

Preventing Violent Extremism

An Independent Evaluation of the Birmingham Pathfinder





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About Waterhouse Consulting Group



Waterhouse Consulting Group is an independent consulting firm providing services in management consulting, diversity and research and talent management.

It's Muslim Community Engagement Division provides specialist services and expertise in *learning and development* (e.g. training and coaching to frontline staff and elected members in local government, 'train the trainer' courses, Imam and Mosque capacity-building training); *research, consultation and facilitation* (e.g. research and community mapping exercises, consultation with hard to reach groups and facilitation of dialogue); *leadership development* (e.g. women, young people, Imam and community leadership programmes); and, *communication and events* (e.g. Islam awareness roadshows, advertising, exhibitions/conferences and corporate event management).

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This evaluation would not have been possible without the help and support of many people and, in particular, we would like to thank all those people listed in Appendix 2 and the many young people who formed the Success Clubs and associated youth projects.



Foreword



Cllr Alan Rudge
Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources
Birmingham City Council



As Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources at Birmingham City Council I feel privileged to hold a portfolio that's important to us all.

Equalities is not just about bringing the necessary behaviour and cultural change in an organisation or enabling policies and services to be developed in ways that result in better outcomes for everyone in our society but also about building strong, cohesive communities, which against the backdrop of persistent threats from extremism, community tension and conflict becomes even more important.

I am determined to work towards creating a society where everyone has an equal chance to live and work without the fear of harassment, insecurity and violence.

I am proud to live in a great city which is diverse and vibrant. A city that is welcoming of all faiths and those that have none. At the same time, I also share my sadness with the majority of our population, particularly the mainstream Muslim communities who feel that a tiny number of people are distorting the peaceful religion of Islam and using it to propagate violence and extremism.

Over the past year or so I have worked with our communities particularly the Muslim communities at all levels: Imams, Mosques, Madaaris, young people, women and our partners including the media, in supporting mainstream voices and building community resilience against violent extremism.

I have also worked with particularly, the mainstream Muslim community to ensure that the projects we have been delivering is consistent with their view of what needs to be done. I am, therefore, grateful to organisations such as the Pakistan Community Development Network, Bangladeshi Council, Somali Council, Yemeni Association, Baran Development Association, Central Mosque, Ghamkol Sharif Mosque, Sultan Bahu Trust, Green Lane Mosque and many others who have provided valuable suggestions and support on how this agenda could be both strengthened and achieved.



This independent review documents our work over the past year in building community resilience to violent extremism. I welcome this review and look forward to implementing its recommendations for the benefit of all in our society.



I know that last year was a pilot year for the Preventing Violent Extremism work but I am encouraged with the support of everyone in our city in making the projects a success. There are great challenges ahead and I know that with your continued support we can not only build community resilience against violent extremism but a society which is safe, inclusive and cohesive for all.



Cllr Alan Rudge



Contents



	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Foreword by Cllr Alan Rudge	3
1. Executive Summary	6
2. Research Methodology	14
3. Introduction	15
4. Muslims in Birmingham: Migration, Community and Socio-Economic Position	17
5. Preventing Violent Extremism – the Central Government Approach	23
6. Review Summary of Birmingham Projects	25
7. Tracking Progress and Evaluating Success	34
8. The Government’s N I: 35 Assessment Framework	35
9. Performance of Birmingham against N I: 35	39
10. Conclusions & Key Findings	42
11. Glossary of Abbreviations & Terms	48
12. Appendix 1: Project Management Board	49
13. Appendix 2: List of Respondents Interviewed	50
14. References	51



1. Executive Summary

- (1) The Local Government White Paper made clear that Preventing Violent Extremism is a major concern for local authorities. The Government's strategy, therefore, supports local authorities to tackle violent extremism at the local area level, focusing on those localities facing the greatest challenges. The strategy aims to build upon what the local authorities most experienced in this area are already doing in relation to community cohesion and inter-faith relations, thereby encouraging others to follow their lead; listening to their communities, working with schools and mosques, and in forging partnerships between police, community and faith groups.
- (2) On 7 February 2007, the Communities & Local Government (CLG) Department published the *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note* which set out the conditions in making available £5 million to support *priority* local authorities in their work to tackle violent extremism in their communities. Birmingham City Council received a funding of £525k.
- (3) The strategic objectives of the Government's Pathfinder Fund were to develop a community in which Muslims in Britain:
 - (1) identify themselves as a welcome part of a wider British society and are accepted as such by the wider community;
 - (2) reject violent extremist ideology and actively condemn violent extremism;
 - (3) isolate violent extremist activity, support and co-operate with the police and security services; and,
 - (4) develop their own capacity to deal with problems where they arise, supporting diversionary activity for those at risk.
- (4) Waterhouse Consulting Group was commissioned by Birmingham City Council to carry out an independent review of Birmingham's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Pathfinder Projects (2007-2008) in April 2008.
- (5) The aims of the independent evaluation were to examine; first, whether the Birmingham Pathfinder has been effective in relation to the Government's National Indicators 35 *Building Resilience to Violent Extremism*; second, to explore the views of those people delivering the local PVE projects as well as a sample of those participating in such projects. Finally, to make recommendations for future work in this area.
- (6) In this first year of funding (2007-2008) Birmingham carefully focused on key activities in areas of greatest need. This ensured that best practice could be developed on which to build future



programmes of action, rather than spreading resources too thinly, both geographically and across different activities.

7. Muslims in Birmingham account for 14.3 per cent of the city's population (140,000) out of a total population of one million, with Pakistanis numbering just over 104,000 (74% of Muslims in Birmingham)¹. Although it is the seventh highest Muslim population as a proportion of a British city, it is twice as large as the single highest concentration of Muslims outside of London. In April 2001, nine per cent of all 1.6 million British Muslims in the UK and 16 per cent of Britain's entire Pakistani population of 658,000 were found to be in the city of Birmingham (ONS 2005). Birmingham is also home to many other Muslim ethnicities and cultures, including Eastern European, North African and Middle Eastern. Muslims in Birmingham comprise one of the most diverse sets of people in the country outside of London.
8. Out of the funding of £525k received from CLG, Birmingham City Council PVE Projects Board chaired by Cllr Alan Rudge approved a total of eleven local projects during 2007-2008 to help build the capacity and resilience of Muslim communities in their efforts to tackle violent extremism.
9. These projects were determined under five major themes which came out of a community consultation meeting chaired by Cllr Alan Rudge on 1st February 2007 at the Council Chamber – *Reclaiming Islam, Media, Women, Young People and Cross-Cutting Projects*. At the time of writing not all the projects had been completed but we have nevertheless attempted to explore their effectiveness in relation to the NI 35 measures.
10. The eleven Birmingham funded projects were:

(1) Theme One: Reclaiming Islam

Project 1: Islamic Schools, Madaaris and Supplementary Schools

Project 2: Governance of Mosques

Project 3: Young Muslim Leadership

Project 4: Supporting Imam Training

(2) Theme Two: Media

Project 5: Media Skills Workshop

Project 6: Positive Resource Project

¹ see 2001 Census



(3) Theme Three: Women

Project 7: Women's Steering Group



(4) Theme Four: Young people

Project 8: Success Clubs

Project 9: Study Circles

Project 10: Journey of the Soul



(5) Theme Five: Cross-Cutting Projects

Project 11: Know Your Client – Muslims in Birmingham

- (11) Birmingham has fared well in relation to the N1 35 measures. The table below provides the breakdown of how Birmingham has performed based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.

NI: 35 Assessment Framework	Score
<p><i>Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities consulted e.g. community engagement meetings on 1st and 20th February 2007, a conference with leading Muslim scholars in March 2007, community launch of the PVE Pathfinder projects in September 2007. • More than basic knowledge of the Muslim community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team knowledge = Prevent Team made up of highly qualified and experienced senior Muslim professionals e.g. the Head of the Prevent Team was also the Head of Youth Division at the Council. - Corporate knowledge = Birmingham City Council has good grasp of Muslim communities and understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities with a number of elected Members, community engagement forums and 'issue specific' groups e.g. the Community Cohesion Forum chaired by the Chief Executive. • Size and diversity of the Muslim communities in Birmingham is significant and complex. • Evidence of strong support by the Cabinet Member for Equalities but more work needs to be done with other elected Members. 	<p>2.5</p>



<p><i>Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the Prevent objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear demonstration of understanding of the Prevent agenda e.g. individual demonstration and leadership (Head of Equality and Diversity supporting the Prevent Agenda). • Clear understanding of the drivers and causes of extremism via projects such as Study Circles, Success Clubs, etc. • Knowledge and understanding of the Prevent objectives e.g. clear & robust Pathfinder Strategy. 	3
<p><i>Development of a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the Prevent objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan for Pathfinder. • Action Plan for 2008-11 (under development). 	2
<p><i>Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal monitoring of Pathfinder Projects (by BCC). • Assessments by Lord Patel, HMIC and the Audit Commission. • Independent review by Waterhouse Consulting Group. • Clearer audit arrangements have been put in place. • Governance structures have been improved. • Secondment of personnel to help strengthen project management. 	2.5
<p>Overall Score</p>	2.5

- (12) Based on our review and the evidence we have seen we would recommend a baseline score of 2.5 as a reliable overall score for Birmingham.
- (13) Achieving a higher score would not be too difficult for Birmingham considering the programme of work and types of projects being delivered and considered by the Council. With better governance structures, improved communication across partners, increased community involvement and consultation, a clearer and effective action plan (all of which are being developed) would all lead to Birmingham achieving at least a score of 3-3.5 by the end of 2008-2009. This assessment framework provides an initial overall evaluation of where Birmingham City Council is in relation to understanding, delivery and governance.



- (14) Having worked through the framework it would be difficult to find another authority that would achieve a higher score without the kind of projects and learning that Birmingham has developed during the Pathfinder year and the successes already being enjoyed by some of its Pathfinder projects.



- (15) Coverage in terms of reflecting the diversity of Muslim ethnicities and different schools of thoughts in Birmingham has been excellent, with Pakistani, Kashmiri, Indian, Bengali, Yemeni and Somali communities reflected in programmes and initiatives. Furthermore, genuine advances have been made in relation to building relations *between* Mosques, Imams, Women and young people that can only continue to be strengthened.



- (16) However, management and delivery of programmes require a more dedicated centralised system to ensure better synergy between projects and effective communications between project partners. There is no doubt that the Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda will continue to remain prominent on the domestic political agenda, and the experiences of Birmingham can effectively provide important lessons for the rest of the country.

- (17) Birmingham has focused on the correct areas of work during its Pathfinder phase. For Central Government and local authorities still closely determining how to understand and deal with the problems of building community resilience against violent extremism, the experience of Birmingham is eminently useful.

- (18) The Birmingham Pathfinder projects have impacted positively on their participants with the potential to make a real impact in the future on the life of the whole community. However, it was not plain sailing for Birmingham. At the outset, Birmingham City Council has had to grapple with the term *Preventing Violent Extremism* as this was seen by many Muslim community members and some stakeholders as insulting, provocative and labeling those that who had or have nothing to do violent extremism.

Key Findings

- (19) Our review of each of the Birmingham Pathfinder projects has highlighted some strong areas that have the potential to make some real impact on building the resilience of the whole Muslim community. We would recommend that Birmingham takes into account these in determining its future priorities and its programme of PVE work (for further details please see our review of each Birmingham Pathfinder project).



- (20) There is an urgent need to help Imams ‘reconnect’ with young people. Imams are best placed to provide the theological leadership but are not always able to convey their arguments to those most vulnerable to violent extremists because of either language barriers or cultural differences (most Imams are not ‘home grown’ hence lack the cultural understanding necessary to effectively engage and communicate with young people). There is, therefore, a key role for Birmingham in providing support and encouragement in the development of robust ‘religious leadership’ capable of engaging effectively with all members of Muslim communities and the wider society.



- (21) Women play a vital role in shaping society in general and influencing men and young people in their communities. It is critical for their voices to be empowered, heard and strengthened through leadership training, breaking down community barriers and involvement in local decision making processes. There are many reports that now highlight the plight of Muslim women in the UK. Muslim women face a ‘triple-whammy’ from their negative portrayal in the wider society (via the media), the negative and unsupportive ‘cultural’ attitudes of their local communities and discrimination in the wider society because of their gender and ethnicity.

These areas of work needs to be robustly supported in the next round of PVE funding, and broadened to cover all key aspects facing the life of Muslim women in Birmingham. Whilst it is fully appreciated that this was part of the Pathfinder initiative to learn lessons for future programmes this was a drop in the ocean compared with the good practice that could be carried out across the city.

- (22) Media plays a huge role in people’s lives. ‘Negative’ voices and stories make headlines even though they are not representative of majority mainstream Muslim community views. It is important to bear in mind that there is a huge deficit amongst certain ethnic groups, particularly Muslim communities in having the capacity, confidence and skills to not only counter-act these false theological notions but effectively use the media or the correct medium in doing so. Birmingham, therefore, must consider in its future PVE programme projects that would help to alleviate this deficit and build the capacity, confidence and skills of key mainstream voices.
- (23) Central Government and local authorities must understand the extent of the deep anger and concern amongst Muslims at grassroots level over the linkage of violent extremism with Islam. This has so far helped to demonise and vilify Muslims in a climate where Islamophobia is already heightened. Here, the sentiments of the then Minister for International Development, Shahid Malik MP struck a



chord with many people who in an interview for the *Dispatches* programme for Channel 4, said:

“I think most people would agree that if you ask Muslims today what do they feel like, they feel like the Jews of Europe”.

“Somewhere there’s message out there that it’s OK to target people as long as its Muslims. And you don’t have to worry about the facts, and people will turn a blind eye (Dispatches, Channel Four, Monday 7 July 2008).

- (24) Our review also encountered some strong views from many respondents that PVE funding is driving attention away from the real causes of extremism, which are the Government’s foreign policy that is anti-Muslim e.g. support of Israel (which is perceived to be ‘racist’ and causing a ‘holocaust’ in Palestine) and treatment and exploitation of Muslims in other countries by the US and UK.
- (25) A number of respondents felt that the police and security services were watching their every move due to the focus on the Muslim community and, therefore, felt ‘imprisoned’ in their own city because they felt they had to watch their every step e.g. what they uttered, the clothes they wore, the people they associated with and the Mosques they attended.
- (26) Local authorities and partners must take into account that there is both a suspicion and anxiety of police and security service involvement in the local Prevent programmes aimed at building Muslim community resilience against violent extremism. This, therefore, has wider implications on the nature and extent of police and security services involvement in their local Prevent partnerships and the extent of work required to win the confidence of their local Muslim communities. In contrast, however, Birmingham’s Prevent programme has been led by the Cabinet Member for Equalities who, supported by the Head of Equalities, held a number of community engagement meetings including on 1st and 20th February in the Council Chamber; a conference with leading Muslim scholars in March and the launch of the PVE Pathfinder with the Rt. Hon Parmjit Dhanda MP, the then Minister for Community Cohesion at the Burlington Hotel in September 2007.
- (27) The success to winning the support of key influential institutions and figures in Birmingham was by having strong political leadership by the Cabinet Member on Equalities who, supported by senior Muslim officers working on the PVE Pathfinder programme, has been critical in ensuring that the programme was given serious consideration by the Council and its partners. This is seen by communities to be providing broader leadership on this agenda. The Government, local authorities and political parties across the *priority* areas should give great care and consideration to the person specification for the appointment of PVE Leads. An ideal candidate would be someone at



Cabinet level with strong political influence across the council and local partners armed with experience of equalities, communities and cohesion. Qualities of senior officer level support would include sound understanding of Muslim communities, feel for theological issues and clear understanding of issues facing the local communities. However, it must be noted that appointment of senior Muslim officers to support the PVE agenda, although it helps it does not automatically bring wholesale support from the local Muslim communities. Both political and officer level involvement is critical to the success of the local PVE agenda.

- (28) Some local authorities have resorted to delivering their PVE work under the banner of ‘community cohesion’. Our view is that local authorities must be clear that violent extremism will not be addressed by focusing on *community cohesion* as PVE needs both a *targeted approach and theological approach*.
- (29) Our review also suggests that dropping the term ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ and replacing it with a far more acceptable phraseology would also help in attracting greater community involvement and confidence.
- (30) Finally, more work needs to be done to strengthen the understanding and relationship between Muslim communities and local employers, leaders in the business and civic institutions and key people working in the statutory, community and third sector bodies by experimenting with innovative projects such as ‘seeing is believing type events’.



2. Research Methodology



This study comprised an extensive literature review and evaluation of secondary sources, focus groups and interviews to explore the views of those people delivering the local PVE projects as well as a sample of those participating in such projects.



The literature review phase gathered demographic data, background information on the projects, the council and local Muslim communities. The unstructured and structured interviews helped to gain an understanding of views, experiences and perceptions.

In order to test Birmingham's PVE work against the Government's National Indicators 35 *Building Resilience to Violent Extremism* key advisers were used from Government Departments.

The fieldwork for the evaluation was carried out during May and July 2008. The desktop research, initial review plus pre-fieldwork analysis, was carried out during the months of April to June 2008.

We have attempted to capture the views, experiences and perceptions of our respondents in this report. We also reviewed and have summarized each of the eleven Birmingham projects; however, this comes with a couple of caveats. First, we were not commissioned to do an impact assessment of each project and second, we were limited in making any critical or comparative analysis since there is no precedence or sufficient learning upon which to compare each project in this Pathfinder phase across the UK. Our commentary, therefore, has had to be limited. We have, however, attempted to provide an indication, based on what we found, on the value and potential of each project for the next phase of the PVE programme.

We are grateful to all those people listed in Appendix 2 who gave their valuable time to participate in our surveys. Without their help and support this review would not have been possible.

We are particularly grateful for all the help, support and co-operation received from Birmingham City Council, particularly staff from the Equalities Division, in facilitating these interviews and focus groups.



3. Introduction



Waterhouse Consulting Group was commissioned by Birmingham City Council to carry out an independent review of Birmingham's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Pathfinder Projects (2007-2008) in April 2008. The aims of this evaluation were to examine; first, whether the Birmingham Pathfinder has been effective in relation to the Government's National Indicators 35 *Building Resilience to Violent Extremism*; second, to explore the views of those people delivering the local PVE projects as well as a sample of those participating in such projects. Finally, to make recommendations for future work in this area.

On 7 February 2007 the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Department published the *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note* which set out the conditions for making available £5 million to support *priority* local authorities in their work to tackle violent extremism in their communities. Birmingham City Council received a funding of £525k. The strategic objectives of the Government's Pathfinder Fund were to develop a community in which Muslims in our communities:

- (1) Identify themselves as a welcome part of a wider British society and are accepted as such by the wider community.
- (2) Reject violent extremist ideology and actively condemn violent extremism.
- (3) Isolate violent extremist activity, and support and co-operate with the police and security services.
- (4) Develop their own capacity to deal with problems where they arise and support diversionary activity for those at risk.

In this first year of funding (2007-2008) Birmingham carefully focused on key activities in areas of greatest need which came out of consultation meetings initiated by the Cabinet Member for Equalities, Cllr Alan Rudge immediately following the *Operation Gamble* raids. The first consultation meeting took place with all elected members on 31st January 2007 in the Council House. This was followed by a community consultation meeting with key figures across different faiths on 1st February 2007 in the Council Chamber. Projects suggested in these consultations meetings fell under five themes of *Reclaiming Islam, Media, Women, Young People and Cross-Cutting Projects*.

On 20th February 2007 Cllr Alan Rudge hosted a third meeting with elected members and community representatives in the Council Chamber to outline and consult on a number of projects under the five themes that the Council would work to identify appropriate levels of funding. The Equalities Division at Birmingham City Council was tasked to prepare a bid for the specific projects that came out of the community consultations to the Communities & Local Government Department. This was successful and a funding of £525,000 was awarded to Birmingham City Council.



In March 2007 Birmingham City Council in partnership with the British Muslim Forum held a conference with leading Muslim scholars from the Muslim world to communicate more widely to the communities the ideas for building community resilience to violent extremism. Following this, the Council then set out to formally launch the Pathfinder programme and in September 2007 with the support of communities and partners (e.g. West Midlands Police, Government Office, West Midlands), and elected members, it did so at the Burlington Hotel in the presence of the Rt Hon Parmjit Dhanda MP, the then Minister for Community Cohesion.



The Projects Management Board chaired by Cllr Alan Rudge approved the Pathfinder projects and oversaw their implementation (see Appendix 1).



This report is the summary analysis of the independent evaluation of those Projects and should be of interest to other *priority* local authorities across the country engaged with understanding the issues relating to building community resilience to violent extremism. It should also be of considerable interest to central government and other relevant bodies.

This report begins with a description of the origins of Muslim communities in Britain and in Birmingham, providing an overview of migration and socio-demographic patterns. It is followed by an analysis of the PVE strategy, highlighting the nature of approaches taken by central government and the city of Birmingham. Each of the eleven locally funded Birmingham projects are summarised and were tested against the NI 35 measures to give Birmingham an overall score. The views of the PVE project managers and a sample of those that participated in the projects are explored to highlight key issues that must be taken into consideration for future delivery and success of local Prevent programmes. Finally, the report makes key recommendations that emerge from its review.



4. Muslims in Birmingham: migration, community and socio-economic position



Birmingham has rich history of Muslim migration and settlement. In 1941 the first mosque was established to serve the Yemeni community which can be traced back to 1885 in Britain. The Yemen was then part of the British Empire and the first settlers were sailors who had served on British merchant ships or soldiers in the British army. The first Yemenis came to Birmingham in the early twentieth century to find work in the local trades, but industrial decline led to unemployment and many left the UK in the 1970s. The minutes of the Parks Committee July 6, 1942 and interleaved report 8 reveal that a Mrs Mary Amirullah who was acting on behalf of the Muslim community present in Birmingham applied for a Muslim burial ground. In 1942 part of the Lodge Hill Cemetery in Selly Oak was provided for that purpose.

However, it was not until the post-World War II period that witnessed labour shortages and in turn led to the arrival of the majority of present day Muslims, mainly from South Asia. Anwar (1996) found that the type of work available to the new arrivals not only determined incomes but established the areas in which they settled, the schools their children attended, as well as how they interacted with the indigenous population. Housing was in obsolescent condition and better homes were unaffordable – largely because of low incomes and the limited availability of mortgages. In Birmingham, immigrant groups initially settled in the ‘zones of transition’, which were vacated by mobile Britons in ‘white flight’. Subsequently, these areas became more impoverished with new employment created elsewhere and in other economic sectors (Rex and Moore 1967; Owen and Johnson 1996). Currently, minority ethnic and Muslim communities in Birmingham are concentrated in various inner city areas, forming the ‘middle ring’ (Rex and Tomlinson 1979).

The 2001 Census showed that second and third generation South Asians were inclined to live in the same geographical locations as parents. Robinson (1996) argues this to be a function of the youth wishing to continue the religious and cultural traditions of the generation before them as well as a result of negative experiences found in the labour market (cf. PIU 2002).

The religion question was asked for the first time since 1850 in the 2001 Census. Although a voluntary question, ninety-two per cent of the population provided a response. Muslims accounted for 14.3 % of the city’s population (140,000) out of a total population of one million with Pakistanis numbering just over 104,000 (74% of Muslims in Birmingham). More recent estimates place the Muslim population at 200,000. Although it is the seventh



highest Muslim population as a proportion of a British city, it is twice as large as the single highest concentration of Muslims outside of London (ONS 2005).



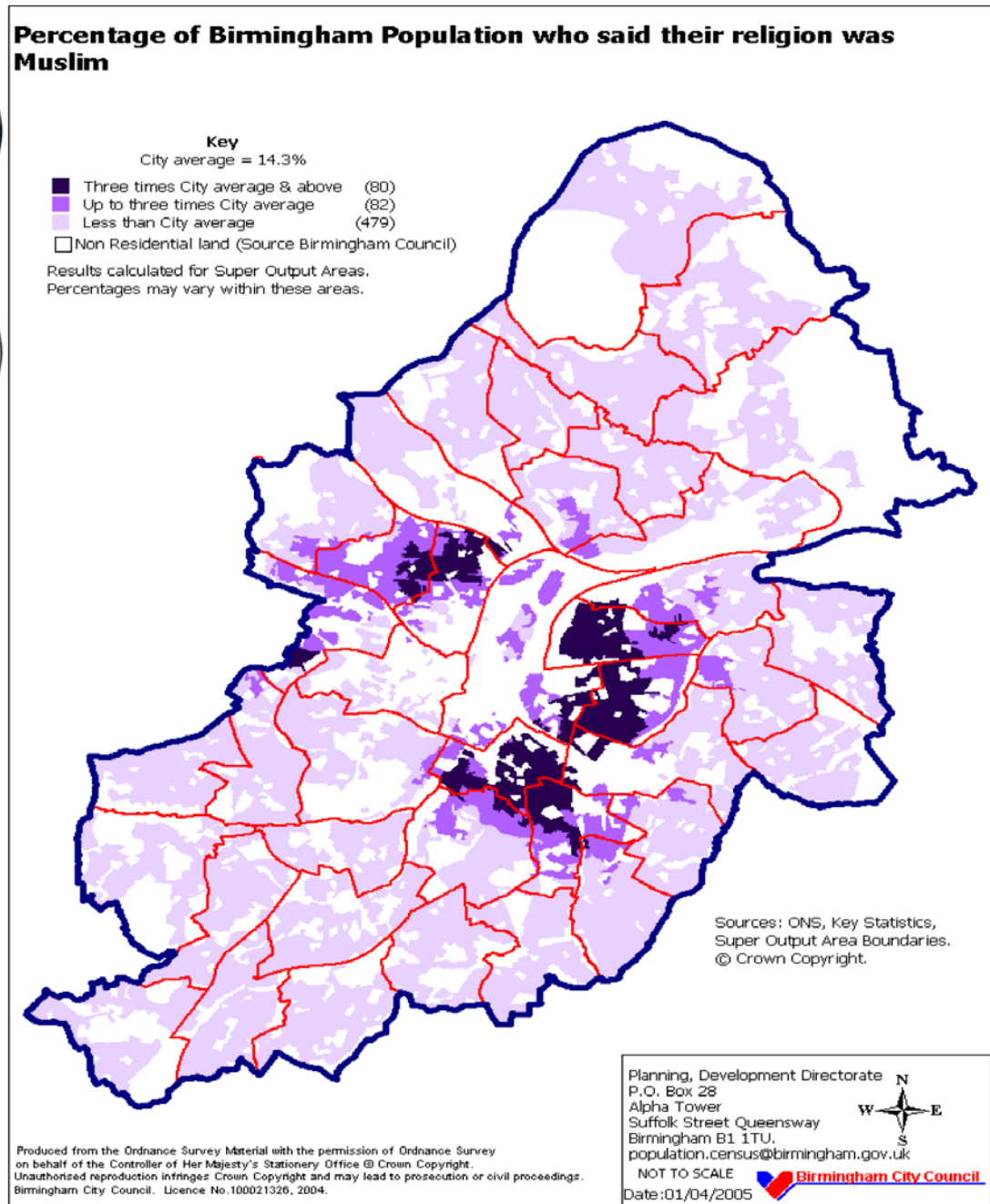
Although the vast majority of Birmingham's 140,000 Muslims are defined as Pakistani (74%), it is important to note the diversity and complexity of the rest of the city's Muslim population that represent a commonwealth of communities made up of Bangladeshis, Somalis, Yemenis, Iraqis, Kurds, Afghans, Indians, African, Caribbeans and of course, new Muslims (converts).



Although in the immediate years after the end of the Second World War, South Asians and African-Caribbeans from former New Commonwealth countries came to the 'motherland' in search of work and better opportunities, in recent periods it has been groups from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa who have migrated to the city of Birmingham. In particular, over the last five years Somalis, who have often come to Birmingham via stays in Holland, Denmark, and Sweden, number approximately 30,000 people (unofficially) and are of different generations, genders, and tribal allegiances. The decade preceding 'the war on terror', which began in 2001, refugee groups arrived and settled within the city in three ways. The first emerged in 1992-93 under a programme called Governmental 1000 in which around a thousand Bosnians who left the country arrived. Second, there are approximately 2,000 Albanian asylum seekers and refugees in the West Midlands, mainly from Kosovo. The Ethnic Albanian Community Association was formed in 1998. Finally, approximately 4,000-5,000 Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees live in Birmingham, the vast majority from Iraq. Birmingham has also become home to many young Iranians (Dick 2004). In general, new Muslim groups have settled in parts of the city where current second and third generation South Asian Muslim groups tend to be found.



Figure 1 below highlights the profile of Birmingham's Muslims. It is possible to see where one in seven of the population of the city is concentrated.



Source: Birmingham City Council (2003: 21)

Many of the arrests in relation to extremism issues in the city and across the country have been of 'Azad' Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and also some Somalis and African-Caribbean converts. It is apparent, therefore, that problems of intergenerational tension, crises of identities, socio-economic marginalisation, and perceptions in relation to foreign policy as well as wider societal vilification play a considerable part in the processes of creating a sense of deepening alienation and exclusion that encourage susceptible minds to be taken in by the violent, aggressive and politically-motivated theology of reactionary dogma.



Aside from the political and theological context of violent extremism, one cannot ignore the social, cultural and economic positions of young people in Western European societies who feel so disenfranchised that they only see a solution to their problems and that of the Muslim world through the narrow prism of violent extremism.



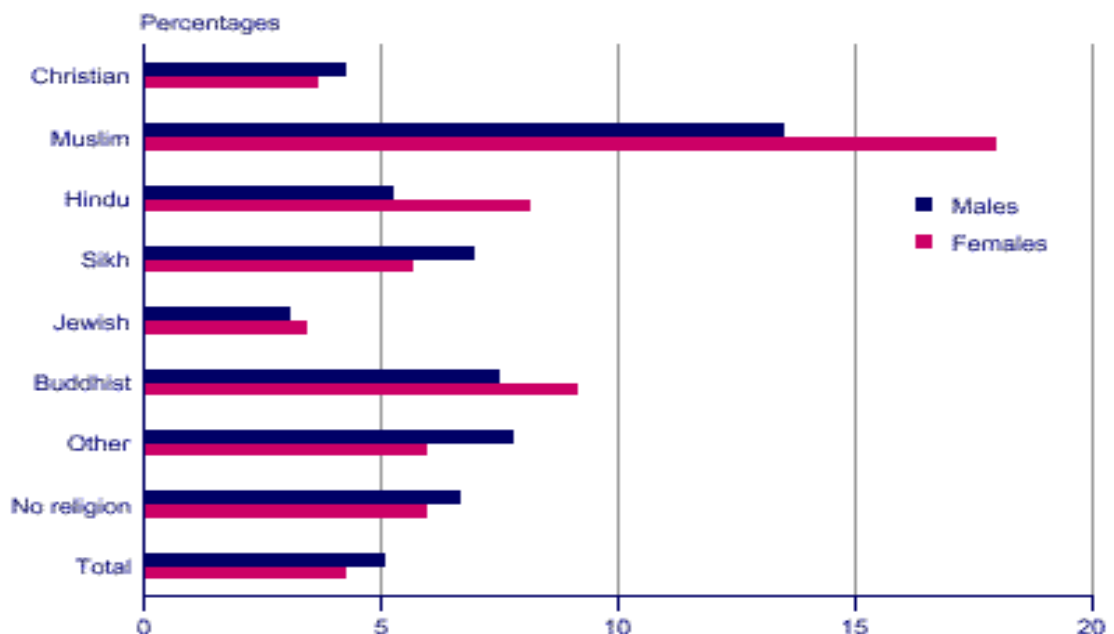
Muslim Unemployment Position



Unemployment rates for Muslims are higher than those for people from any other religion, for both men and women. According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2004 Muslims had the highest male unemployment rate in Great Britain, at 13 per cent². This was about three times the rate for Christian men (4 per cent). Unemployment rates for men in the other religious groups were between 3 and 8 per cent.

The unemployment rate for Muslim women at 18 per cent was about four times the rate for Christian and Jewish women (4 per cent in each case). Unemployment rates for women in the other religious groups were between 6 per cent and 9 per cent. Unemployment rates were highest among those aged under 25 years for all religious groups. Muslims aged 16 to 24 years had the highest unemployment rates. They were over twice as likely as Christians of the same age to be unemployed – 28 per cent compared with 11 per cent.

Unemployment rates: by religion and sex, 2004, UK, ONS

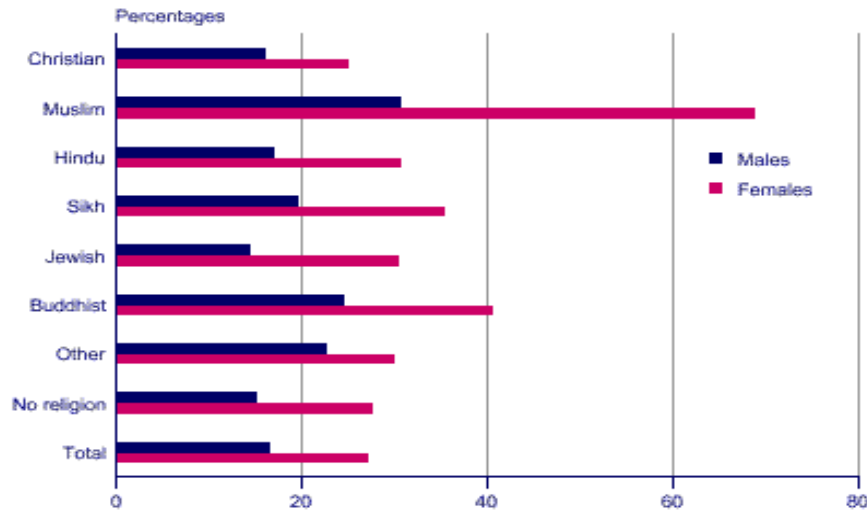


² Source: Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, London: Office for National Statistics (ONS).



Although unemployment rates for older Muslims were lower, there was a greater difference between their unemployment rates and those for people from other religious backgrounds. Muslims aged 25 and over were more than three times as likely as Christians of the same age to be unemployed – 11 per cent and 3 per cent respectively.

*Economic inactivity rates of working age people:
by religion and sex, 2004, UK, ONS*



Men and women of working age from the Muslim faith are also more likely than other groups in Great Britain to be economically inactive, that is, not available for work and/or not actively seeking work. Reasons include being a student, being disabled or looking after the family and home.

Among working age men, Muslims had the highest overall levels of economic inactivity in 2004 – 31 per cent compared with 16 per cent of Christians. This is partly explained by the young age profile of Muslims and the correspondingly high proportion of students. However, among older men of working age, Muslims also tended to have the highest levels of economic inactivity, largely due to ill health.



Within each religious group women were more likely than men to be economically inactive. The main reason was that they were looking after the family and home. Muslim women were more likely than other women to be economically inactive. About seven in ten (69 per cent) Muslim women of working age were economically inactive, compared with no more than four in ten women of working age in each of the other groups. Christian women were least likely to be economically inactive (25 per cent).



On average, Muslim unemployment in Birmingham is approximately three times the average of the city. Furthermore, ethnic and Muslim minority unemployment rates are hyper-cyclical – that is at times of economic downturn the impact felt by certain ethnic groups is often considerably greater.





5. Preventing Violent Extremism – the central government approach



The Local Government White Paper made clear that Preventing Violent Extremism is a major concern for local authorities. The Government's strategy, therefore, supports local authorities to tackle violent extremism at a local level, focusing on those areas facing the greatest challenges. The strategy aims to build on what the local authorities most experienced in this area are already doing and encourage others to follow their lead – listening to their communities, working with schools and mosques, forging partnerships between police, community and faith groups.



Local authorities, therefore, are key to delivering the Government's priority by preventing violent extremism in their communities. Cross-government accountability for PREVENT lies with the Home Office and CLG with the primary aim 'to prevent people becoming or supporting terrorists or violent extremists'. The PVE agenda has become an ever more significant aspect of the core activities of the *priority* local authorities and it is likely to remain a primary concern for some time (*priority local authorities* are either those that have areas of highest priority or need and/or have sizeable Muslim communities).

The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund was launched by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Department in October 2006 to help *priority* local authorities develop appropriate activities and strategies to tackle issues of violent extremism at the local area level. It works specifically within a wider government agenda as set out in the document, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds* (CLG, 2007a). This threat is regarded as a significant issue in relation to the idea of Al-Qaida inspired Islamic political radicalism (although it is framed in the context of a struggle of a small number of alienated minorities). The threat is seen to have global reach with local area impacts.

In this context, the government is encouraging a programme of action with local authorities as the delivery mechanism to engender local area solutions to tackle violent extremism in their communities. This is being done through developing community-based and community-led initiatives to tackle radicalisation as well as building the resilience of Muslim communities.

In 2007-2008, the government made available the sum of £5m to support around 70 *priority* local authorities in their delivery of pathfinder initiatives (CLG, 2007b), of which Birmingham received £525,000. Entitlement to the funding was based on the demographic compositions of Muslims; in particular local area contexts. Funding was provided through an assessment carried out by CLG based on the need and ambition of the proposals carried forward. Multi-area partnerships were encouraged (and have proved successful) such that the number of authorities which fell below the 5 per cent Muslim population bar were also included in the Pathfinder work.



In the 2008-2011 Comprehensive Spending Review period, government has announced that £45m over three years (£12m/£15m/£18m). This will be made available to further support local delivery. Qualification for funding and its distribution will continue to be based on the relative composition of the Muslim population in any particular local area.



In May 2008, the government published guidelines in relation to the areas of work deemed important in helping to prevent violent extremism in Britain. Entitled, *Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery* (UK Government, 2008a), various points were emphasised as part of this drive, including the need to ‘undermine extremist ideology and support mainstream voices’, ‘disrupt those who promote violent extremism, and strengthen vulnerable institutions’, ‘support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists’, ‘increase the capacity of communities to challenge and resist violent extremists’, ‘effectively address grievances’, and ‘developing understanding, analysis and information and improving strategic communications’.



The essential aims of these proposals are to provide adequate guidelines for Local Authorities in pursuit of projects to prevent violent extremism. Here, it is presented in no unambiguous terms, and the threat is seen to emerge from violent Islamism, and this particular concern outweighs all others relating to violent extremism.

Further documentation, entitled, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England* (UK Government, 2008b) is specifically aimed at local partners, the police, Community Safety Partnerships, and other partners involved in the delivery of effective solutions. In eliminating the threat of terrorism, the document provides advice on partnership working and the importance of the local area contexts requiring locally derived solutions. A comprehensive report, it provides all the necessary guidance needed by local partners, including the ‘NI: 35 – Building Communities Resilient to Violent Extremism (Assessment Framework), Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities’, which will remain an important evaluative tool in relation to the abilities of local partners to effectively appreciate the extent of their knowledge base and the processes through which that understanding is translated into action.



6. Review Summary of Birmingham Projects



We reviewed each of the eleven Birmingham projects and below is a summary account of our review. This comes with a couple of caveats. First, we were not commissioned to do an impact assessment of each project and second, we were limited in making any critical or comparative analysis since there is no precedence or sufficient learning upon which to compare each project in this Pathfinder phase across the UK. Our commentary, therefore, has had to be limited but have attempted to provide an indication, based on what we have reviewed, their value and potential for the next phase:



Theme One: Reclaiming Islam

Project One: Islamic Schools, Madaaris and Supplementary Schools

Birmingham City Council Children, Young People and Families Directorate³, as part of the local Pathfinder Prevent Strategy worked with Madaaris across the city to help broaden the provision of citizenship education in supplementary schools and Madaaris.

It is estimated that in the UK around 100,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 attend Madaaris. Each child typically attends for two hours after school each day. It is in everyone's interest that the education provided is of the highest possible quality. There could be significant benefits if even a small proportion of this time were used to help provide children with a deeper understanding of citizenship and the inter-relationship between their faith and the communities in which they live.

A total of 72 Madaaris staff has been trained in the crucial teaching and Islamic syllabus delivery. Well over 300 children and parents have been involved in *capacity-building focus groups* to learn what local public authorities do, their role in helping to create just, fair, safe and cohesive communities for everyone, and how they could be involved in the process, as well as help in driving professionalism, standard and promoting mainstream Islam in local Madaaris, so that children and young people are able to benefit from improved pedagogy and institutionalised practices.

Our view is that this project needs to be strengthened and continued as there is evidence of young people, parents and local Madaaris being better supported than ever before, and consequently, there is considerably greater capacity and professionalism amongst young people, parents and some of the leading Islamic institutions across the city. This project has a sound basis for considerable success in the future.

³ The support officer was Nargis Rashid MBE



Project Two: Governance of Mosques



Mosques are holy places and play a key role in the life of Muslim communities. Any local Prevent strategy has to involve Mosques in order to alienate and eliminate extremists from the mainstream Muslim communities. In Birmingham over 40 major institutions serve a diverse and growing population of Muslims in different localities throughout the city. Led by Birmingham City Council with external support⁴ the main aim of this was to work closely with 10 key Islamic institutions between July 2007 to March 2008 to:



- a) effectively engage and help build their capacities and professionalism;
- b) help improve their governance and management systems; and,
- c) develop a robust toolkit that has the potential to be used by all faith-based institutions across the city

This intensive work involved an assortment of group and one-to-one learning and development sessions, presenting advice on good practice and how to adapt their own policies and practices in all areas of their work.

The project was able to engage with the largest Mosques that attract most of the city's Muslim population including, the Birmingham Central Mosque, Central Jamia Masjid Ghamkol Sharif, Green Lane Mosque, Sultan Bahu Trust and the Amanah Mosque.

Combined together these Mosques are key to the life of many Muslims in the city and, therefore, building their capacity to involve them in the local Prevent work by improving their governance and management systems can not only strengthen communities and institutions but strengthen their hands to isolate, alienate and ultimately, eliminate extremism from the mainstream Muslim communities. One of the participants from one of the city's leading institutions said:

“As the representative of Birmingham Central Mosque (BCM) who took part in the pilot programme I felt that it could not have come at a better time or juncture in time for us as an organisation. We are at the beginning of preparing a new five-year strategy to turn BCM into a ‘model mosque’, a central resource hub for the community offering all sorts of educational, recreational and leisure opportunities, aside from the main congregational prayers, for all sections of the Muslim and non-Muslim community. Looking ahead I feel it is inevitable that faith centres of this kind will need to implement good governance practice to help achieve their full potential and expand the services they currently provide to meet the changing needs of their congregation/target audience.” (Birmingham Central Mosque).

The governance of mosques project has worked to deliver an important range of achievements in the relatively short time of its inception and development. There is considerable confidence in the ways in which mosques are run and managed, which give the Muslim community and

⁴ External support provided by Karl George Ltd.



wider user groups a greater sense of trust in processes relating to their running. This particular project has been a tremendous success and has considerable potential to continue to make an important impact.



Project Three: Young Muslim Leadership

Involvement of young people in tackling extremism is critical to the success of any local Prevent strategy. Young people play a vital role in influencing their peers and it is important to empower and capacity build them. Birmingham City Council developed the *Young Muslim Leadership* to enable young people to develop the skills and build the confidence necessary to influence members of their peer group or the communities more widely. The Council established five Young Muslim Leadership projects across the city with staff based at the Council's Equalities division to manage the delivery of these projects.



The aims were to:

- 1) Encourage young Muslims in Birmingham to engage with a set of 'citizenship workshops' that highlight the importance of detecting and tackling the signals of violent extremism.
- 2) Develop the next generation of Muslim leaders who are able and confident enough to challenge and tackle violent extremism.
- 3) Learn lessons and disseminate good practice across the city.

The project worked to build understanding and equip young people with the theological arguments to counter extremist ideologies, dispel misapprehensions and develop their role as citizens, leaders and positive role models so that they can become 'leaders' for mainstream Islam and assert their British identity.

A range of youth groups including Birmingham Central Mosque, Sultan Bahu Trust, Sparkbrook Islamic Centre, the Tyga Youth Forum, the Somali Council Youth Group and Green Light (Birmingham) were involved. Many young people took part in these initiatives and found them to be of considerable benefit to their understanding of Islam and their roles as Muslims in a secular society, confidently dealing with the challenges of identity and society. Given the wider problems of generational disconnect that relate to problems of violent extremism in Muslim communities, a project such as this has considerable potential, and in Birmingham this Pathfinder initiative has demonstrated tremendous successes, albeit in a short period of time. However, it was not possible to provide a much fuller analysis of these initiatives due to the limitations in relation to reporting and documentation. Nevertheless, there does appear to be considerable mileage in relation to supporting these initiatives because of the impact they have and can potentially have on the attitudes and behaviours of young Muslims seeking greater Islamic knowledge and awareness across the city.



Project Four: Supporting Imam Training

The roles of Imams tend to be largely misunderstood in the UK. They do not strictly perform the duties of a Chaplain or Minister of a Religion but can be 'religious leaders' in their own right, attracting immeasurable respect and authority. This is particularly true if an Imam happens to be an *Alim* (Scholar) or *Peer* (Spiritual Guide).



Imams are best placed to provide the theological leadership, however, they are not always able to convey their arguments to those vulnerable to violent extremist messages, and because of either language barriers or cultural differences (most Imams are not 'home grown' hence lack the cultural understanding necessary to effectively engage and communicate with young people). There is, therefore, a role for local authorities in providing support and encouragement in the development of robust 'religious leadership' capable of engaging effectively with all members of Muslim communities. This is also necessary because there has been a growing 'disconnect' between Imams and particularly, those young people who are born and bred in the UK seeking help and looking for answers to questions on their religious identity. And, in our view, it is this group of people that contain the 'most vulnerable' and who could fall foul of extremists looking to recruit.



It is against this background that Birmingham City Council explored in some detail the possibility of establishing the *Imams Training* project in partnership with the University of Birmingham. However, due to the length of time involved in getting validation and accreditation for the formal programme of training at Master's level, which went beyond the period of the Pathfinder programme, that this is now being carried forward to 2008-2009. We would recommend and support this programme for its potential to affect broader cultural change.

Theme Two: Media

Project Five: Media Skills Workshop

Media plays a huge role in people's lives. In a world where the news media is increasingly interactive and open to formerly passive 'consumers' it is essential that no group or community should be marginalised. 'Negative' voices and stories make headlines even though they are not representative of the majority mainstream Muslim community views. The purpose of the media workshops was to assist individuals within the Muslim community to increase their communication skills as well broadening their understanding of the media and specifically the regional media. The workshops were also intended to provide opportunities and a safe space for those employed in the media to increase their understanding of the aspirations and frustrations of the Muslim community given the current political climate.



This was the rationale behind the Media Skills Workshop project managed by Birmingham City Council's Equalities Division and supported by the Communications directorate⁵. Seven media workshops, each around two and a half hours in length, explored a range of areas, including how the media operates, the essence of a 'good' or a 'bad' story, the nature of the print media, aspects of broadcast media, alternative social media formations, and giving interviews and dealing with the media. Various partners from the city were involved, including Birmingham City University' Screen Media Lab, Birmingham Post and Mail, BBC WM, the BBC Asian Network and Channel 4. The aims were to help Muslims in the city, including young people and established community leaders, to improve their communications skills in relation to the media.



During our review, some people for example talked about their frustration in not being able to have the right access or support to put forward credible mainstream voices. In our view, supporting and providing media skills and media engagement training could make their diverse voices heard more widely as well as build their confidence and skills.

We found these workshops to be effective because they did more than just inform participants on how to write a press release by encouraging good interaction with the media and providing the necessary skills to generate that effective communication. One person stated *"It was brilliant. I wasn't expecting to have learnt so much, and am hoping to put (it) into practice in my work place and on a personal level..."*

Fifteen people were selected for the workshops and they largely remained for all of the seven sessions. These individuals were of diverse ethnicity, age and generation, reflecting the Birmingham Muslim communities. Based on initial evaluation of this programme, it is apparent that participants were keen to engage with the media professionals. There is a further suggestion to build on this pathfinder initiative by encouraging young people to consider the media as a career option at an earlier age and running these workshops alongside the media in certain schools.

Project Six: Positive Resource

This project⁶ has only just begun after recently securing its funding. We were, therefore unable to make any in-depth analysis or explore its impact. The aims of the Positive Resource project are two-fold. First, to generate a basket of positive media images that act as a resource for different institutions across the city, helping to bridge understanding and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims; and second, to develop a stronger understanding of Islam and Islamic culture, society and history across all communities.

⁵ The support officer was Zubeda Limbada

⁶ Developed by Sandra Hall and Mitra Memarzia (Freelance Artists)



We would support this project as it has the potential to help break down the suspicion and misunderstanding that can result from ignorance. We would, however, recommend widening this project to include the promotion of greater understanding of Islam and Muslims across all communities through other means e.g. art work in schools, promotion of positive books and Islamic art roadshows.



Theme Three: Women

Project Seven: Muslimah in Action Steering Group and Conference



Women play a vital role in shaping society in general and influencing men and young people in their communities. It is critical for their voices to be empowered, heard and strengthened through leadership training, breaking down community barriers and involvement in local decision making processes.

This project was established to help strengthen the role that women can play within their communities. It provided a space for women to meet, build social networks and consider the key challenges facing them in Birmingham.

A Steering Group *Muslimah in Action* was formed with a range of Muslim women who were keen to be involved in tackling extremism in their communities. Originally called *Sister's Coalition*, this group is an effective mechanism for advice and project work across the city. Consisting of twelve women in the Steering Committee the key aims were to:

- 1) Identify and determine the variety of issues impacting on Muslim women across the city.
- 2) Develop an action plan to tackle the issues.
- 3) Explore the most effective ways that women could play their part in local priorities and decision making processes.

The findings formed a report for action and also enabled the women only conference which became a project in itself and was ultimately held in May 2008.

However, whilst the 'all-women' conference in Birmingham helped to highlight some of the fundamental issues facing women and what should be done to tackle them to enable women to play their full part in society, there is a need to step up the pace of action on this matter.

Our view is that this is a critical area that needs to be supported in the next round of PVE funding and broadened to cover all key aspects facing the life of Muslim women in Birmingham. Whilst it is fully appreciated that this was part of the Pathfinder initiative to learn lessons for future programmes this was a drop in the ocean of the good practice that could be carried out across the city.



Theme Four: Young People

Project Eight: Study Circles



Birmingham City Council helped to support the development of a series of community-led Study Circles to help young people develop a better understanding of Islam. Birmingham worked with the Radical Middle Way Initiative and the British Muslim Forum to facilitate these Study Circles involving leading Islamic Scholars.



In our view, the provision of such a ‘space’ is both necessary and critical to countering extremist ideology and belief. It is this lack of open space that has contributed to young people finding their own ways to quench their thirst for religious knowledge and, thus, have sometimes fallen foul of extremist recruiters. This project, therefore, is a welcome initiative and we would support its further development in becoming a permanent feature of the Birmingham city scene along the lines of the successful City Circle (www.thecitycircle.com) initiative in London. As one respondent said:

“The Study Circle enabled me to understand Islam from the original sources, to interpret it in accordance to my life as a British citizen and to know how to live peacefully with other communities.” Young person, Tyga Youth Forum
Project Nine: Journey of the Soul

The Journey of the Soul project helped mainstream Imams to ‘reconnect’ with young people as mentors, teachers and credible voices, in countering the arguments of violent extremists. It focussed on issues of spirituality, helping young people to better appreciate their roles and responsibilities in wider society according to faith. Mainstream Imams were given an opportunity to reconnect with young Muslims to help build confidence and resilience against violent extremism. Individuals were encouraged to become more proactive in relation to building cohesion and improving inter-faith relations.

The Journey of the Soul project helped to promote the confidence in religious identity and the culture and environment that young people were living in. This allowed the development of a distinct British Muslim identity providing a space to help open minds within an environment which is non-threatening, non-intimidating and where an individual’s *Imaan* is revitalised and nourished.

In our view, this is an example of an excellent project that should be strengthened and built upon in future PVE work.

Project Ten: Success Clubs

The ideas behind Success Clubs⁷ relate to principles defined through youth work and volunteering and, in particular, the importance of belief and

⁷ The support officers were Yousiff Meah, Atif Iqbal and Altaf Hussain Kazi



practice in the lives of young people. The Birmingham Pathfinder was able to tap into notions of developing resilience in disaffected youth using Islamic beliefs of *Khidmah* (selfless and voluntary service to people, neighbours and communities whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The concept of *Khidmah* is similar to the *love thy neighbour* ethos but with a much deeper, stronger and powerful belief) and, *Akhlaq* (Islamic belief of good and high morals).



The idea is, therefore, that a sense of more ‘true’ Islam needs to be fed to these disillusioned young vulnerable people in order to counter any extremist, racist or destructive beliefs that they may hold because the project was about building resilience through a focus on understanding a Muslim’s responsibility to their wider community. Journey of the Soul and Study Circles could more accurately be described as directly countering extremist, racist or destructive beliefs that they may hold.



These beliefs were instilled in young people through their mentors who were credible and had their respect, trust, confidence and were seen as their ‘role models’. These Success Clubs have been particularly important in both engaging and encouraging young Muslims to ask searching questions about identity, politics, citizenship and theology, actively challenging problems of deculturalism, patriarchy and self-emollition on the part of existing elites and elders who are seen to be outmoded and unable to answer their questions satisfactorily.

They appear to be a welcome relief for young Muslims as well as youth work professionals who are now able to incorporate faith-based training in their efforts to help young people.

Theme Five: Cross-Cutting Projects

Project Eleven: Know Your Clients – Muslims in Birmingham

The ‘Know your Client’ Project⁸ was designed to facilitate and harness a series of constructive discussions between policy makers and grass root organisations to examine the needs of Muslim communities and identify a range of short to long-term solutions that build cohesion and inclusion across 5 core themes: *Education and Skills; Employment and Regeneration; Health; Crime and Safety; Art and Culture*. As the only ‘cross cutting’ project, it was chosen for its central aim to build resilience through the strengthening of links between mainstream society (its institutions and its leaders) and the Muslim Community.

As this was a pathfinder, only the first phase of the project was funded via a launch event made up of presentations and interactive workshops. Over 25 organisations attended the event including Birmingham City Council, HSBC, Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust, West Midlands Police, Shoosmiths Solicitors, Working Links Employment Services, Eversheds, Birmingham Forward and Pricewaterhouse Coopers. The programme

⁸ Delivered by Assad Hamed of CURE (UK) Ltd.



sought to empower all participants with an understanding of Muslim Communities as well as the City's leading institutions to build social, cultural and economic cohesion.



Our view is that this project shows exceptional promise and that it needs to be continued by strengthening and developing it to focus more on building cohesion and inclusion through 'seeing is believing' type events that facilitate regular conversations between Muslim communities and the City's institutions and leadership. As a cross cutting project, it has the right ingredients for success in the future.





7. Tracking Progress and Evaluating Success



In order to track progress and evaluate the success of Birmingham's Pathfinder projects we tested them (although not a requirement for the Pathfinder phase) against the Government's National Indicator (NI) 35 measures. The NI 35 seeks to measure overall progress by assessing the levels of engagement and understanding that local authorities and their partners have of the local communities, the strength of their partnership working, the effectiveness of their strategies and their effectiveness in implementing them. As part of the National Indicator Set, work to prevent violent extremism will also be part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Long-term success is represented by communities that condemn and reject violent extremism and support those most at risk from within their communities. Success is reflected in the effectiveness of mechanisms in place to support individuals, and also in attitudes within the community. Effective programme and performance management arrangements are required to be in place to track progress and ensure that learning can be shared.

Below are the NI 35 measures which will be used to assess and evaluate both the progress and success of future PVE projects in *priority* local authorities. There are four assessment areas and each area has a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. Performance scores will be given according to how the local authority measures against each of the scales.

In carrying out the assessments for Birmingham we were conscious of the mammoth task this is for local authorities, however, we were also conscious of the need for robustness, given the serious nature of the issues at hand as well as the extent of public funds involved. In our view, there is a serious danger for public funds to be misused if the assessment framework is relaxed not due to maliciousness or fraud but because not many people understand or have the expertise and skills to deliver the PVE agenda. There would, therefore, be a natural desire to do something guided by those who may not know anything or too little to be of any great substance.

It is our view that these indicators would help to guide local authorities in not only setting up appropriate and effective projects but allow them to be focused, constantly monitoring their performance and developing innovative approaches.



8. The Government's NI: 35



The Government's NI 35 Assessment Framework has four key areas. Each area has five indicators and a score against which future PVE projects (2008-2011) will be assessed throughout the country in *priority* councils.



Birmingham requested us to independently assess its projects against these indicators, which it did not have or was required to do, in the 2007 Pathfinder phase to see whether it was on the right tracks and help in the development of a future strategy. We, therefore, assessed Birmingham Pathfinder projects against the following indicators:

Area 1: *Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities.*

Score	Description
1	Community engaged on an ad hoc basis and through wider faith/minority groups. Mechanisms and engagement is/are not self sustaining or productive. Understanding of the make-up of the local Muslim community is limited and superficial.
2	Regular mechanisms for consulting and working with Muslim community, but attendance and reach not wide. Tendency to engage with individuals and interest groups rather than communities. Basic knowledge of structure of local Muslim community in terms of ethnicity and geographical extent.
3	Regular and reliable mechanisms for frequent contact with whole communities, as well as individuals within communities. Strong knowledge of the make-up of the Muslim communities, including different ethnic groups, denominations, social and economic status, elected representatives and community leaders, knowledge of location and denomination of mosques, awareness of community groups. Knowledge of partner agencies appropriately utilised.
4	Regular and reliable mechanisms which include all communities and under-represented groups such as women and youth in an ongoing dialogue. That dialogue influences and informs policy. Sophisticated and segmented understanding of Muslim communities, the structures within them, and the cultures which make them up.
5	A self sustaining, dynamic and community driven engagement which takes place on a number of different levels and in a number of different ways, with innovative approaches to communication and engagement of all groups. Sophisticated understanding of local Muslim communities is used to drive policy development and engagement.



Area 2: Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the Prevent objectives



Score	Description
1	Awareness of the issues, but no thinking about what it means for the locality or how to engage fully with the agenda. Poor understanding of causes of violent extremism and the Government's Prevent strategy objectives.
2	Basic understanding of what is required from local partners, and familiarity with key documents and guidance material. Attempts to draw together an evidence base and to analyse the underlying causes of violent extremism.
3	Good understanding of the Prevent objectives and drivers of violent extremism among partners. Established evidence base draws on a number of sources, including evidence from a number of local partners about violent extremism within the local area. Awareness of appropriate research. Attempt to take into account specific local circumstances and build evidence of strength of drivers locally, including sharing of information between partners.
4	Strong understanding of the Prevent objectives and the drivers of violent extremism, as well as of the interfaces with related policy areas. Full use of local, national and international research, guidance and expertise on the agenda, including good information sharing between partners. Good understanding of local circumstances and drivers.
5	Sophisticated understanding of the Prevent objectives and the drivers of violent extremism. Full use of local, national and international research, guidance and expertise on the agenda to build a wide-ranging and sophisticated evidence base. Clearly strong information interchanges between local partners across delivery organisations and strands of activity. Strong understanding of local circumstances and drivers.



Area 3: Development of a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the Prevent objectives



Score	Description
1	Basic, narrowly focused action plan in place.
2	Action plan with clear resource allocations and timeframes attached to actions. Some linkages to Government's 'Prevent' strategy objectives and to the drivers of violent extremism. Some links to feedback from community engagement.
3	Risk-based comprehensive and clear action plan which makes clear links to the 'Prevent' strategy. Links to community engagement and knowledge and understanding of the drivers of violent extremism. Range of activity covering different strands of the 'Prevent' strategy.
4	Risk based and strategically focused action plan with clear links to the knowledge and understanding of the drivers of violent extremism, the 'Prevent' strategy and to extensive consultation with communities. Clear buy-in from senior officers and strategic partners. Necessary actions, capabilities, policies and projects clearly identified. Strong focus on multi-agency partnership working, including synergies with CDRPs and other bodies. Broad range of activity delivering all strands of the 'Prevent' strategy, including through a range of mainstream services.
5	Risk based and strategically focused action plan with strong links to the knowledge and understanding of the drivers of violent extremism, the 'Prevent' strategy and to extensive consultation with communities and local partner agencies. Agenda effectively 'mainstreamed' through consideration of existing service delivery and policies, alongside the development of specific actions, projects and capabilities. Awareness of agenda throughout partner organisations. Full range of activities across all strands of the 'Prevent' strategy. Innovative actions, projects and capabilities clearly identified. Strong evidence of multi-agency approach to deliver across a broad range of partners and agencies, including synergies with CDRPs and other bodies.



Area 4: *Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions*



Score	Description
1	Loose and informal monitoring of projects, leading to haphazard delivery and frequent overruns and changes of scope. Evaluation is informal and haphazard. Audit arrangements in place.
2	Clear plans for delivery and oversight. Some level of formal evaluation, but no clear mechanism for follow-up. Audit arrangements and risk management in place.
3	Monitoring mechanisms in place with regular reviews to ensure delivery. Oversight group in place. Formal evaluation but which has no real effect on developing future projects and actions. Strong audit arrangements and risk management in place.
4	Proven monitoring mechanisms in place which help ensure regular delivery of projects within timescale, to the required standard and budget constraints. Oversight group with range of skills and representing appropriate range of interests. Formal evaluation using appropriate methodology which has some impact on the development of future projects. Strong audit arrangements and risk management in place.
5	Strong tried and tested monitoring mechanisms which allow highlighting and resolution of issues, track progress and ensure consistent delivery of projects and actions within timescale, to the required standard and budget constraints. Oversight group with appropriate skills and seniority in place and actively involved in monitoring. Professional and extensive evaluation of project against agreed objectives, which has real impact on development of future projects. Strong audit arrangements and sophisticated risk management in place.



9. Performance of Birmingham against NI: 35



In our assessment Birmingham has fared well in relation to the NI 35 measures. The table below provides the breakdown of how Birmingham has performed based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest:



NI: 35 Assessment Framework	Score
<p data-bbox="331 573 1134 611"><i>Understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="384 651 1182 831">• Communities consulted e.g. community engagement meetings on 1st and 20th February 2007, a conference with leading Muslim scholars in March 2007, community launch of the PVE Pathfinder projects in September 2007. <li data-bbox="384 875 1182 1413">• More than basic knowledge of the Muslim community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="480 943 1182 1122">- Team knowledge = Prevent Team made up of highly qualified and experienced senior Muslim professionals e.g. the Head of the Prevent Team was also the Head of Youth Division at the Council. <li data-bbox="480 1133 1182 1413">- Corporate knowledge = Birmingham City Council has good grasp of Muslim communities and understanding of, and engagement with, Muslim communities with a number of elected Members, community engagement forums and 'issue specific' groups e.g. the Community Cohesion Group chaired by the Chief Executive. <li data-bbox="384 1424 1182 1491">• Size and diversity of the Muslim communities in Birmingham is significant and complex. <li data-bbox="384 1503 1182 1603">• Evidence of strong support by the Cabinet Lead on Equalities but more work needs to be done with other elected Members. 	2.5
<p data-bbox="331 1693 1182 1760"><i>Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the Prevent objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="384 1805 1182 1939">• Clear demonstration of understanding of the Prevent agenda e.g. individual demonstration and leadership (Head of Equality and Diversity supporting the Prevent Agenda). <li data-bbox="384 1951 1182 2018">• Clear understanding of the drivers and causes of extremism via projects such as Study Circles, Success 	3



Clubs, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of the Prevent objectives e.g. clear & robust Pathfinder Strategy. 	
<i>Development of a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the Prevent objectives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan for Pathfinder. • Action Plan for 2008-11 (under development). 	2
<i>Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal monitoring of Pathfinder Projects (by BCC). • Assessments by Lord Patel, HMIC and the Audit Commission. • Independent review by Waterhouse Consulting Group. • Clearer audit arrangements have been put in place. • Governance structures have been improved. • Secondment of personnel to help strengthen project management. 	2.5
Overall Score	2.5

Based on our review and the evidence we have seen we would recommend a baseline score of 2.5 as a reliable overall score for Birmingham. Achieving a higher score would not be too difficult for Birmingham considering the programme of work and types of projects being delivered and considered by the Council.

With better governance structures, improved communication across partners, increased community involvement and consultation and a clearer and effective action plan (all of which are being developed) would all lead to Birmingham achieving at least a score of 3-3.5 by the end of 2008-2009. This assessment framework provides an initial overall indication of where Birmingham City Council is in relation to understanding, delivery and governance.

Having worked through the framework it would be difficult to find another authority that would achieve a higher score without the kind of projects and learning that Birmingham has developed during the Pathfinder year and the successes already being enjoyed with some of its Pathfinder projects.

However, management and delivery of programmes require a more Dedicated centralised system to ensure better synergy between projects and Effective communications between project partners. There is no doubt that the Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda will continue to remain prominent on the domestic political agenda, and the experiences of Birmingham can effectively provide important lessons for the rest of the country.



Coverage in terms of reflecting the diversity of Muslim ethnicities and different schools of thoughts in Birmingham has been excellent, with Pakistani, Kashmiri, Indian, Bengali, Yemeni, and Somali communities reflected in programmes and initiatives. Genuine advances have also been made in relation to building relations between Mosques, Imams, Women and Youth that can only continue to be strengthened.





10. Conclusions & Key Findings

- (1) Birmingham has focused on the correct areas of work during its Pathfinder phase. For Central Government and local authorities still closely determining how to understand and deal with the problems of building community resilience against violent extremism, the experience of Birmingham is eminently useful.
- (2) The Birmingham Pathfinder projects have impacted positively on their participants with the potential to make a real impact in the future on the life of the whole community. However, it was not plain sailing for Birmingham. At the outset, Birmingham City Council has had to grapple with the term *Preventing Violent Extremism* as this was seen by many Muslim community members and some stakeholders as insulting, provocative and labeling those that who had or have nothing to do violent extremism.

Key Findings

- (3) Our review of each of the Birmingham Pathfinder projects has highlighted some strong areas that have the potential to make some real impact on building the resilience of the whole Muslim community. We would recommend that Birmingham takes into account these in determining its future priorities and its programme of PVE work (for further details please see our review of each Birmingham Pathfinder project).
- (4) There is an urgent need to help Imams ‘reconnect’ with young people. Imams are best placed to provide the theological leadership but are not always able to convey their arguments to those most vulnerable to violent extremists because of either language barriers or cultural differences (most Imams are not ‘home grown’ hence lack the cultural understanding necessary to effectively engage and communicate with young people). There is, therefore, a key role for Birmingham in providing support and encouragement in the development of robust ‘religious leadership’ capable of engaging effectively with all members of Muslim communities and the wider society.
- (5) Women play a vital role in shaping society in general and influencing men and young people in their communities. It is critical for their voices to be empowered, heard and strengthened through leadership training, breaking down community barriers and involvement in local decision making processes. There are many reports that now highlight the plight of Muslim women in the UK. Muslim women face a ‘triple-whammy’ from their negative portrayal in the wider society (via the media), the negative and unsupportive ‘cultural’ attitudes of their local communities and discrimination in the wider society because of their gender and ethnicity.



These areas of work needs to be robustly supported in the next round of PVE funding, and broadened to cover all key aspects facing the life of Muslim women in Birmingham. Whilst it is fully appreciated that this was part of the Pathfinder initiative to learn lessons for future programmes this was a drop in the ocean compared with the good practice that could be carried out across the city.

(6) Media plays a huge role in people’s lives. ‘Negative’ voices and stories make headlines even though they are not representative of majority mainstream Muslim community views. It is important to bear in mind that there is a huge deficit amongst certain ethnic groups, particularly Muslim communities in having the capacity, confidence and skills to not only counter-act these false theological notions but effectively use the media or the correct medium in doing so. Birmingham, therefore, must consider in its future PVE programme projects that would help to alleviate this deficit and build the capacity, confidence and skills of key mainstream voices.

(7) Central Government and local authorities must understand the extent of the deep anger and concern amongst Muslims at grassroots level over the linkage of violent extremism with Islam. This has so far helped to demonise and vilify Muslims in a climate where Islamophobia is already heightened. Here, the sentiments of the then Minister for International Development, Shahid Malik MP struck a chord with many people who in an interview for the *Dispatches* programme for Channel 4, said:

“I think most people would agree that if you ask Muslims today what do they feel like, they feel like the Jews of Europe”.

“Somewhere there’s message out there that it’s OK to target people as long as its Muslims. And you don’t have to worry about the facts, and people will turn a blind eye (Dispatches, Channel Four, Monday 7 July 2008).

(8) Our review also encountered some strong views from many respondents that PVE funding is driving attention away from the real causes of extremism, which are the Government’s foreign policy that is anti-Muslim e.g. support of Israel (which is perceived to be ‘racist’ and causing a ‘holocaust’ in Palestine) and treatment and exploitation of Muslims in other countries by the US and UK.

(9) A number of respondents felt that the police and security services were watching their every move due to the focus on the Muslim community and, therefore, felt ‘imprisoned’ in their own city because they felt they had to watch their every step e.g. what they uttered, the clothes they wore, the people they associated with and the Mosques they attended.



(10) Local authorities and partners must take into account that there is both a suspicion and anxiety of police and security service involvement in the local Prevent programmes aimed at building Muslim community resilience against violent extremism. This, therefore, has wider implications on the nature and extent of police and security services involvement in their local Prevent partnerships and the extent of work required to win the confidence of their local Muslim communities. In contrast, however, Birmingham's Prevent programme has been led by the Cabinet Member for Equalities who, supported by the Head of Equalities, held a number of community engagement meetings including on 1st and 20th February in the Council Chamber; a conference with leading Muslim scholars in March and the launch of the PVE Pathfinder with the Rt. Hon Parmjit Dhanda MP, the then Minister for Community Cohesion at the Burlington Hotel in September 2007.

(11) The success to winning the support of key influential institutions and figures in Birmingham was by having strong political leadership by the Cabinet Lead on Equalities who, supported by senior Muslim officers working on the PVE Pathfinder programme, has been critical in ensuring that the programme was given serious consideration by the Council and its partners. This is seen by communities to be providing broader leadership on this agenda. The Government, local authorities and political parties across the *priority* areas should give great care and consideration to the person specification for the appointment of PVE Leads. An ideal candidate would be someone at Cabinet level with strong political influence across the council and local partners armed with experience of equalities, communities and cohesion.

Qualities of senior officer level support would include sound understanding of Muslim communities, feel for theological issues and clear understanding of issues facing the local communities. However, it must be noted that appointment of senior Muslim officers to support the PVE agenda, although it helps it does not automatically bring wholesale support from the local Muslim communities. Both political and officer level involvement is critical to the success of the local PVE agenda.

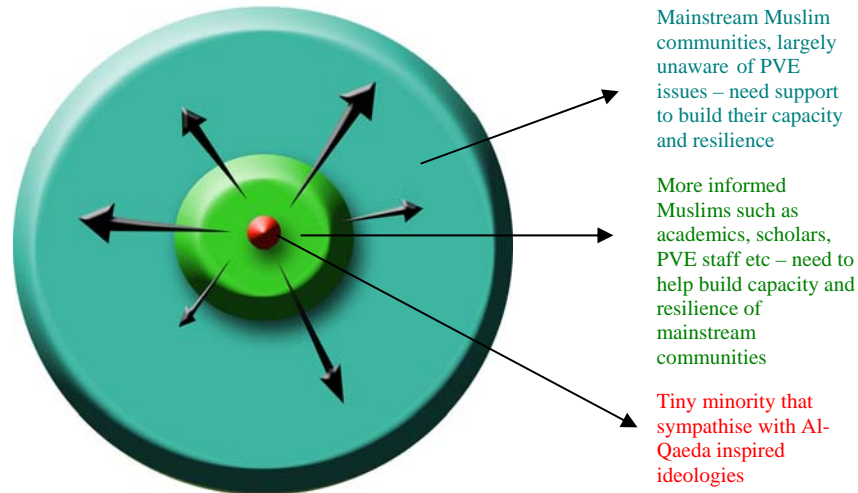
(12) Some local authorities have resorted to delivering their PVE work under the banner of 'community cohesion'. Our view is that local authorities must be clear that violent extremism will not be addressed by focusing on *community cohesion* as PVE needs both a *targeted approach and theological approach*.

(13) Our review also suggests that dropping the term 'Preventing Violent Extremism' and replacing it with a far more acceptable phraseology would also help in attracting greater community involvement and confidence.



(14)

Part of the learning would also be to understand how PVE activities should be targeted. The diagram below describes the makeup of the Muslim community in relation to the targeting of PVE work in order to build resilience:



The above diagram shows the different levels of engagement that is required. The vast majority of Muslims in Birmingham (and the UK) are largely unaware of the complexities surrounding the PVE strategy. They are, like everyone else, trying to live a normal life. Some are practicing Muslims and others are not. They do not generally possess the knowledge, skills or resources required to prevent violent extremism within their localities or even recognise the signs of self radicalisation of young Muslims.

The tiny fraction (shown as a dot) of those within Muslim communities that actually sympathise with and are potentially vulnerable to developing dangerous tendencies are very small in percentage. This group of vulnerable individuals need to be engaged in a targeted and innovative way to ‘win back their hearts and minds’ away from extremist ideologies. Therefore, local authorities need to engage with those (shown as green) who are more informed within Muslim communities such as scholars and key community figures and empower them to build the capacity of local Muslim organisations and individuals, creating an atmosphere of resilience and resistance to extremist influences.



- (15) The diagram below is a useful way to illustrate which vulnerable people should be targeted:



On one side of the wall are the violent extremists who have crossed the wall and now engaged in violent activities. The PVE work must not focus on this group of people as they should be the concern of the security services. Where the local Prevent work must focus is the side of the wall where some young people are 'hanging around', walking towards or wanting to climb over. They represent the young vulnerable people that must be targeted with specialist activities under PVE programme underpinned by the necessary support required and space for their rehabilitation.

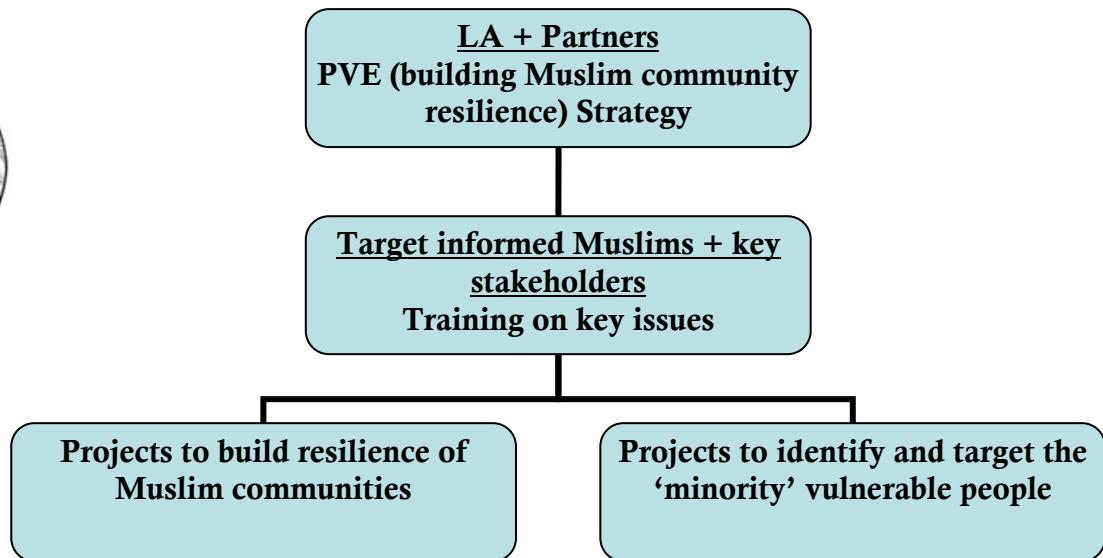
- (16) It is imperative, therefore, that a distinction is made between *general* community cohesion work and PVE (or building Muslim community resilience). Community cohesion will automatically be promoted by focusing in a targeted way on building Muslim community resilience to violent extremism. However, by not focusing in a targeted way, community cohesion could be damaged e.g. the radicalisation of young Muslims may well continue to grow without a 'specific Muslim strategy' which in turn will continue to be fuelled by extremists.



The diagram below provides the approach local authorities should adopt in delivering their PVE programme:



Delivery of a Local Prevent (Building Muslim Community Resilience) Strategy



- (17) Finally, more work needs to be done to strengthen the understanding and relationship between Muslim communities and local employers, leaders in the business and civic institutions and key people working in the statutory, community and third sector bodies by experimenting with innovative projects such as ‘seeing is believing type events’.



11. Glossary of Abbreviations & Terms



Alim

Islamic Scholar

CLG
Department

Communities and Local Government



Gurdwara

Sikh Temple

Imam

Muslim spiritual leader

Imaan

Arabic word for faith/belief

Madaaris
Schools)

Plural for Madarssa (Islamic or Quranic

Masjid

Arabic for Mosque

Muslimah

Arabic word for Muslim women

Priority local authorities

Defined by the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Guidance Note (London: CLG, February 2007) as those that *“have areas of highest priority or need and / or have sizeable Muslim communities”*.

Peer

Islamic Spiritual Guide



12. Appendix 1: PVE Project Management Board



Name	Organisation
Councillor Alan Rudge , Cabinet Member for Equalities & Human Resources (Chairman)	Birmingham City Council
Mashuq Ally , Head of Equality & Diversity (Vice Chairman)	Birmingham City Council
Mirza Ahmad , Chief Legal Officer	Legal & Democratic Services, Birmingham City Council
Sharon Lea , Director of Community Services & Resilience	Community Services, Birmingham City Council
Ian Coghill , Director of Community Safety & Environment	Community Safety, Birmingham City Council
Debra Davis , Director of Public Relations and Communications	Communications, Birmingham City Council
Tarik Chawdry , Assistant Director of Personnel & Human Resources	Corporate Human Resources, Birmingham City Council
Waheed Nazir , Assistant Director for Development Planning & Regeneration	Regeneration, Development Directorate, Birmingham City Council
Yousiff Meah , Principal Equality & Diversity Manager	Equality & Diversity, Birmingham City Council
Chrissie Garrett , Assistant Director Inclusion Support	Children, Young People and Families Directorate, Birmingham City Council
Paul Scarrott , Chief Superintendent	West Midlands Police
Mick Gillick , Chief Inspector	West Midlands Police
Zahid Nawaz	Equality & Human Rights Commission
Glenda Joseph James	GOWM
Waqar Ahmed , Preventing Extremism Team	GOWM
Ifor Jones , Acting Director Of Constituencies-Representing Housing Constituencies	Birmingham City Council



13. Appendix 2: List of Respondents Interviewed

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Ahmed, Khurshid | British Muslim Forum |
| 2. Ahmed, Nasir | Bangladeshi Multi-Purpose Centre |
| 3. Ahmed, Waqar | Government Office West Midlands |
| 4. Al Asly, Hameed | Mauth Welfare Trust |
| 5. Ally, Mashuq Dr | Head of Equalities and Diversity, BCC |
| 6. Dixon, Shakil | Equalities and Diversity Unit, BCC |
| 7. Douglas, Raymond | Learning Curve |
| 8. Fazil, Kamran | TYGA Youth Forum/Success Clubs |
| 9. George, Karl | Karl George Associates |
| 10. Hamed, Assad | Know Your Client |
| 11. Hussain, Aliyah | SILK/Success Clubs |
| 12. Iqbal, Atif | Equalities and Diversity Unit, BCC |
| 13. Kazi, Altaf Hussain | Equalities and Diversity Unit, BCC |
| 14. Limbada, Zubeda | Communications, BCC |
| 15. Mahmood, Tasneem | Hear My Voice/Success Clubs |
| 16. Meah, Yousiff | Equalities and Diversity Unit, BCC |
| 17. Naseem, Dr Mohammed | Birmingham Central Mosque |
| 18. Rashid, Nargis | Children, Young People and Families,
BCC |
| 19. Rehman, Aftab | Government Office West Midlands |
| 20. Scarrott, Paul | West Midlands Police |
| 21. Vos, Lawrence | Communications, BCC |



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