effective types of work.

19. Feedback from our local partners made it clear that the label “Preventing Violent Extremism” attached to the local Prevent funding stream has on occasion been a barrier to promoting good, community-based work. We have removed the label from our funding. Some local authorities are already taking a more flexible approach and we will give further encouragement to this. Labels should not get in the way of a focus on work which can be proven to be effective in achieving our Prevent objectives, strengthening communities and keeping everyone safe.

Q2. How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is, or should be, aimed?

20. National and local partners need to engage with the broadest range of groups and individuals to ensure that they are obtaining representative and balanced views. Terrorist groups have targeted vulnerable people in Muslim communities, so that is where the Government’s community engagement effort has largely been targeted. We are clear that we do not want terrorism to define, or be perceived as defining, the relationship between Government and Muslim communities. We reflect and make clear in public statements that the vast majority in our Muslim communities are against violent extremism. We stress the importance of the wider context of promoting shared values and community cohesion and the relationship with the work on Prevent.

21. A large part of community engagement on Prevent is delivered locally through local authorities, schools, higher education institutions and the police, enabling local discussions and Prevent delivery to be shaped to addressing local needs and issues. Our recent revision of guidance to local authorities encourages the widest possible debate of these concerns at local level across all communities, not just with Muslim communities. National Indicator 35, the key performance measure against which local strategic partnerships must report, seeks to measure the strength and breadth of that engagement, and we have continued to encourage the development of local forums to discuss the issues of extremism and Islamophobia (through our £3.2 million Challenge and Innovation Fund, for instance).

22. At the national level, government engagement seeks to ensure that Muslim communities are reached through various mechanisms including advisory groups, stakeholder roundtables, capacity-building support, funding, attendance at events, and ongoing relationships at official level. This enables the views of all stakeholders to feed into policy making, as well as ensuring that a greater variety of groups able to deliver Prevent projects are receiving support.

23. In October 2006, the Government announced that it would fundamentally rebalance its engagement with Muslim organisations towards those actively taking a leadership role in rejecting and condemning violent extremism and upholding shared values. This helped ensure that the Government was engaging with a wider range of Muslim communities, as the Government was at risk of speaking to only a narrow range of “gatekeeper” organisations. Muslim communities in Britain are highly diverse in terms of ethnicity and religious denomination. There are also other issues to take into consideration, such as age/intergenerational issues and the role of women in Muslim communities

24. There is a high level of engagement with communities across government departments including at Ministerial level—this includes outreach visits the Foreign Secretary has made to local communities to discuss foreign policy which, in addressing concerns of communities, are of interest to us.

25. We have engaged with a wider range of Muslim organisations and individuals at both the national and local level. We are supporting Muslim and non-Muslim grassroots organisations through the Community Leadership Fund (CLF) and local Prevent projects. Some Muslim communities, such as the Somali and Turkish communities, have been engaged on the Prevent agenda by the Government for the first time. We are also now engaging with sections of the community whose views have been traditionally underrepresented, such as Muslim women and young people.

26. Fifty per cent of Muslims in Britain are under the age of 25 and although, there is no single profile of a violent extremist or a single radicalisation pathway, research and data on this subject has highlighted that younger people may be at greatest risk of radicalisation. CLG and DCSF established the Young Muslims Advisory Group (YMAG), comprising 23 young Muslims from different backgrounds and representing each region. This group has advised and challenged Government on issues relating to Prevent and young Muslims. In March 2009, the YMAG led a major national conference in Leeds for young people of all faiths and non faith and from all around the country to encourage dialogue across communities on Prevent.

27. The National Muslim Women’s Advisory Group (NMWAG) was established in January 2008 by CLG to promote the voices of Muslim women and to help empower Muslim women at a grassroots level. The group acts an ambassador for Muslim women, representing their views and concerns to Government and providing positive role models. The group was refreshed in 2009, increasing the membership to 26 and ensuring that the group reflects the diversity of Muslim communities in Britain and has representatives from each region.

28. Knowledge of who to target in order to reach the diverse British Muslim communities was significantly advanced by the Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities reports.⁸³ This work identified significant voices in these communities as well confirming that there is a need to continue to broaden and deepen engagement across these different communities and support them through capacity-building work. This research, commissioned by CLG, has been shared and has informed a wide range of policies in other Government departments.

29. Research shows that some British Muslim communities retain strong links with their countries of origin, which is why work overseas by other Government departments such as the FCO is vital. These links are especially strong in the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali communities. To better understand relevant UK communities and issues relevant to them, and possible drivers of radicalisation, CLG Ministers and officials have engaged with officials from countries with key communities in the UK, visited Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India and met senior visitors to the UK.

30. Our wider engagement has given us greater feedback and we understand that some parts of the Muslim communities are inhibited from engaging with the Government on this agenda because of the language around Prevent. That is why we have recently revised our guidance to local authorities and acknowledged that the label “Preventing Violent Extremism” can in some areas be a barrier to promoting community work. We are seeking to engage all communities on the Prevent agenda and recently announced an additional £7.5 million funding for local authorities to bring communities together to tackle violent extremism and deliver Prevent.

31. Our work with Muslim communities often means that we are the first to be alerted to broader issues within the community. When this happens we work with other departments, agencies and communities to ensure that issues are resolved quickly.

32. Events such as the Gaza crisis in January 2009 have shown that Government’s engagement activities have had an impact. Meetings with community members from across the country were arranged at short notice, which enabled concerns to be heard and for Ministers to communicate directly with community members. Community members were updated throughout this period with written briefings, which they were able to circulate more widely, ensuring that messages that were not getting through to the community via other channels, reached a wider audience. During the Gaza crisis, we also found opportunities to keep the Jewish community closely informed about the Government’s approach, and we will always work with other faith communities as appropriate in crisis situations.

⁸³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/summarymuslimcommunity>

Q3. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

33. We work with local partners to ensure that the strategy evolves and adapts to different challenges as well as learning from what has worked. Local authorities are often the first to highlight challenges in delivering the Prevent agenda. An example of this is our recent guidance to local authorities which acknowledges that the label “Preventing Violent Extremism” attached to local funding can in some areas be a barrier to promoting good community based work. Where this is the case we have supported local authority decisions to position programmes within the wider context of work with their communities. Moving forward, we will continue to develop and share a suite of practical “tools” for local authorities to use, coupled with clearer information and support that can help local authorities decide the best approach and practice that can help them to effectively deliver Prevent. This will include looking at how all communities can work together to tackle this unique threat.

34. In line with the Government’s National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy we have worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) and Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA) to develop sector-led solutions, consulting closely with groups like the Local Delivery Advisory Group to consider local needs. Exercises with the Audit Commission and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) have typified this learning approach and have received positive feedback from local practitioners. Support includes:

- At a regional level CLG and OSCT is investing £1.5 million in 2009–10 to fund posts in each of the English Government Offices and in the Home Office Crime Team in the Welsh Assembly Government to build their capacity to act as a first point of contact for local authorities, coordinate work across their regions and share best practice amongst local partners. We are also piloting regional support through the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership which is supporting local authorities to set up and deliver specific Prevent workforce development/training activity in the region with the aim of sharing good practice across the regions.
- We have worked closely with IDeA to build on their local “peer support” approach, with 30 local authority officers, councillors and third sector representatives accredited to provide support to other authorities on the Prevent agenda. In addition, the IDeA is creating a councillors network and councillor-focussed workshops, as well as running other bespoke workshops on issues like developing Prevent action plans. Both the IDeA and LGA have produced guides to the Prevent agenda, looking at the role of councillors and considering issues such as the use of council property by groups with extremist views.
- To support the sharing of good practice between local areas and provide learning opportunities we have supported the delivery of two national conferences in 2007 and 2008, involving around 1,500 delegates and a further conference is planned for 2009. The conference involved a range of organisations including people from a wide range of faiths and people of no faith. The IDeA also facilitates an on-line “Community of Practice”, allowing local practitioners to share best practice, access key documents, post comments and take part in question and answer sessions. Alongside this, four local authorities have been given beacon status for their work on “cohesive and resilient communities” and will be sharing best practice on the Prevent and cohesion agendas through 2009–10.
- Building on these approaches we are intending to work intensively in a small number of local authority areas to jointly develop understanding of good practice and effectiveness through deploying a small number of CLG advisors to work in partnership with the authority. An element of this work will look at how local authorities can work with the wider community to tackle al Qaeda influenced extremism.
- More broadly, CLG and other Government departments continue to develop a wide range of guidance and support documents to help authorities implement the Prevent agenda which are included in Annex A. These evolve as we learn more about what works and how best to communicate with all communities. We continue to update overarching guidance on delivering Prevent locally, alongside more specific guidance on issues such as evaluating local Prevent projects. CLG is also working closely with the Home Office to ensure appropriate training and awareness packages for Prevent issues are available for a full range of local partners.
- CLG and OSCT coordinate and disseminate a cross-government monthly newsletter, which keeps local partners up to date by giving a snapshot of important events, conferences, new publications, and national projects. This is complemented by RICU’s weekly update for local partners on Prevent related news stories
- RICU is delivering a programme of workshops throughout the UK to support the development of strategic communications at the local level. RICU is also developing, with CLG, a communications toolkit to help local partners to develop and implement effective Prevent communications.

35. CLG commissioned a mapping of local Prevent project activities delivered in 2007–08 which included an analysis of the evaluations that had taken place at a local level. This identified the need for greater support in this area and we published a guide to evaluating local Prevent project and programmes with an accompanying resource pack in August 2009.

Q4. *Are the objectives of the PREVENT agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

36. We have made good progress in communicating Prevent objectives and many more people of differing perspectives and views are now engaged on this agenda. There has been a remarkable coming together of central and local Government, police forces and communities. We are talking and constructively debating Prevent and finding solutions to the challenges. In order to further broaden activities funded under Prevent, CLG has boosted Prevent funding for local authorities to give them more flexibility to engage with a wider range of activities, including engagement with other communities and fostering shared values.

37. Prevent communications are aimed at specific audiences, including local government, community organisations and Prevent champions, Muslim faith leaders, and more generally, Muslim and other faith and non-faith communities. Much of CLG's Prevent communications work is supported by research, guidance, campaigns and other communications projects produced by the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU).

Supporting Local Communications

38. We have created a strong pool of committed partners at the local level. These local partners often have influence with communities that the Government cannot reach. We are working closely with these partners to strengthen their voices, to facilitate better engagement and dialogue amongst them, and to ensure that they have the information, skills, and confidence to deliver the Prevent objectives locally. From discussions with communities and local partners, we are also more alert to the communications impact of the label "Preventing Violent Extremism" and have acted on this by removing the label from the funding.

39. In addition to the communications activities detailed above, our offer of support for local communications includes:

- Targeted communications training for local delivery, community, and faith stakeholders, including through RICU's local delivery and campaigns teams;
- The development of a communications toolkit, aimed at supporting local delivery partners to develop and implement effective Prevent communications;
- Support for initiatives that promote positive British Muslim voices (eg Radical Middle Way and Projecting British Islam).

The broad range of communications activities set out above supports and is supported by the wider context of cross-Government Prevent communications with communities in the UK. This includes regional outreach events by FCO and other Ministers and senior officials. RICU plays a central strategic role in the Government's Prevent communications, including by coordinating and supporting the Prevent communications of other Departments and delivery partners, delivering campaigns and media work, disseminating information to delivery partners and other stakeholders regarding current issues, and conducting domestic and international research and analysis around audiences, language, and credible communications channels

National Communications

40. Key channels through which CLG communicates Prevent and related national policies to local delivery, community, and faith stakeholders include:

- The annual national Prevent conference, which last year was attended by over 900 people—cross-community delivery partners, community and faith stakeholders, and media representatives;
- Published documents (eg "Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds", April 2007, and "Preventing Violent Extremism: Next Steps for Communities", July 2008);
- Guidance issued in June 2008 and updated in August 2009 provided local partners with key messages and practical advice on establishing effective partnership working on Prevent;
- Regular GO Network meetings and other meetings and conferences involving local delivery, community, and faith stakeholders;
- Recently established national advisory groups—the Local Delivery Advisory Group, Young Muslims' Advisory Group, the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group, and the Faith Communities Consultative Council—which all have regular meetings with Ministers and officials and which facilitate a two-way dialogue between the centre and local communities;
- The development of CLG's Prevent web pages, to provide accessible information for a range of audiences including Prevent practitioners and the general public;
- Ministerial and official visits to see local Prevent projects;

- Targeted Ministerial and official engagement with stakeholders. For example, during the Gaza crisis earlier this year, we were quick to write to all local delivery, community, and faith stakeholders to explain the Government's position, in addition to organising a series of meetings where stakeholders had the opportunity to raise their concerns with Ministers and officials; and
- Communications aimed at overseas audiences, including Ministerial foreign visits, which counter anti-Western opinion by promoting the positive contribution of Muslims to British society and the strong and positive links between the UK and Muslim communities overseas.

41. These targeted communications are supported by wider messaging through national and specialist media channels, including Ministerial articles and speeches. We are now broadening this to include new media such as Twitter, forums, and blogs, which have younger audiences.

42. We are continuously building on lessons learned to ensure that our communications are as effective as possible. For example, our experience of handling community tensions during the Gaza crisis has increased our understanding of how to communicate with communities quickly and effectively in times of emergency. As a result, we have been much better equipped to respond strategically to other issues that have arisen since, such as the North-West arrests in April, through targeted face-to-face engagement and regular information updates to stakeholders.

Q5. Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?

43. We appreciate this policy is complex and sensitive, and impacts on a range of stakeholders, from Muslim and other communities to delivery partners such as local authorities and the police. CLG has therefore actively asked for advice from experts, practitioners and various stakeholder groups from all communities through a range of mechanisms. It will always be important to ensure that the Prevent programme is working as effectively as it can and the updated guidance for local partners is in response to advice we have had from our stakeholders.

Muslim Communities

44. The Government has, from the start, made it a priority to seek advice from Muslim communities on how best to achieve the goals of the Prevent programme. Immediately after the London bombings of July 2005 the Government held a consultation exercise with leading members of Muslim communities called "Preventing Extremism Together". This process produced a number of practical recommendations for tackling violent extremism which formed the basis of the current Prevent strategy.

45. Ministers and officials have regularly met representatives from a range of national Muslim organisations, Muslim academics and other stakeholders both individually and through roundtable meetings, and given them the opportunity to play an active role in shaping policy. For example, at a roundtable meeting with Ministers, Islamic scholars and theologians, it was suggested that an independent review of Muslim Faith Leader training in the UK should take place. It was also suggested by scholars that a safe academic space to debate the contextualisation of Islam in a British Society should be facilitated. Both of these suggestions were taken forward. Our support for community-led initiatives such as the independent Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board has further enabled our ability to access independent advice across a wide range of Muslim communities.

46. CLG has also promoted the voices of those who were previously under-represented in discussions by establishing the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group and a Young Muslims Advisory Group. These groups enable Government to engage more directly with young Muslims and Muslim women about Prevent and issues affecting them more widely. Both of these groups have representatives from each region and reflect the diversity of Muslim communities.

47. These advisory groups meet regularly with Ministers, feeding in their own views on policy issues as well as the views of those in their communities. They have identified priority areas for the Government to focus on in its delivery of the Prevent agenda and its engagement with Muslim young people and women. They also have a dialogue with policy officials and have contributed to policy formation on a variety of issues relating to preventing extremism and other policy matters from a range of departments including the DCSF, Ministry of Justice, FCO and Home Office.

48. There is also a cross government network of community advisors from key Prevent departments who work alongside policy officials to feed in views from the community level, as well as to advise on decisions being considered by officials.

Local Delivery Partners

49. The Government is in regular dialogue with those who are working to deliver the Prevent programme and seeks advice from them as part of the policy development process.

50. The Government has established the Local Delivery Advisory Group (LDAG) which meets on a quarterly basis to advise the Communities Secretary and Home Secretary on the development and delivery of the Prevent agenda. Membership of LDAG includes representatives from across the fields of local government, policing, education, housing and the third sector. It gives local practitioners, elected members

and strategic leaders the opportunity to help shape policy on Prevent at the national level. Discussions with the LDAG have emphasised the importance of strengthening the support available to local partners and have helped to shape the way that support is delivered.

51. The LDAG builds on the regular contact that officials have with frontline practitioners and strategic leaders across a range of organisations. Ministers and officials seek views and feedback through regular local visits, attending regional and local networks and conferences, and national events such as the Prevent08 conference. Government offices in the regions are closely involved in the policy development process and help to represent the views of local partners to departments including CLG.

Academic/Expert Advice

52. In developing the Prevent strategy the Government has used research and taken advice from academics and scholars about Muslim communities, such as Dilwar Hussain from the Markfield Institute and Tufyal Choudhury from the University of Durham. Some of the members of the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group are academics. CLG also commissioned the Change Institute to undertake the "Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities" research, which has informed the way that Government engages with Muslim communities.

53. Academics and universities play an important part in the delivery of the Prevent agenda and the Government is supporting Cambridge University to create the academic space to bring together Muslim academics and leaders to discuss the contextualisation of Islam in Britain.

International Partners

54. As Contest makes clear, the terrorist threat that we face is international. We work overseas as well as at home to understand the process of radicalisation, to reduce the vulnerability of our diaspora communities and the countries and regions from which they come, to strengthen the voice of mainstream Islam to counter the propaganda of the extremists, and to tackle the grievances which are exploited by those extremists. The Government response has increased significantly in scale over the last two years: FCO spending alone on Prevent overseas has more than doubled and will have trebled by 2010. It has also widened in scope, with support from DFID and the British Council, and more international work by the Home Office and CLG.

55. CLG, supported by FCO and OSCT, work closely on Prevent with international partners, especially in the context of international links of British Muslim communities. CLG Ministers and officials have engaged with other governments, theological experts and faith leaders, and those with close links to UK communities. This includes meetings with faith leaders in Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan and Syria to better understand theological influence on British communities, and to share experience on tackling extremism. As part of the Muslim Faith Leader Training Review, reviewers also visited seminaries and scholars in Pakistan and India, with links to seminaries in the UK, to gain support for the independent review being undertaken in Britain. We also work closely with key partners in Europe to share best practice, particularly around local delivery.

Other Faith Communities

56. CLG Ministers and officials meet the Faith Communities Consultative Council on a quarterly basis. This group comprises representatives from the nine major faiths. The group has been given the opportunity to feed its views to Ministers and officials about the Prevent agenda and its impact on other faith communities. We have supported work across faiths, including for example the Three Faiths Forum, through our national community leadership funding, and a number of other faith groups are already involved in Prevent at a local level. They are helping each other to build capacity, share ideas and confront challenges. We believe that communities that stand together are stronger and have provided £7.5 million additional funding to give local authorities greater flexibility to deliver Prevent with all communities as part of their wider work on cohesion and building shared values .

57. Through these mechanisms we are able to draw on a range of advice from both community members and practitioners on how best to achieve the goals of the Prevent programme. An example is the advisory board for the Review of Muslim faith leaders training which includes people from Muslim communities and from other faiths.

Q6. How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

58. We make sure that we get a wide range of information on reactions to Prevent. Stakeholder, Muslim women, young Muslim and cross-faith advisory groups provide robust advice on reactions to Prevent and to specific new approaches. A programme of Government Office network meetings and visits to local authorities, and the Prevent Local Delivery Advisory Group provide constant updates from those delivering Prevent. For example, feedback from these groups indicated that the term Preventing Violent Extremism was inhibiting engagement and we have acted on this by encouraging local authorities in taking a different approach.

59. The media plays a key part in both reporting and influencing reactions, so RICU has used focus groups to test reactions to key Prevent messages; media analysis to understand whether key messages are being reproduced in the media; and media monitoring to build awareness of emerging issues. Collectively, these sources provide a wide range of advice and evidence on the range of reactions to different aspects of the programme.

60. Prevent projects run from or funded by CLG are monitored and the most significant projects are individually externally evaluated. The complexity and relative immaturity of Prevent projects mean that formal evaluation of Prevent remains a significant challenge. To ensure that the best possible methodologies are used CLG commissioned Tavistock Institute to produce a study on evaluation methodologies and to provide recommendations.

61. Following the 2007–8 Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund (PVEPF) which supported 70 local authorities CLG commissioned a mapping exercise which examined the range of projects that were funded, project partners, project beneficiaries and the contribution of the projects to PVEPF priorities and the wider Prevent strategy.

62. Alongside this work HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Audit Commission jointly undertook a learning and development exercise, which was published in October 2008, exploring the progress made by councils and police partners in developing programmes of activity to deliver Prevent. This specifically looked at identifying “what works, what doesn’t and what looks promising” in respect of Prevent activities funded in the pathfinder year through the PVEPF and partners’ core budgets.

63. Building on a need identified in the mapping exercise in August 2009 CLG published “Evaluating local Prevent projects and programmes: guidelines for local authorities and their partners”.

64. CLG also intends to commission a national evaluation of local authority-led Prevent work. The evaluation will run from December 2009 to September 2011, and will use a case study methodology. This will include examining project rationales, resource management, whether the proposed outputs were delivered to the right recipients and the immediate outcomes.

Q7. Question seven: Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?

65. We are working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a safe, prosperous and healthy community. Prevent, cohesion and integration initiatives all sit within this umbrella, with CLG leading these across Government. We are clear that while separate these are related initiatives and if delivered effectively should support one another. It is important that all forms of extremism are tackled consistently and effectively. Over the coming months, we will encourage the wider public to debate the values that communities share and the role values can play in creating the safe, fair and empowered communities in which we all want to live.

66. Prevent, cohesion and integration interventions may look similar but we are clear that the overarching objective of each is distinct, as set out below:

- Prevent is about stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting al Qa’ida influenced extremism;
- Community cohesion is about creating strong and positive relationships between people of different backgrounds to enable a wide variety of groups to get on well together; and
- Integration is the process by which new arrivals settle into and make a positive contribution to their new communities. It is achieved by learning to speak English, participating in the labour market and understanding the responsibilities and rights that come with living in the UK.

67. Experience has shown that al Qa’ida influenced extremism can emerge from even the most cohesive and well integrated communities; but extremist messages are less likely to find support and are more easily isolated in a cohesive environment. We believe that a community which isolates extremism of all forms is likely to be one where people have more confidence to build relationships with one another and increase community cohesion. So while building community cohesion can help Prevent it will not be enough on its own.

We do not want to put up artificial barriers between these policy areas and to ensure that we deliver success in all three areas it is important that at national, regional and local levels our communications are clear about both the differences and the synergies between them.

CONCLUSION

68. We believe that the evolving approach to Prevent is comprehensive and sufficiently flexible to respond to changing pressures. It also acknowledges that this is a long term programme that aims to shift attitudes and behaviours within communities; in some respects it is too early to be exact about what is and isn’t working. The recent guidance to local authorities shows that we are continuing to further refine the strategy in response to changing circumstances, feedback and the advice we get on what works best.

69. There is agreement between Prevent partners of the importance of having a community led response to Prevent and it is here that CLG adds real value to the strategy.

70. This memorandum has set out the wide range of policies and programmes: from the overall strategic frameworks for local authorities, national trail-blazing projects, through to capacity building programmes specifically aimed at strengthening communities to drive forward this work in the future.

71. The strategy is internationally recognised and people come from overseas to learn from the British approach to Prevent. However, the agenda continues to develop, and in moving forward we are considering:

- how we implement a more consistent approach across all extremisms whilst not detracting from al Qaeda influenced terrorism;
- how we continue to strengthen our strategic communications to support the delivery of the Prevent agenda at the local level;
- how we work with all communities to advance and develop shared values;
- how we continue to develop our knowledge and evidence base; and
- how we mainstream Prevent into the business of core local and national government delivery in recognition that there are no quick fixes.

72. The Committee can be assured that the Government will be taking forward these policies vigorously and that we will continuously learn from emerging evaluation and research. I am very much looking forward to contributing to the inquiry and to reading the committee's findings.

Annex

STRATEGIC PUBLICATIONS

1. Contest Strategy
http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/HO_Contest_strategy.pdf
2. Prevent Strategy
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent-strategy/>
3. Preventing Violent Extremism—Winning hearts and minds
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/320752.pdf>
4. Preventing Violent Extremism: Next Steps for Communities
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventingviolentextremismnext>

Prevent Guidance

5. Prevent Strategy: A guide for local partners (Part 1)
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent-strategy/>
6. Prevent Strategy: A guide for local partners (Part 2)
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent-strategy/>
7. Delivering the Prevent Strategy: Updated Guide for Local Partners
<http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/updated-guide-for-local-partners?view=Binary>
8. LGA Guidance—Leading the preventing violent extremism guidance
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/1181542>
9. Striking the balance, LGA Information sheet on use of Council Halls
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=2164903>
10. Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventingviolentpathfinderfundg>
11. Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007–2008—Case studies
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventingviolentpathfinderfund>

Evaluation, Assessment and Research

12. National Indicator 35—Building communities resilient to violent extremism assessment framework
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/preventingextremism/performanceindicator/>
13. Self Assessing local performance against NI35: Building Resilience to Violent Extremism
http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/NI35_Guidance1.pdf?view=Binary
14. Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and Development Exercise
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventlearningexercise/>
15. Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund Mapping of project activities 2007–08
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/pathfinderfund200708>

16. Preventing Extremism Together
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/generalcontent/communities/preventingextremismtogether/>
17. Tavistock Institute—Evaluation Guidance
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/localPREVENTprojectsprogrammes>
18. Faith Leaders and Workers Project: Evaluation Report
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/faithleadersworkers>
19. HMIC Prevent Inspection Report
<http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/inspections/thematic/prevent-report/prevent-report?view=Binary>
20. Delivering Prevent—Responding to Learning
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/deliveringprevent>
21. Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities reports
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/research/understandingmuslimcommunities/>
22. The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation (a study in progress)
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/muslimidentitypolitics>

Education publications

23. Learning together to be safe—A toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/violentextremism/downloads/DCSFLearning%20Together_bkmk.pdf
24. Learning together to be safe—A toolkit to help college contribute to the prevention violent extremism
<http://www.dius.gov.uk/~media/publications/L/learning-together-to-be-safe-online-version>
25. Promoting good campus relations, fostering shared values and preventing violent extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges
http://www.dius.gov.uk/~media/ec_group/22-07-HE_on

Publications about Women

26. Empowering Muslim Women: Case Studies
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/empoweringmuslimwomen>

October 2009

Memorandum from Ms Nahid Majid OBE and Ms Alveena Malik (PVE 64)

SUMMARY

- There was a missed opportunity, at the inception of PREVENT, by not taking on board many of the recommendations that were made in the Home Office PET Report (2005).
- We strongly urge the CLG Select committee to revisit the original PET report when making recommendations for strengthening work to prevent violent extremism in the future
- We propose a more nuanced approach to tackling all forms of extremism (Muslim and Non Muslim) which takes at its central focus the need to address socioeconomic grievances and domestic regeneration programmes, which breeds resentment and hatred across all communities in Britain today as seen in the rise of the BNP.
- The emerging empowerment agenda offers a real positive opportunity to tackle extremism through mainstream activity. In particular real investment should go into supporting Local Government to meet its new duties to “involve” and “promote democracy”. This also means real representation on governance bodies in allocating funding and determining policy making.
- Government must aim to seek the views of all its citizens and not only those that “agree” with it to allow challenge and debate.
- We encourage Government and the Select Committee to revisit the recommendation for a central Rebuttal Unit (CIC report 2006) being established to tackle extremist myths effectively and with facts.
- We urge CLG to relook at the perception that PREVENT is single group funding and broaden its scope to include all forms of extremism.
- The definitions of radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism and terrorism need to be redefined as does the relationship between these activities and the broader community cohesion agenda.

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

1.1 There are much more effective and better ways of addressing the problem of violent extremism than the current PREVENT programme. The term itself is regarded as having negative connotations particularly in allocating funding to groups who do not want to be labeled.

1.2 We believe that there was a missed opportunity, at the inception of PREVENT, by not taking on board many of the recommendations that were made in the Home Office PET Report (2005). In particular we are disappointed with the continuing glaring omission of taking into consideration the contributing socio-economic factors in government's current approach to tackling extremism.

1.3 Therefore we propose a more nuanced approach to tackling all forms of extremism which takes at its central focus the need to address socioeconomic grievances which breeds resentment and hatred across all communities in Britain today.

1.4 The Working Group "Supporting Regional and Local Initiatives and Community Actions" highlighted the fact that despite decades of Government Urban Polices designed to tackle disadvantage and poverty in our most deprived neighbourhoods, the arguments over whether communities have become increasingly segregated, or whether they have chosen to be isolated in particular within the most disadvantaged communities, continues. Within this context Government has continued to stress the importance of partnerships, as a key factor in establishing sustainable communities. What the group focused on was to determine what makes certain sections of communities feel so dissatisfied and alienated that they decide to turn to extremism? The group concluded that social and economic exclusion has often been regarded as key factors, which have been seen as contributing to increasing unrest within our poorest neighbourhoods.

1.5 The group also examined the government's agenda around civil renewal and active citizenship, driven by the Home Office, but which has relevance with other government departments such as the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Communities and Local Government. A common theme across the strands is the need to recast the relationship between state and citizen through the promotion of initiatives such as partnerships, community engagement and governance, but within an active framework of deliverables with accountability. We believe the emerging empowerment agenda offers a real positive opportunity to tackle extremism through mainstream activity. The Take part pathfinders programme funded by CLG offer many important lessons on how to encourage disaffected alienated individuals to take part in civic and civil activities. The new duty to involve, and promote democracy offer Local Authorities for the first time a way into communities that are on the margins of the democratic process to become active and develop ownership and stakeholderhood of their local agenda, holding public services to account and making their demands heard. Real representation on governance and decision making is central in allocating funding.

1.7 The current Prevent programme does not acknowledge or have a policy strand which acknowledges or addresses that poverty and lack of access to employment or housing can be used as "grievance" to justify violence. There has been no link made between Prevent hot spots and regeneration or deprived areas to be targeted in terms of identifying communities at risk. Clearly the success or otherwise, of regional and local strategies on issues such as poverty and exclusion can have profound impact in the UK's poorest neighbourhoods. Poverty and the reduction of life chances has an impact on all communities within the UK, whether white or from a minority ethnic group, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

1.9 The group concluded that we needed to therefore avoid simplistic assumptions about people, communities, cultures and ethnicity, and acknowledge that deprivation is one facet in a chain of circumstances that could possibly lead to "extremism", political or religious. Therefore deprivation and disaffection among young White people has made them equally susceptible to extreme views, as it can for young people from other minority and faith groups.

1.10 Are there better ways of tackling extremism? The Working Group concluded that an approach that works within the framework of existing government strategies was seen as a sensible starting point, as it enhances the potential for recommendations that respond to the particular needs of the Muslim faith communities being more readily incorporated. What was important was having a stronger delivery framework in operation ensuring better representation and accountability of diverse groups, and a positive framework allowing for differing views.

1.11 The working group therefore began its work by disseminating information about the range of government initiatives, (by inviting key Government officials to meetings) partnerships and policies that are currently in place, alongside an examination of the decision-making processes (including issues around representation on key decision making bodies) that impact on effective and responsive public service delivery. This enabled members to establish which, if any, policy instruments are being effectively used to improve the life chances and opportunities for Muslim communities, where policy gaps exist and where value could be added to aid the direction of existing or future policies. Needless to say the process led to an engaging debate, marked by intensive discussions amongst the working group—all of whom brought an exceptional degree of expertise and insights to the challenges that confront the Muslim and non-Muslim Community alike. The report, also signposted local good practice which could be built on.

1.12 The following six recommendations were presented to the Home Secretary, at a meeting at the Home Office on the 22 September 2005, with the working groups analysis of the issues and subsequent recommendations being commended by the Secretary of State.

1. Improve data collection on Muslim communities through faith monitoring;
2. Invest in interfaith work mapping;
3. Increase the faith confidence and competence of public bodies through secondments and short-term contracts into and out of central, regional and local government agencies;
4. Strengthen the capacity of Muslim voluntary and civic organisations;
4. Support places of worship, including Mosques, to become co-located within community hubs;
5. Link community cohesion and community safety policy strands

1.13 Although our recommendations were “commended” by the Home Secretary none were followed up or implemented, and members of the group were not invited to be involved in contributing to the “Prevent agenda”.

1.14 We strongly urge the CLG Select committee to revisit the original PET report when making recommendations for strengthening work to prevent violent extremism in the future. All working groups held intense debates and made considered recommendations which were not fully understood or supported at that time. We hope the current climate is more conducive to considering medium and long term strategies which are inclusive of the need for all communities to take full responsibility for tackling a British and not a Muslim only issue.

2. How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?

2.1 As stated above there remain a glaring omission in the current approach which fails to recognize the socioeconomic factors which may lead people to become involved in violent extremism.

2.2 Currently no accurate data exists for Muslim communities and this needs to be urgently addressed. Most research, such as a recent TUC report,⁸⁴ uses official data relating to the position of people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups to draw conclusions about the position of British Muslims. However, it would be a mistake to take “Pakistani/Bangladeshi” figures as substitutes for “Muslim”. Although a majority of British Muslims are people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, there is a substantial minority from other ethnic backgrounds. It is important therefore to understand the makeup of Muslim communities in Britain, the diversity of race and culture, educational attainment and rates of employment.

2.3 What is clear from the research that the TUC has undertaken is that whilst British people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin account for about 2% of the overall UK population, they are the most disadvantaged and socially excluded ethnic groups in Britain today. For example, narrowing of gaps in GCSE attainment but not in labour market and area segregation remain a major issue, particularly for Muslim communities. In addition, from the limited evidence available, there is clearly a hierarchy of deprivation within Muslim communities. This needs to be further investigated, with universal programmes being supplemented with targeted programmes for specific sections of the Muslim communities.

3. How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?

3.1 We have been disappointed to see that whilst Government recognized that gatekeepers can be a barrier to effective engagement with the Muslim communities, that rather than removing this barrier, it has in fact increased the number of gatekeepers over the years! It is now almost impossible to engage with Government on these issues if you are not a member of the key Government appointed Muslim organizations.

3.2 There is a perception that Government will not talk to those who hold different views to its own and some suggest that this is a key factor, for the failure of the PREVENT programme.

4. Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

4.1 It is important to note the growing number of Local Authorities who reject the term and principles of the PREVENT programme. LAs are best placed to determine what issues are most relevant to their local area and what ways are the most appropriate to address the issues. It is therefore not surprising that many LA have chosen not to adopt the Local Authority Indicator for Prevent, suggesting that this will end up dividing and labeling community cohesion initiatives.

⁸⁴ “Poverty, Exclusion and British people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin”, Trades Union Congress, August 2005.

4.2 We encourage future approaches to tackling extremism be broadened to include all forms of extremism and that a central unit, budget and expertise be developed which should be “on call” for LAs that require specific advice/support.

4.3 There was a recommendation for a central Rebuttal Unit (CIC report 2006) being established to tackle extremist myths effectively and with facts which could be accessed by LAs. In the current climate of a rise of far right extremism we urge the Select Committee and Government to revisit this recommendation.

5. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

5.1 Given that there has been no real evaluation of the PREVENT programme it is difficult to assess how far the programme has met its desired outcomes and been communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed at.

5.2 Given also the wide perception that Government is only choosing to communicate to those organizations which are supportive of its position to preventing violent extremism it therefore suggests that best communications are limited to those who are “in” with Government.

6. *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?*

6.1 Government can and should do more to engage all communities on this agenda shifting the burden of responsibility away from British Muslims to British citizens more widely.

6.2 The failure of Government rhetoric and practice in making this agenda exclusive to Muslims has seriously undermined the impact of the programme. It has only served to further alienate Muslim communities giving rise to the notion of “suspect” communities. At the local level this has caused further community cohesion tensions rather than strengthening community cohesion both within Muslim communities and between different.

6.3 Any programme which is perceived to have resulted in this outcome must be scrutinized and changed.

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

7.1 The paradox of the PREVENT approaches is that they are over researched but under evaluated. Single group funding is now fully recognized by politicians and policymakers alike to be limited in terms of value for money and its impact on building community cohesion.

7.2 PREVENT is now the only remaining large scale single group funding which remains inconsistent with wider funding policy. This needs to be addressed in order to be realigned with wider government thinking on communities funding policy as a whole. There needs to be a connectivity between Prevent hotspots and Urban Regeneration areas (Working Neighbourhood Fund WNF) to assess whether there is a link in terms of places and communities who do not access employment opportunities.

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

8.1 No the distinction is blurred in relation to intended achievements. On one hand the Prevent agenda focuses on ensuring Muslim community integration and on the other by labeling as Prevent seeks to alienate and make distinctions between the Muslim community and other communities. The working group however recognised that the community cohesion and integration agenda is not an area where government can, or should, have all the answers. However, it has an important role to lead a robust and inclusive debate that penetrates both political and community arenas at all levels. Existing government policy strands, such as active citizenship, civic participation, civil renewal, community cohesion and the emerging social capital agenda all need to reflect the realities of Muslim communities’ day-to-day experiences within the wider British context.

8.2 There is also a need to redefine the terms extremism, violent extremism and terrorism to be inclusive and provide clarity on the routes to entry of each activity. Without this clarity we remain in the danger of trying to find the needle in the haystack. At a time of economic downturn and government cutbacks it is not justifiable to put so much effort and money into an activity that generates very little output.

October 2009

Memorandum from Birmingham Activist Citizens Group (PVE 65)

INTRODUCTION TO GROUP AND EXPERTISE

As a group of diverse professionals and community members working on and around Birmingham’s PVE agenda since its inception we are keen to submit evidence concerning the programme. Our observations are drawn from long-term and close observation of the ways in which PVE policies and practices have been implemented with varying success in a city with a large minority ethnic and faith population, including

numerous Muslim communities, and one that has come under considerable scrutiny regarding terror related crime. As active citizens of Birmingham we are aware of the impact PVE has had on the city and its communities, and as professionals involved in various projects and evaluations of PVE from our work within academia, the public and third sectors we are able to highlight specific issues with a level of expertise.

SUMMARY

While we have endeavoured to clarify our observations in more detail below, the following may act as a summary of the most salient points:

- The remit between community cohesion and Prevent programmes has been blurred since the inception of Prevent, creating confusion and tensions within and between communities, and in the relationships between communities and state institutions, including the City Council, Local Government, National Government and West Midlands Police.
- In particular, a lack of clarity stemming from the policies themselves, for example CONTEST 2, has created a great deal of misunderstanding as to whether the government is attempting to prevent violent extremist beliefs and acts, or promote a homogenising and assimilationist approach towards those communities it deems problematic, particularly through the notion of “shared values” and “moderate” British Muslims.
- The confusion has further damaged the co-operation of key community members whose engagement may prove vital to the successful prevention of violence.
- A lack of transparency, independent evaluation and auditing of the programme, including projects funded through the City Council’s PVE money (£2.4 million 2008–2011) has led to damaging charges of nepotism, a lack of strategy and honesty, and an inability to independently assess and verify project impacts.
- The short-term nature of PVE funding and the increased cynicism about the aims of PVE have had a detrimental effect on community groups and projects who are otherwise ideally placed to continue excellent work, which in the opinion of the group, may well be successful in countering terrorism.

ADDRESSING THE INQUIRY’S QUESTIONS

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

The group believes that while the notion of proactively preventing violent extremism at a community level is an important one, and preferable to the dominance of the inevitable “harder” approaches of the reactive “Pursue” strand in countering terrorism, the current programme has failed on a number of levels, exacerbating community tensions, and causing as much disengagement as it has engagement.

2. A key problem with Prevent is that it is viewed as replicating the work of community cohesion (CC)—if Muslim communities are involved, projects that would have been previously categorised as CC are better funded under Prevent, with some community groups being explicitly directed by some local authorities to apply for PVE funding, and using PVE language and criteria.

3. A related issue has grown around the failure to address the issue of poor socio—economic conditions of predominantly BME communities (not just Muslim communities). This can be tied in with the work of the other marginalised communities (eg white working classes) who also suffer from lack of access to power, poor socio-eco conditions and addressing cohesion issues collectively rather than isolating already marginalised groups which leads to further community and localised tensions.

4. Prevent has not escaped the early accusations that in targeting Muslim communities explicitly and without sensitivity, it would alienate already marginalised citizens. It has continued to do this, with fear of spying increasing. Those individuals who were already engaged, and whose level of social and political capital were already high have gained—those who were disengaged and vulnerable have been further isolated.

5. Communities and professionals working on the PVE agenda remain confused as to whether the programme is about countering terrorism, or promoting undefined “British values” in an effort to assimilate those Muslims deemed “radical” or “backward”. The confusion is reflected within Government itself, and demonstrated by its inability to engage effectively with wide-ranging community groups and organisations.

6. The current programme has failed to engage those community members with the most experience and understanding of violent radicalisation, with the Government apparently avoiding criticism by refusing to engage those Muslims deemed “Salafi” or “Islamist”, despite police success with such groups, and the poor definition of these categories. Some local authorities list strict criteria on who can and cannot apply. This raises questions about whom the government finds acceptable or not.

7. Whilst local Muslim groups interested in applying for PVE funding have continued to be cautious in their involvement, often viewing the PVE label as stigmatising and insulting in its conflation of Muslims and Islam with terrorism, some community groups have taken advantage of the situation, proclaiming themselves as experts and successfully and repeatedly gaining funding.

8. In effect, those groups who have far more credibility and expertise at a grassroots level, particularly with young people and women, have thus been excluded, to the detriment of the programme.

9. A further problem with Prevent is that it alienates whole sections of communities and more specifically the Muslim community.

10. Many people feel that their personal human rights and civil liberties are being infringed which makes people feel further discriminated against. The use of Section 44 on young Muslims in particular is repeatedly cited by community members.

11. Communities commonly ask whether Prevent is about solidifying the role of the security and police apparatus as illustrated by the allegations of spying on the Muslim community. CLG initially encouraged local authorities to take the stronger lead in the Pathfinder year as they were seen as more legitimate players in terms of their natural link to communities. Over the past two years, whilst the Police have maintained a distance from leading on the work with communities, their hold on the programme is significantly tighter, with access to greater levels of public funding through the Home Office.

12. A further source of tension and apparent disconnect with community experience within PVE is the contrast between theory, as outlined in CONTEST 2 that ALL forms of violent extremism are of concern to government, and the reality that Prevent focuses on actual and potential extremist violence exclusively within Muslim communities. The rise—perceived and actual—in violent extremism in the form of attempted indiscriminate and targeted attacks on minorities—increasingly Muslims—by far-right individuals and groups, who seek to incite racial hatred and violence activities, not only heightens community tensions, but underscores the view that the Government dedicates resources to targeting “potentially vulnerable” Muslims, while apparently turning a blind eye to actually violent racists.

13. In diverse cities such as Birmingham, in which there are histories of civil unrest within minority communities, and where public marches against Islam by groups such as the “English Defense League” are causing authorities to struggle to balance freedom of speech with the crime of inciting racial hatred, those of us working around Prevent fail to understand why community projects that include young people from communities vulnerable to far-right violent extremism as well as young Muslims vulnerable to violent ideologies are being actively discouraged. Muslim communities in particular are well aware of these differences, and levels of cynicism, hurt and mistrust continue to grow.

14. *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism?*

15. *Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

16. *Are the objectives of the “Prevent” agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

17. *Is the Government seeking and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the “Prevent” programme?*

18. The Government’s analysis of radicalisation and the subsequent possibility of de-radicalisation remains ill defined and unclear—perhaps reflecting a wider lack of empirical research in the field—there is little evidential literature provided for those working within PVE.

19. Although CONTEST 2 acknowledges various forms of violent extremism, such as far right groups, there is little evidence that any resources are being diverted for these purposes.

20. Despite public denials, key government agencies such as FCO, HO, Police departments, RICU appear to use forms of demographic and psychological profiling, despite the ethical and empirical evidence against its usage.

21. Further discontent has been created by the fact that Contest and Prevent do not address Islamophobia. The 175 page Contest document makes no reference to this, further fuelling cynicism about the Government’s message.

22. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government’s strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

23. The City Council, like many others, has little connectivity with communities, and is therefore a weak project leader/partner agency.

24. There remains a major problem relating to engagement and the politics of community representation. By using and strengthening existing hegemonic community leadership routes to secure credibility and communication, the Government’s messages have remained largely irrelevant within grassroots community groups who are disconnected and disinterested in traditional community leadership and power politics.

25. There is evidence of success in Birmingham in that a number of community groups have engaged and participated in projects. However, they may not have been informed that the funding emerged through Prevent—some local authorities are consciously disguising Prevent as Cohesion due to local political sensitivities.

26. Despite Government recognition of the importance of engaging young people and women, there has been a significant failure to create meaningful links and opportunities with women's and young people's groups. Most groups, consultancies and champions who are seen as financially benefitting from the PVE funded projects are male dominated. Though women and young people are used as a banner through which to champion PVE projects, most project leads tend to be male, exclusive and kept within a small inner circle of people.

27. Pressure to spend the money each year appears to drive planning, costings and project direction, leading many to feel that Prevent lacks a clear and coherent strategy, and wastes public funding at the expense of the tax payer, without reducing the risk of extremist violence.

28. Communication by government with communities, and communication by local authorities with communities are both poor leading some to feel that Government (via CLG and Home Office) lacks legitimacy in its message and are comfortable to communicate only with those in the know—ie those people who are connected and knowledgeable about funding. Recently, RICU and FCO have tried to communicate using the web, newsletters etc, but this information is only as good as the mailing lists and reach into the communities—message coordination with local authorities may only happen accidentally.

29. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

In the case of Birmingham there has been a failure to thoroughly and publically evaluate the PVE programme. However, the measurement of success in a preventative process remains a problematic concept, and not one which local partners have been able to achieve without Government support.

30. As such, there remains no way of knowing if communities are effectively engaged—there is no baseline study completed locally to see what has been understood.

31. There is evidence that those advising central government have little or insubstantial community based experience or connectivity. This lack of expertise is reflected in the advice provided to local partners which is often half-baked, constantly altering and blanket in scope and applicability. Such a model makes the work overly universal and renders the multiple identities and contexts of local areas irrelevant.

32. There remains a general over-simplification in the literature and dialogue from agencies involved in Prevent about different Muslim groups and schools of thought: it is common for senior officials to refer to Deobandis and Salafis in reductionist terms such as “bad”.

33. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

Regionally there appears very little transparency: most elected members in Birmingham appear not to have been kept fully informed. Public information about projects that are funded, budgets, programme leaders and governance arrangements on steering groups are circulated in the public domain if that information is requested, but due to the lack of knowledge of how Prevent works, the amount of money circulating in the public domain in a locality and key target areas largely remain unknown.

34. NI 35 may be in place but many local authorities' have not fully adopted this within their performance indicators.

35. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

36. Prevent is overly open to interpretation. Its objectives are too wide and subject to disparities in terms of how it is understood and implemented. The five causal strands of Prevent: “challenging, disrupting, supporting, increasing and addressing” can be interpreted by police, local authorities, community groups, national government departments, border agencies etc, in a variety of ways.

37. Although government has sought to clarify that Prevent is not about targeting Muslim communities, funding is approved for those targeting Muslim communities and predominantly for those groups that are Muslim led (this policy has been amended as of September 2009). Some community groups have used the opportunity to embrace PVE not out of conviction for meeting PVE aims, but because they feel that years of under-funding for their communities and groups justifies an opportunity to right this wrong.

38. Some community groups equate project monitoring with intelligence gathering by the authorities as the role of the police is visible both in terms of their presence on key strategic bodies as well as visibility of uniform.

Memorandum from Dr H A Hellyer (PVE 69)

INTRODUCTION

The author was appointed by Her Majesty's Government (HMG) to be Deputy Convenor of the Working Group on "Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation" of the "Preventing Extremism Together" Working Groups (PET) in August 2005.

- An academic at the University of Warwick and founder of a research consultancy on Muslim world—West relations (the Visionary Consultants Group (www.visionaryconsultantsgroup.com), he has been associated with think tanks in the US and the UK on issues pertaining to counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation, including the Brookings Institution & the International Institute of Strategic Studies.
- He has provided expert advice to different departments within the UK and US governments, including the Department of Homeland Security (US), the Home Office (UK), the Department of Communities and Local Government (UK), and in 2007–08 was ESRC Placement Fellow at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as an independent Warwick University academic looking at Muslim European communities.

SUMMARY

1. Assessing the PREVENT agenda is difficult, as over the past four years the "aims and goals" have been redefined several times.
2. It is vital that the civil service be concerned foremost with effectiveness and accountability—not ideological agreement.
3. The diversity of the Muslim British community must be recognized, with these problems being viewed as challenges facing British society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Take steps to assess PREVENT's success beyond DCLG—other government departments must be investigated.
- II. Recognise that PREVENT is in danger of being considered a part of PURSUE, and take steps to remedy.
- III. Make a clear distinction between PREVENT work, and the integration/community cohesion/common values discussion.
- IV. Violent extremism remains a threat; it is motivated by a variety of factors, and HMG, in partnership with all our communities, must tackle each of those factors.
- V. HMG must make clear that it has no desire to engage in "religious engineering" by promoting certain groups over others owing to their support of HMG policies. If such groups break the law, they are held to account like everyone else—but state—community engagement activity should not be done with the aim of inducing "reformation" or other such ill-advised notions. This is not the role of the British state.
- VI. Lobby groups or representative bodies should be dealt with on the basis of effectiveness—if they are able to induce positive change for the public good (good governance, increased capacity, and so forth), they should be assisted through the same processes as any other community group or NGO.
- VII. HMG must re-evaluate how it deals with newly created experts, who may have no background in these issues. Bad expertise is often worse than no expertise.
- VIII. HMG must create new ways to liaise with the professional academic community, and professional expertise in order to benefit from their expertise, on the basis of their knowledge.
- IX. HMG must take steps to re-professionalise how the civil service deals with all non-HMG actors, and investigate any claims of cronyism or unjustified preferential treatment.
- X. HMG must also be careful about considering specific gate-keepers into the Muslim community as "the" gate-keepers, and be aware that the large majority of the Muslim community are very localised, and outside the realm of national organisations.
- XI. Current PREVENT initiatives that are in the public interest, but are more appropriately part of the community cohesion agenda, should be funded separately from PREVENT.
- XII. All PREVENT initiatives that can be self-sustaining should be encouraged to be so, and provided

Introductory remarks

1. Post-7 July, HMG had a clear opportunity to win the total support of Muslim communities in a counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation effort.
2. This was a lost opportunity. While many parts of HMG used PREVENT as a way to continue the good work they were doing pre-7 July, the PREVENT agenda has become discredited, for huge numbers of the Muslim British community—its main target audience.

3. This is the case not only in the UK but beyond—PREVENT is not simply a DCLG affair, but also falls within the purview of other government departments and ministries, particularly the Foreign Office.

Recommendation: Take steps to assess and evaluate PREVENT's success beyond DCLG other government departments must be investigated.

Overall perception and credibility

4. PREVENT has a number of different focal points—some of which are properly left within DCLG, but whereas others belong solely to the security services.

5. Many around the country and internationally perceive PREVENT to be part and parcel of one large security apparatus that stigmatises and problematises Muslim communities entirely as a security risk. In this regard, PREVENT is in danger of being considered “‘PURSUE’ in sheep’s clothing”.

6. This increases anti-Muslim sentiment (commonly referred to as “Islamophobia”) across the country, and may in part be why the British National Party’s vitriolic discourse against Islam and Muslims has become so acceptable to large numbers of the wider British public.

7. PREVENT has also suffered by poor explanation to and reception by some of the tabloid media.

8. This is most vividly evident in the recent media coverage that claimed PREVENT was being used to conduct espionage; the perception alone is damning (and was strengthened by the moral validation of such a perception by a PREVENT funded lobby group).

Recommendation: Recognise that PREVENT is in danger of being considered a part of PURSUE, and take steps to remedy.

Recommendation: Make a clear distinction between all PREVENT work, and the integration/community cohesion/common values discussion.

Violent Extremism

9. Violent extremism is still a reality and a threat to this country, our European neighbours, and perhaps most of all, the Muslim world.

10. It is important that a strategy exists from HMG to empower Muslim communities, whether domestically or internationally, to take the “battle of ideas” to violent extremists.

11. This should be done with important caveats. Firstly: it is rarely strictly religious motives that are the main source of violent extremism: it is usually more through a combination of social and political circumstances. PREVENT runs the risk of ignoring such individuals, at the peril of our national security.

12. Nevertheless, there remain a select & small group of violent extremists who are directly influenced by a radical theology that justifies violent extremism—that radical theology must also be counteracted through a “battle of ideas”.

Recommendation: Pay attention to the fact that violent extremism remains a threat, that it is motivated by a variety of factors, and that HMG, in partnership with all our communities, must tackle each of those factors accordingly.

“Religious engineering” and the “pseudo representational model”

13. The second caveat: HMG is not in the business of dictating what is or what is not religion—such dogmas are left to religious communities themselves, within the confines of British law.

14. Nevertheless, it has become widely perceived that HMG is engaging in “religious engineering” through remote proxies that are perceived to be “more true” or “more British”. The perception is that these “more true” or “more British” interpretations of religious dogmas are thus so due to their being ideologically more in tune with HMG policies, by being liberal/conservative/non-radical/etc.

15. The pseudo-representational model of pre-7 July, where one Muslim community organisation was deemed to be the sole and legitimate representative of the entire Muslim British community, quickly came to an end after the 7 July bombings. In one respect, this is positive, for no one organisation could not hope to represent all Muslims in the UK.

16. However, PREVENT also led to HMG dealing with a plethora of other organisations that were even less representative. The initial intention notwithstanding, this led to a suspicion that HMG was engaged in unwarranted “religious engineering” within Muslim British communities—supporting other non-violent voices over others, despite having no competency to do so.

17. HMG must make absolutely clear that it neither seeks, nor already has, any role whatsoever in engaging in “religious engineering”. As long as they do not break any law of the land, any religious interpretation is tolerable within British society.

18. The funding of any activities of any of these groups must not be perceived to be the result of HMG favoritism due to their being perceived as more pro-HMG, domestically or internationally. HMG must make very clear its non-interest in encouraging certain types of legal religiosity over others, owing to a perceived synergy of ideology—whether Sufi over Salafi, Salafi over Sufi, Sunni over Shi’i, Barelwi over Deobandi and so forth.

19. Community organisations and lobby groups should be engaged with on the basis of effectiveness, not on the basis of media attention. Politicians should be also very careful before characterising organisations they may like as laudable without giving due thought to how such organisations are actually perceived on the ground.

20. Community lobby groups and representative bodies are important to deal with—and they should all be dealt with, as long as they have broken no law. Nevertheless, the bottom line must be—how effective are they in creating change in particular communities on the ground?

21. Where faith groups are actively involved in counteracting practices or ideas that are illegal according to British law, such activities should be vigorously supported through PREVENT funds *if and only if* they are shown to have sufficient grounding within the community they intend to influence. Other activities conducive to the public good, should also be funded but not through PREVENT.

22. In this regard, HMG would be empowering communities to counter-act illegal groupings; but HMG has not been consistent in its testing the grounding of all activities it supports within the Muslim British community through PREVENT. This has led to further claims of “religious engineering”, as unqualified and non-rooted actors are empowered far beyond their ability to influence.

Recommendation: HMG must make it clear that it has no desire to engage in “religious engineering” by promoting certain groups over others owing to their support of HMG policies. If such groups break the law, they are held to account like everyone else—but state-community engagement activity should not be done with the aim of inducing “reformation” or other such ill-advised notions. This is not the role of the British state.

Recommendation: Lobby groups or representative bodies should be dealt with on the basis of effectiveness—if they are able to induce positive change for the public good (good governance, increased capacity, and so forth), they should be assisted through the same processes as any other community group or NGO.

“Religious engineering” and the “pseudo-expert model”

23. HMG has taken the step of privileging certain non-representational organisations or individuals over others to further its replacement of the “pseudo-representational model”. Unfortunately, such organisations or individuals have not always been vetted through objective avenues, and a widely held perception is that they have been so privileged (often with funding) owing to their popularity, rather than their (pseudo-) expertise.

24. The media is partly responsible for creating a pseudo-background for many of these cases, but politicians and all actors relating to PREVENT need to take responsibility for this state of affairs, where overnight, previously unknown individuals or groups become “experts”.

25. HMG’s terminology in describing the problematic groups within Muslim communities has a troubled background, and often, much confusion could have been avoided by relying less on ideologically based “think-tanks” and more on professional expertise.

26. In this regard, the Economic and Social Research Council’s efforts in arranging placements for members of academia to go into HMG departments and HMG officials to enter university departments on secondments (through the Knowledge Transfer program) is a good example of a model that should be replicated.

27. PREVENT’s first major initiative could be considered to be the formulation of the seven working groups set up after 7 July. The proposals and recommendations from those groups have generally been ignored. Moreover, by and large, members of those groups, many of whom were career professionals in the areas most directly needed by HMG, were not invited to contribute to what became the PREVENT agenda. Instead, a new set of gate-keepers emerged in this regard.

Recommendation: HMG must re-evaluate how it deals with newly created experts, who may have no background in these issues. Bad expertise is often worse than no expertise.

Recommendation: HMG must create new ways to liaise with the academic community, and professional expertise in order to benefit from their expertise, on the basis of their knowledge; not on the basis of their friendly attitude towards the powers that be.

PREVENT'S gatekeepers

28. One destructive side effect of the PREVENT agenda is the creation of “gate-keepers” between HMG and Muslim communities. These “gate-keepers” are to be found on a national level and international level, within HMG itself, and might be Muslim or non-Muslim.

29. The creation of such “gate-keepers” has meant that rather than a professional civil service being called upon to deal with such issues, with the neutrality and objectivity that represents, we often have individuals who may have particularly narrow political agendas involved. Such individuals may promote their own notions, without oversight, and use their positions as “gate-keepers” to award, or indeed punish non-HMG partners. Such actions may be as insignificant as invitations to HMG events or forums, or as significant as participation in HMG-funded initiatives. This has resulted in a degradation of how professional civil servants are meant to conduct themselves, and is potentially conducive to corruption and opportunism.

30. “Gate-keepers” also act within the Muslim community. HMG has to resist the temptation to cut corners, by referring to a small and select number of individuals and groups as the equivalent of local tribal leaders.

Recommendation: HMG must take steps to re-professionalise how the civil service deals with all non-HMG actors with regards to PREVENT—whether Muslim or not, and investigate any claims of cronyism or unjustified preferential treatment

Recommendation: HMG must also be careful about considering specific gate-keepers into the Muslim community as “the” gate-keepers, and be aware that the larger majority of the Muslim community are very localized, and outside the realm of national organizations, let alone

Specific issue with credibility: PREVENT's conflation of agendas

31. Although this review is primarily concerned with DCLG, and thus with national affairs, PREVENT also has an international dimension, such as through the Foreign Office abroad.

32. A number of officials have privately expressed reservations as to how their work has had to shift from being carried out in an “engagement prism” to a “PREVENT prism”, domestically and abroad.

33. This has led to rather absurd results—such as arts festivals being funded through “PREVENT” and ensuring that all engagement with Muslim communities domestically is permanently imprinted with a security veneer. At the moment, reports indicate that many community organisations are not accepting PREVENT money for this type of work, owing to the conflation of the “PREVENT” agenda.

34. Abroad, the same sort of reservations can be felt, and in some cases more so. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in late 2007 restructured all its engagement work with Muslim communities abroad (including the appropriately named “Engagement with the Islamic World” unit) to be subsumed under the new department of “Counter-Terrorism”.

35. This has led to many staff refusing to use new HMG-issued business cards that refer to “Counter-Terrorism” or “PREVENT”, and instead using older cards, from pre-“Prevent” days, that are far more neutral, and do not problematise the Muslim communities they are interacting with.

36. The end result of all this means that the Muslim community as a whole is constructed as a “suspect community”. This is fundamentally counter-productive to any counter-radicalisation or counter-terrorism program, and is not what PREVENT was meant to achieve.

Recommendation: HMG must split and distinguish between “engagement” activity, which must continue on a national and international level, and PREVENT activity. Conflating the two sets is counter-productive.

PREVENT's initiatives

37. Grassroots PREVENT initiatives that are in the public interest, but not necessarily directly related to issues of security should continue. We may not see direct consequences of such efforts for some time to come, but in the long run, we would be well advised to consider such initiatives as far better than the mass production of violent, radical discourse.

38. Such initiatives must in the long-run become self-sustaining—and in the meantime, must remain as independent as possible from HMG political interference in order to maintain credibility.

39. But, it must be stated—if the proposed aim of the initiative(s) are for community cohesion, they should be directed through a separate and non-related process, as distinct from counter-terrorism as much as possible.

Recommendation: Current PREVENT initiatives that are in the public interest, but are more appropriately part of the community cohesion agenda, should be funded separately from PREVENT.

Recommendation: All PREVENT initiatives that can be self-sustaining should be encouraged to be so, and provided with training and resources to be so for the long-term.

Memorandum from NAMP (National Association of Muslim Police) (PVE 71)

SUMMARY

The below is a brief outline of National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) submission for the Preventing Violent Extremism enquiry.

Prior to beginning our summary, we take this opportunity in explaining the reason for our delay in making this submission. NAMP was given the opportunity at a late hour and has made attempt to get a submission that will support the overall investigation/enquiry into PREVENT.

It is first real opportunity for us to make a real contribution to any such enquiry and we welcome this opportunity. NAMP has been established since July 2007 and is a Police Officer and Staff based support network, we have some 12 affiliated forces and four in interim phase in England, Wales and Scotland, with a membership of over 2000.

Our objectives include:

- Support Network.
- Increase Trust/Confidence and improve Community Cohesion.
- Recruitment/Retention and Progression.
- Raising Islamic Awareness and dealing with Equality issues such as Islamophobia.

The PREVENT strategy has been with us for sufficient time to enable a methodical review of its delivery and effectiveness. Any such strategy must be subject to review and we welcome this committee's enquiry.

From the outset a very sizeable section of the Muslim Community has shown real concern at the main thrust and inner drive being focused on Islam and Muslims. Whilst there is a clear need to address some under lying concerns within the Muslim Communities. Radicalisation and extremism are not confined to the Muslim Community. Recent examples of acts of Terrorism in Northern Ireland are a testament to this. We have seen a growth of the threat posed by the right wing. This threat takes the form of both political and direct action, direct action has seen the rise of potential of the far right. Recent arrests and indeed the Brixton nail bombings show that there are individuals in other societies that are not in tune with main stream Britain.

The Muslim communities feel a sense of frustration that the institutions that can protect them are not really listening to their concerns. The consultation appears to be a simple tick box exercise with no real interest in solving the real issues affecting us all.

The strategies of PREVENT were historically focused on so called Islamist extremism.

This has subjected the biggest Black and Minority Ethnic community and second biggest faith group in an unprecedented manner, stigmatizing them in the process. It has also arguably isolated them and visibly made them the focus of all our anti Terror actions for a substantial period. The net result may have caused some serious damage to Community Cohesion.

Never before has a community been mapped in a manner and nor will it be, it is frustrating to see this in a country that is a real pillar and example of freedom of expression and choice. Our British system is a model for the world to follow, yet we have embarked on a journey that has put this very core of British values under real threat. This has been echoed from all areas of the globe, the UN in New York to Liberty based in the UK.

The hatred towards Muslims has grown to a level that defies all logic and is an affront to British values. The climate is such that Muslim are subject to daily abuse in a manner that would be ridiculed by Britain, were this to occur any where else. An example of this was the recent BBC programme titled "hate at your door step". This programme gave us an insight at level of abuse faced by many Muslims in Britain on a daily basis.

We must not diminish our British values further by continuing to allow such behavior and policies to continue unchecked.

Institute Race Relations Report SPOOKED by Arun Kundhani listed some key areas of real concern,

The report's key findings are that:

- Prevent-funded voluntary sector organisations and workers in local authorities are becoming increasingly wary of the expectations on them to provide the police with information on young Muslims and their religious and political opinions.
- The atmosphere promoted by Prevent is one in which to make radical criticisms of the government is to risk losing funding and facing isolation as an "extremist", while those organisations which support the government are rewarded.
- Local authorities have been pressured to accept Prevent funding in direct proportion to the numbers of Muslims in their area—in effect, constructing the Muslim population as a "suspect community".
- Prevent decision-making lacks transparency and local accountability.
- Prevent has undermined progressive elements within the earlier community cohesion agenda and absorbed from it those parts which are most problematic.

- The current emphasis of Prevent on depoliticising young people and restricting radical dissent is actually counter-productive because it strengthens the hands of those who say democracy is pointless.

1. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

1.1 There has to be an alternative in dealing with extremism, whether Islamic or Non Islamic. The present PREVENT and CONTEST 2 in seen, perceived and based on so called Islamic Extremist.

1.2 The initiative has been led from the start by issues that included International matters namely Foreign policy, yet this was largely ignored in strategic term's and was only part acknowledged after all the strategies had been devised. The impact of Foreign policy is still not really addressed neither are grievances nor the sense of duplicity and double standards.

1.3 The term does not lend itself well to public acceptability and apart from the negativity that has gained momentum over time; the badge is in serious need of refreshment and change.

1.4 If we are to tackle extremism, our strategy needs to reflect this not just in word, actions but in spirit. We need to be seen to doing and practising what we preach, the old adage of "do as I say and not as I do" needs to disappear if we are to deal with these threats.

1.5 All forms Right Wing, Separatist, so called Islamist, Green issues, Single entity..... need to addressed as opposed to the current PREVENT focus on Islam.

1.6 We need to seriously consider the Prevent agenda sitting within Cohesion and being more acceptable to general Social Cohesion rather than its current Counter Terrorism base. However there may need to be caution of the danger's of this being too politicised if we adapt this format.

1.7 It appears that the whole of the Muslim Communities some 2 million plus is being stigmatized and mapped from start to end, There has never been in any case in history to such effective mapping apart from the Martian era in America pre the second world war.

1.8 It can be argued that there is a connection in the rise of islamophobia and our PREVENT programme as it feeds on the stereo types that the media and some right wing parties promote i.e all Muslims are evil and non trust worthy.

2. *How robust is the Government's analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the "Prevent" programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

2.1 The present PREVENT strategy is based very narrowly in its analysis and root causes, there is no mention of deprivation factors ie Report of TUC re deprivation in Pakistani and Bengali Communities to name one source, discrimination ie anecdotal evidence and EU human Rights report on Discrimination in Europe, whilst this did not include the UK. There is anecdotal evidence to show this is mirrored in the UK in the form of Islamophobia ie Runnymede trust report a challenge for all of us in 1997 and various other reports show this as a daily challenge. There appears to be no strategy to acknowledge nor drive this by the use of a problem solving approach

Our foreign policy appears to be based on established pressure groups and some would say double standards ie Israel's breach of countless United Nations resolutions along with its possession of Nuclear Weapons shows a lack of honest brokering by key players including the UK as all have failed to take any action here but this is contrasted with similar occurrences elsewhere. There appears to be in consistency in our approach to matters such as the lack of any real actions in Gaza in comparison to our rapid action in Iraq and Afghanistan.

2.2 There is concern as to who was consulted and who formed part of the original group that devised our PREVENT strategy. It appears that the usual suspects and those with whom we appear to be comfortable with were part of the so called inner circle.

2.3 All research including that by OSCT from interviews with those convicted of Terrorism acts shows Islam was not and is not a real driver but all our strategy seem to focus on this unevidenced view of Islam being the driver. In fact the research shows that firstly the so called Terrorist have little if any knowledge of Islam and secondly were they to be more islamically aware they may not be susceptible to such deviance or actions.

2.4 Foreign policy and an un even handed approach to world affairs has caused major concern in our communities. Modern society is more knowledgeable of current affairs and has greater access to world news from a variety of sources, spin is not a productive tool in long run ie Current Debate on Rendition, The Iraq enquiry, Abu Garib, . . . etc. Prevent does not really tackle these root causes.

2.5 Terrorism is a complex area for us all and a more thorough research should have been commissioned before any consideration was given to the PREVENT strategy being formulated. There needs to be a clear understanding of what drives people and individuals to break away from so called normal behaviour and take the deviant route to radical or criminal action that we refer to.

3. *How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is—or should be—aimed?*

3.1 There is a perception that Government is comfortable speaking with those who appear to foster and support its own views rather than those that represent the communities, ie Muslim Council of Britain has been politicized and marginalized and is a main stream popular Muslim organisation. This approach is hugely divisive and counter productive particularly when we consider engagement with our communities has to be based on real and not selective engagement.

3.2 The Quilliam Foundation and British Muslim Forum appear to be flavor of the Month, whilst other main stream are ignored and marginalized. There are echoes of what was often said about the Racism problems of the 70's and 80's, who do they really represent? We appear to have ignored the lessons learnt from these dark days.

3.3 Arguable the programme has been restricted in effectiveness although this cannot be truly gauged due to a lack of an effective transparent review of the strategy. There appears to be strong belief that we have not really engaged nor reached the real targets of our objectives.

4. *Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?*

4.1 There appears to be little in terms of evaluation of all the projects and work carried out thus far. Local authorities and partners all have management tools of evaluation; the question is not whether they have the tools and support but more whether there is any real evaluation of delivery based on effectiveness and cost.

4.2 The lack of demographically and representative Muslim perspectives in key areas is of concern and needs to be addressed ie lack of Muslims in key areas of decision making.

4.3 This can be evidenced from Local authority to government as there is little visible representation. Clearly if we all to be part of one community we need to be seen and reflecting our communities demographics (Muslims make up some 3% and some local authorities as high as 15–20%), yet the lack of Muslims is puzzling.

5. *Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?*

5.1 Whilst the projects such as Chanel from Prevent appear to be showing success in terms of referrals and recent take on of some right wing extremism. There is question again about the targeting of the real need. It is debatable whether we are reaching the really hard to reach individuals who may be effected by this thought process.

5.3 There seems too little transparency or evaluations of projects of prevent, hence it is not easy to measure or evidence success. Yet again it is all based around Islam and Conjecture.

5.4 There is concern at the PREVENT agenda and anecdotal evidence show's that sections of the Muslim Communities and the wider community are realigning themselves away from this programme due to the negativity and impact on communities especially Muslim .

5.5 There is concern of the use of comforting partners, organisations that we appear to like. We need to be based more broadly in terms of the main stream Muslim communities, organizations and not be entirely focused on new emerging organizations, specifically those born out of political drive.

6. *Is the Government seeking, and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?*

6.1 There appears to be greater consultation from top down by better inclusion of Muslim's within the process ie Acceptance at OSCT of Muslim Involvement and NAMP being finally included in the ACPO Prevent Board.

6.2 Such attendance is still seen as tokenistic as representatives are vastly outnumbered and hence out voted on any real debate. We need to ensure that whilst the Muslim Communities is not solely responsible for proactive work in reducing extremism, it is effectively represented by the right individuals where the need arises.

6.3 Counter Terrorism units are an example of this disproportionate representation, NAMP in partnership with National Prevent delivery Unit are undertaking a piece of research to look at monitoring staff representation and hopefully work with ACPO on any issues identified.

6.4 The impact and growth of the far right and its ability to carry out Terror acts cannot and should not be under estimated.

7. *How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?*

7.1 As indicated above (4.1, 4.2, 4.3) there is little in terms of critical evaluation of outcomes.

7.2 This needs careful consideration in view of the economic constraints and in effective use of key financial resources during these difficult times.

7.3 The opinion of the Muslim Communities does not appear to be effectively gauged or taken into consideration ie Start of prevent and serious concerns of the community, like Muslim Council of Britain, Muslim Safety Forum on other matters such as Gaza, Gazan Convoy, Protests outside the Israeli Embassy re Gazan siege, Arrest of individual in Manchester in April 2009 and also those most recently in Manchester. There is a perception that the institutions appear to be paying lip service and any concerns or opinion in not really acted upon or considered.

7.4 There is evidence to show that some communities are no longer supportive of prevent and appear to be walking away from the large financial gains due to the negative impact and perceptions ie Most recent cases of arrest in the North.

8. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

8.1 Reports from EU Policing show that the threats faced by EU are predominately from far right and separatist extremism some 70%. The reports also show that there is a real need to re examine our terminology and strategies of prosecution. Namely what is extremism and Terrorism? Evidence shows we deal with so called Islamist extremists as Terrorist, whilst the right wing and separatist are dealt with as extremist hence facing lesser (charges) legal action.

8.2 The biggest haul of weaponry in the UK was from Right Wing Sources.

8.3 We need to ensure our Prevent and Cohesion strategies are based on equality and impact assessed effectively on all our communities, this includes our so called definitions.

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November 2009

Memorandum from the Reading Council for Racial Equality (PVE 72)**BACKGROUND**

The Reading Council for Racial Equality has been dealing with issues of discrimination & racial equality for over forty years. In 2006, RCRE joined with Reading Muslim Council to lead the Reading pathfinder Preventing Violent Extremism project.

The project created the concept of Community Ambassadors. This was based on the belief that the fight against all forms of extremism should be led by Reading people from all sections of the community. People were recruited and briefed about the subject and asked to lead debates in the local community.

Two unpaid co-ordinators, Mustafa Chaudhary (Reading Muslim Council) and Rajinder Sohpal (Director, RCRE) led the work with the pilot project working through a partnership called Reading Forum Against Extremism.

In 2007–8, Reading Borough Council were awarded the funding of £80,000. Mr Mustafa Chaudhary was employed as the project co-ordinator, the main theme being to work with Higher & Further Education establishments. At this stage, the local branch of the Hzb-Ut-Tahrir began to openly oppose and disrupt the work. This was done through the formation of the “Reading PVE Crisis Group”. The initiative has been strongly led by the Reading Muslim Council and Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Given that Project Coordinator originated from the RMC, it seems that the project itself was effectively disrupted through a conflict of interests. The RCRE published the results of its own work during the year (funded largely by the EHRC and some supplementary support from the PVE programme), but no final report seems to have been published for the main project.

When the funding for 2008–11 was announced by the Government, the Council continued to consult and invite ideas for future work. RCRE submitted formal proposals and it is stated that the RMC submitted informal proposals for taking the lead on implementing NI35. As the latter has never been documented, it is difficult to presume what the actual proposed idea consisted of.

The Council adopted an approach of encouraging communities to put forward project ideas. Many organisations have put forward projects and some have been funded. Even at the time of writing, the available budget has not been fully allocated and further ideas are being developed in the community.

However, the PVE Crisis group and RMC adopted a strong position against Contest 2 and the NI35 indicator. This reached a height when questions were submitted to a council meeting held on the 23 June 2009. There is evidence of bullying and intimidation by these opponents, against Muslim organisations and individuals who have shown interest in engaging. People have been told that the PVE funding money is “haraam” and should not be used by Muslims.

The RCRE assessment of the rather confused situation is as follows. The Hzb-Ut-Tahrir seem to hold a position of fundamental opposition to PVE work. The RMC, on the other hand, seem to have adopted their position of opposition on grounds of their failure to secure control over the whole of the budget.

CURRENT POSITION

To date the Hzb-Ut-Tahrir in partnership with Reading Muslim Council lead a prominent and successfully campaign to run a smear the PVE work in Reading. This smear has included scare-stories that the PVE work will mean Muslim children will be interrogated by the police, Mosques will be spied upon, Islam is under threat of being distorted etc. A further summary of the objections mainly with the national PVE policy can be found in a letter dated 27 October 2008 on the PVE crisis group. The Group seems happy to use the names of organisations without their permission to convey an image of respectability. For example, the Pakistan Community Centre and the BASIAN organisations are reported as signatories to oppose PVE work, but are in fact running PVE projects.

The recent so-called study funded by the Rowntree Trust was supposed to consult with people working on PVE projects but in fact managed to speak to known opponents in RMC.

RCRE PROJECTS

RCRE are running two main projects, Community Awareness and Women against extremism network. We also have an active interest in the Faith project with the local Pakistan Community Centre. We welcome debate. All three of these projects are cross-community and not specifically one community. Our view is that the problems we face in Reading are especially from the far right extremism. We are also concerned that there

is inadequate engagement in decision making from some sections of the community, notably women. Our work aims to positively address these by working with all sections of the community. None of the projects “stigmatise” or alienate the Muslim community, but this is a regular criticism from opponents.

QA. *Is the Prevent programme the right way of addressing the problem of violent extremism, or are there better ways of doing it?*

No.

The problem lies with the way in which the programme has been rolled out. There are three big concerns but lots of small ones.

Firstly, early inflammatory speeches from the then Prime Minister, Mr Blair and former President Bush linking Islam with terrorism have been the founding blocks for these programmes. Whilst Government now has changed its approach, for many, the links to those anti-Muslim sentiments will always make this work wrong. The way the money was allocated on the basis of the numbers of Muslims living in a Council area. This tends to reinforce the racist ideology from the two former leaders.

Second, the fact that there is a problem of extremism from the far right was largely ignored in the early days of this work.

The two points combined have caused three major problems on the ground:

- The approach has focussed the attention of many on just Muslim communities, both causing a feeling of injustice for ordinary peace-loving Muslims.
- It has given legitimacy to and a “free-run” to racists.
- It the approach has given reason for extremists, like the Hzb-Ut-Tahrir material to persuade ordinary Muslims that the world is against them.

Thirdly, the link with what the Police are doing with their PVE work has been unhelpful. Whilst only a few challenge the role of the police in PVE work, no one is happy to see community projects linked to the work of the police. The creation of Prevent Officers working in the police service does nothing but confuse our work. Some (deliberately) see not distinction between the Police PVE work and community work. This leads to community projects being accused of being police spies. Some in Reading have promoted the idea that Prevent is actually Pursue.

Locally in Reading, we have not followed the national restricted approach, we have been more inclusive. However, the critics have used the above to undermine our work.

1. We would welcome Prevent being separated from the PVE agenda of the Police so as to save confusion on whose role is that of engaging, enforcing, community cohesion and so forth.
2. Prevent should be a functional part of the overall policy but the views of the Muslim community and opposition to NI35 and Contest 2 should be addressed in order to move forward with the Muslim community and make Preventing Violent Extremism the responsibility of all races, faiths and cultures not just one community.
3. A fundamental change to the national policy is required as we have suffered with significant progress and do not know the long term affects of rebuilding important community relations because of the current national policy.
4. We would like Prevent funding to explicitly include far right groups who have recently had an increasing influence locally and nationally.
5. The wider cohesion and engagement work should be sustainable.
6. We would support independent research analysis in looking for additional or alternative approaches to tackle extremism among all communities rather than focusing on one community.

QB. *How robust is the Government’s analysis of the factors which lead people to become involved in violent extremism? Is the “Prevent” programme appropriately targeted to address the most important of those factors?*

Not robust at all

The origins of the programme are locked into misguided and racist ideology from some former world leaders, rather than on analysis.

1. We have found many arguments such as foreign policy, social deprivation, lack of belonging, etc. There is no evidence that these lead people to violent extremism in themselves. What seems important is that decision makers are listening and sensitive to concerns.
2. Our local, albeit anecdotal work in the community suggest that there is a real fear of causing offence by airing views and feelings. To such an extent that people who might think they have extremist ideas will only talk amongst people with similar ideas. This makes impossible any correction and tend to reinforce stereotypes. More needs to be done to encourage open constructive dialogue.

3. Part of our work has involved capacity building, networking and empowerment to local women so they actively get involved within the community. Women play a vital role in the community and in families and perhaps there needs to be more investment in education, women being placed in work and having platforms to speak openly.

QC. How appropriate, and how effective, is the Government's strategy for engaging with communities? Has the Government been speaking to the right people? Has its programme reached those at whom it is — or should be—aimed?

At the national level, we feel that there has been a knee-jerk reaction to bring in so-called leaders, almost to a point of desperation. In many cases, there has been a willingness to take high risks with unknown quantities rather than to call on long-established structures of "representation". The idea of "representation" itself is flawed. The focus has been on the Muslim community and there is little track record of recognised representation at the national level because there are no such structures within the faith. We feel that the emphasis should be on what people can offer and their commitment.

In Reading,

1. In Reading there are many different complex tensions between community organisations and statutory bodies. Owing to the well organised disruption and smear campaigns it has been difficult to reach all sections of the community.

2. We have found it easy adopting engaging with a cross-section of the community. Disruption has been made difficult but not impossible to connect with Muslims.

QD. Is the necessary advice and expertise available to local authorities on how to implement and evaluate the programme?

Not sure.

1. This work has been a challenge and it is fair to say that we have all been learning together and even the formal structures (Regional Government offices, Police etc) have not always had answers to difficult questions.

2. Discussions are held with the local authority at Management meetings but advice ought to be taken on board from our organisation as we have experience and an unparalleled expertise in a rapidly changing Prevent environment from a community perspective.

3. The most important resource has been local knowledge and connections.

QE. Are the objectives of the "Prevent" agenda being communicated effectively to those at whom it is aimed?

1. The communication has been a key weakness. Nationally, the message that the current threat is from AlQaeda has been swamped with statements about the Muslim community.

2. Locally, this has caused confusion and sent out wrong messages to the community and helped opponents. This would be appropriately addressed from central government with clear guidelines on what should be communicated.

3. Concerns regarding spying, possible detention of young people etc have not been addressed adequately. Instead, close association of the community projects with the Thames Valley Police, Prevent Engagement has further such allegations.

4. The correct values of transparency, honesty, integrity etc have not been respected by those who wish to disrupt. Under these circumstances, the Uniting Reading will always be on the back-foot.

QF. Is the Government seeking and obtaining, appropriate advice on how to achieve the goals of the "Prevent" programme?

We support the idea that the Government and local authorities should listen to as many voices as possible and especially including those who are not funded. At the same time, there needs to be awareness of the fact that some should very loud and are not necessarily a representative voice.

QG. How effectively has the Government evaluated the effectiveness of the programme and the value for money which is being obtained from it? Have reactions to the programme been adequately gauged?

1. At present it would be difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of a programme like this. It requires more time to evaluate any true results as this is a long term effort as well as the programmes objectives being changed since its inception in Reading.

2. Reactions in our local authority have not been adequately gauged, which may or may not have contributed to those who had been supportive or willing to discuss the project having a perception that they are not being consulted with regarding their issues towards the programme.

3. This work has led to tensions and divisions within the Reading community as was evident in the run up to the recent elections of the local Pakistan Community Centre. Prevent was made a key issue against the existing committee Part of the election campaign included references to the PVE agenda accusing the

present committee of signing up Prevent without consulting the community. One of the statements read “*They have shockingly inferred in their own election campaign publicity that they will be monitoring our community! On whose orders are they spying on us, the community? At what price have they sold us, the community they are supposed to represent? Do they even understand what PVE is all about? Have they (can they!) even read the policy documents NI35 and Contest 2 and realise the implications.* (The Opposition Pakistan Community Centre Election Team, 2009)

QH. *Is there adequate differentiation between what should be achieved through the Prevent programme and the priorities that concern related, but distinct, policy frameworks such as cohesion and integration?*

1. No, and in our view, the desire to have such a distinction is erroneous and based on funding audits rather than the business end. A good quality community cohesion must be key to success, and would have more support in the community. It is a pity that better ways cannot be found to increase accountability.

2. The national strategy has harmed our local work and provided groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir with a cause. Currently such organisations are getting a good foothold in the community with scare-stories about “stigmatising”, “spying” etc. A wider community cohesion approach would enable communities to come together more easily.

ISBN 978-0-215-54546-6



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