



Preventing Violent Extremism: Training for Community Leaders

A Report of the two-day programme held on Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th December 2009 at the Lightbox



The Lightbox, Chobham Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 4AA

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Summary

The Government's Prevent agenda has come under much scrutiny from areas of the Muslim communities. It is viewed by many as a confused and misguided agenda largely based on surveillance, and unfairly as well as unjustifiably targeting entire Muslim communities as potential terrorists. Others view it as an agenda that takes a 'top-down approach' by 'telling' Muslim communities what to do. Perceptions such as this have made engaging with Muslim communities on this agenda a problematic, and very sensitive issue.

Woking Borough Council took a 'bottom up' approach by bringing community leaders from different denominations and ethnic groups together and empowering them to understand their key issues and challenges and devising a way forward for Woking.

To achieve this Woking Borough Council commissioned Waterhouse Consulting Group to carry out the work. Waterhouse Consulting Group developed a two-day training programme for Woking Muslim community leaders which was held at the Lightbox on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th December 2009. The aims and objectives were

- 1) encourage the different Muslim ethnic groups and denominations e.g. *Deobandi; Wahabi/Salafi; Barelwi/Ahle-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat; Shi'a* to work together;
- 2) identify key issues and challenges facing their communities; and,
- 3) develop wider community knowledge of Prevent and in so doing, increase acceptance of the benefit of Prevent to the community.

The contents of the two-day course included:

- *how individuals become radicalised*
- *how to identify a vulnerable person in the community (what are the vulnerability factors)*
- *what local interventions could be made; what is the Government's Prevent Strategy?*
- *how to work in partnership with the council and other key stakeholders and*
- *what are the key issues, challenges and priorities facing the Muslim communities in Woking; and,*
- *how can 'community ownership' of the agenda and change happen?*

Thirty key figures from the local Muslim communities attended (please see appendix 1). The two day programme adopted a blended approach with videos, acting/role plays, discussion groups and workshops in order to be inclusive to meet the diverse learning needs of the diverse participants. It was facilitated by Dr Waqar Azmi OBE (Government's former Chief Diversity Adviser); Fatima Qamar (Divisional Head – PVE Programmes) and Sulemanm Dadabhai (Manager – PVE training).

The two-day was conducted under Chatham House Rules and participants additionally highlighted how they wanted the two-day to run and what they wanted to achieve:

The outcomes of the two-day programme were extremely positive. It not only helped to identify key issues, priorities and challenges facing Woking's Muslim communities but also established the Woking Muslim Forum (with representatives from all Muslim ethnic groups and denominations) to drive forward these issues as well as have ownership of their local PVE agenda.

Recommendations

Our key recommendations based on the two-day programme and the views of the delegates are as follows;

- 1) The Woking Muslim Forum (WMF) has a huge potential to *work for the common good* and, therefore, should be financially supported to help achieve its goals particularly, the four identified priority areas of:
 - Youth
 - Mosques
 - Education
 - Building Trust
- 2) However, the short-term and more pressing requirement is the provision of part-time Secretariat Support for at least a year to help the WMF to hold meetings; develop a constitution; and have some quick wins.
- 3) The WMF needs to have representation of women. The Council should commission a similar two-day event for Muslim women to:
 - develop their knowledge of Prevent and in so doing, increase acceptance of the benefit of Prevent to the community;
 - empower them to identify their key priorities, issues and challenges; and,
 - help incorporate these as well as their membership on the WMF as well as its four Sub-Committees.

Participant's recommendations

We received a number of feedback from participants who felt that this training is critical and would recommend to key community figures elsewhere in the country. However, there were some specific needs which they identified and expressed. These included:

- 'Are there any more 'in depth' workshops on how to identify potential problems with youth going off the right path?
- 'I believe we need more leadership training so that we can learn to be more effective in our efforts to serve our whole community.
- 'We should involve the 'host' community and others like the local authority & police in such courses'.
- 'Key community members and Imams should be given effective media training on how to effectively and diplomatically represent Islam and events in a positive way – how to complain about incorrect media coverage etc'.

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1. Introduction

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To achieve this Woking Borough Council commissioned Waterhouse Consulting Group to carry out the work.

2. The 'bottom up' approach

Waterhouse Consulting Group developed a two-day training programme for Woking Muslim community leaders which was held at the Lightbox on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th December 2009. The aims and objectives were

- 4) encourage the different Muslim ethnic groups and denominations e.g. *Deobandi; Wahabi/Salafi; Barelwi/Ahle-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat; Shi'a* to work together;
- 5) identify key issues and challenges facing their communities; and,
- 6) develop wider community knowledge of Prevent and in so doing, increase acceptance of the benefit of Prevent to the community.

The contents of the two-day course included:

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- *how to identify a vulnerable person in the community (what are the vulnerability factors)*
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Thirty key figures from the local Muslim communities attended (please see appendix 1). The two day programme adopted a blended approach with videos, acting/role plays, discussion groups and workshops in order to be inclusive to meet the diverse learning needs of the diverse participants. It was facilitated by Dr Waqar Azmi OBE (Government's former Chief Diversity Adviser); Fatima Qamar (Divisional Head – PVE Programmes) and Sulemanm Dadabhai (Manager – PVE training).

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The two-day was conducted under Chatham House Rules and participants additionally highlighted how they wanted the two-day to run and what they wanted to achieve:

The outcomes of the two-day programme were extremely positive. It not only helped to identify key issues, priorities and challenges facing Woking's Muslim communities but also established the Woking Muslim Forum (with representatives from all Muslim ethnic groups and denominations) to drive forward these issues as well as have ownership of their local PVE agenda.

3. Key issues, challenges & priorities

Following the training provided by Waterhouse Consulting Group all community leaders not only understood Prevent but accepted the benefit of Prevent to the Community. Participants became keen to not only highlight issues, challenges and priorities facing their communities but also find a way of working together amongst themselves and with the local public authorities. However, in order to avoid duplication of work Dr Zafar Iqbal, Senior Policy Officer (Community Engagement) at Woking Borough Council provided an overview of what the Council is currently doing and what have been its achievements.



Photo of some of the Muslim community leaders attending the two-day training programme

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A general consensus agreed the following four issues, challenges and priorities within Woking’s Muslim communities which needed to be tackled collectively:

- 1) Building Trust
- 2) Education
- 3) Mosques
- 4) Young People

After identifying and agreeing these four key priorities delegates were divided into four groups each representing one of the priorities. Each group was asked to work together and feed back to the wider group their short, medium and long term objectives and the possible solutions.

The following was what each of the groups came up with:

Issues	Solutions
<p>Education:</p> <p>The attendance rate / performance in the two schools in Woking where majority of Muslim pupils attend is very low</p> <p>To understand issues and how to effectively engage with children and encourage them to study further.</p> <p>To aim high and encourage achievement</p> <p>To further capacity build and provide training to community leaders on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to develop effective support structures • gain an appreciation of Islamic values in the educational systems • effective ways of raising awareness of Islam into the wider community; and, • how to present Islam in a positive way. 	<p>Parental Skills: parents need training on why education, attendance and actively getting involved in all aspects of their child’s education are of key importance.</p> <p>Adult classes for parents – awareness that education is important and how to ensure that they have the capability to offer sufficient careers advice.</p> <p>To have qualified teachers – both for Islamic education in Mosques/Madaaris and in schools. Not short term on an ad-hoc basis but long term reliable and good teachers.</p> <p>To have <i>Community Achievement Awards Ceremonies</i> – to recognise and appraise both teachers and students to create a competitive and striving community</p> <p>To raise public awareness and encourage Muslims to become Governors of their children’s schools. In so doing;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhance their own individual Islamic knowledge so that they could support others - train them on how get effective parental engagement - provide media and wider community/institutional engagement training to key community figures <p>Quick Win (Short-Term) <i>To encourage parents to become school Governors for the two schools in Woking where Muslim children are in majority. This will help to encourage greater parental involvement as well as increase pupil attainment levels.</i></p>
<p>Mosques</p> <p>Effective leadership</p> <p>Inclusions for ALL communities.</p>	<p>Capacity-build Imams by providing Imams training; capacity-build Mosque Committees on how to play their role effectively on: governance issues; health & safety; charity law; recruitment of staff on merit; development of formal recruitment & selection policy; carrying out CRB checks as well as minutes/agenda/policies etc</p> <p>Become a centre of support for the community – e.g. counselling for service for emotional/drugs/careers etc; allow it to become a centre of excellence for correct Islamic learning – particularly for the young; open</p>

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<p>Raise awareness about Islam</p> <p>Islamic education</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>up Mosque visits for all communities.</p> <p>Using effective methods such the media, internet, power-point presentations, workshops, conferences & seminars; focus on methods that will appeal to the younger generation.</p> <p>Raise the quality and standard of Islamic education in Woking Mosques/Madaaris – professionalise this area</p> <p>Capacity-build relevant Mosque committee members/community leaders on how to access mainstream funding to develop community projects that could be run from the Mosques/Madaaris.</p> <p>Quick Win (Short-Term): <i>To organise at least <u>one</u> open day in all Woking mosques, where all members of the communities are invited to visit, talk to people and gain awareness about Islam. This to be done in partnership with the local media and relevant stakeholders.</i></p>
<p>Building Trust</p> <p>1) Effective engagement & communication with & between different communities is critical (inter-community harmony: non Muslims and Muslims not interacting)</p> <p>2) Common Goals – define what they are and come together to achieve this i.e. establish a charity to help the community in Woking</p>	<p>Short/Medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispel myths through media, talks, community events, newsletters • Effective leadership training is urgently required covering PR, media and effective stakeholder engagement for community members and Imams to respond to events at local, national and international levels • Work with statutory organisations, businesses, schools and other relevant bodies in Woking. • Create events e.g. open days in mosques, fairs and exhibitions, and inviting the wider community to get together and interact. <p>Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-active work within the community of Woking • Becoming more regionally & nationally involved by supporting local stakeholders <p>Quick win: <i>Effectively communicate between each other (the different denominations and ethnic groups present here today) by meeting on a regular basis for a year within the context of mutual respect and Islamic values.</i></p>
<p>Young People</p> <p>Equip and build the skills of young people to express themselves in a positive way.</p> <p>Young people are not part of 'Muslim leadership: they need to have a role and responsibility in the welfare of the community.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of the situation of Muslims in Britain.</p>	<p>Engagement is required at a school level, but the training/coaching and capacity-building work is urgently required. This needs to be delivered by appropriate people i.e. Muslim role models</p> <p>Leadership Involvement: young people are not being represented in the community decision-making processes e.g. Mosque Committees; Committees of community & mainstream organisations. This needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Create an awareness of the levels of crime and how many Muslims are in prison today, i.e. have conferences/awareness raising days and build their confidence on how they could contribute.</p>

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Employment	Create projects that would encourage young people to get jobs or improve their chance of getting better work e.g. CV writing, interviewing skills; secondment opportunities; shadowing and mentoring opportunities.
Lack of role models	Provide role models for young people e.g. through Mosaic (a national Muslim mentoring network established by the Prince's Charities). Relevant key figures & community leaders could mentor local young people.
Recognising achievement: Youth talent is not encouraged in the local community.	Community Awards Ceremonies: recognise and appreciate achievements. This will also create a competitive culture within young Muslims to achieve better. Quick win (Short-term) <i>Every appropriate delegate attending this training must take on ONE high potential young person 'as a mentee'. This could potentially support thirty young people in Woking.</i>



Photo of a delegate presenting the key issues, challenges and solutions from his Group

4. The way forward

In order to address these issues, challenges and solutions all community leaders of all denominations and ethnic groups agreed to come together under one platform by creating a new body that represents all Mosques, denominations and ethnic groups namely, the Woking Muslim Forum. This was history in the making as in many parts of the World Shi'as, Sunnis and their different denominations like Wahabis/Salafis; Deobandis; Barelwis/Ahle-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat; Ahle-Hadith do not sit together let

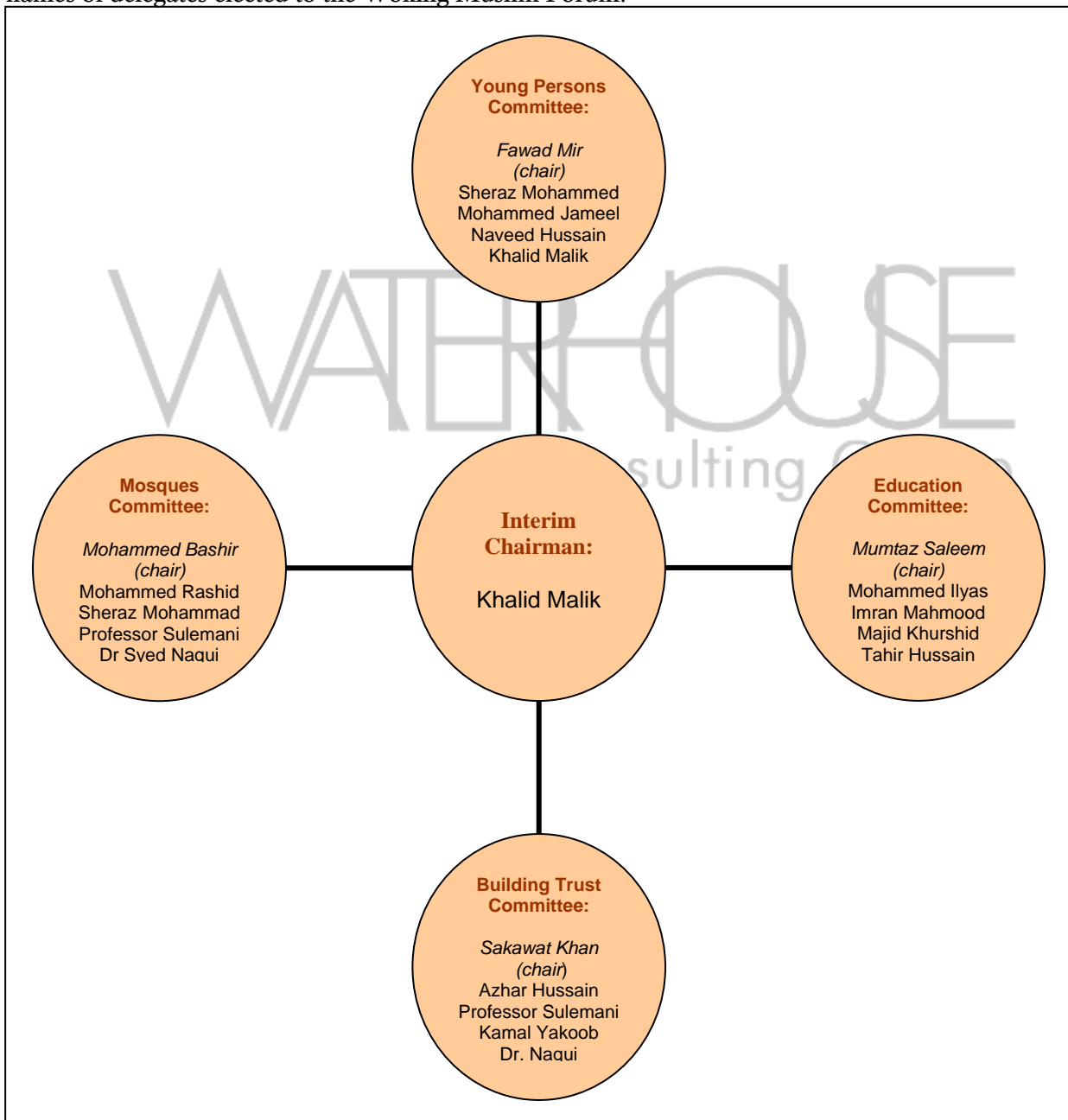
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alone work together. Woking Muslim community leaders, therefore, should be congratulated and supported for taking this major step.

It was agreed that the overall aim of the Woking Muslim Community Forum would be **“to work towards the common good”** and the four priority areas identified e.g. Education; Mosques; Building Trust and Young People would become the key objectives. The issues and solutions discussed by each of the Groups and highlighted above would become the Forum’s Work Programme for the year (December 2009 – November 2010).

In order to ensure that work in each of the four priority areas get done delegates agreed to make each area as a Sub-Committee of the Forum and elected an Interim Chair and Members to drive forward work respective to their area listed above. Delegates also appointed an overall Chair of the Forum to represent the Muslim communities, Mosques, Islamic Institutes and Muslim community organisations in Woking. All appointments were unanimous and by a simple majority. The diagram below shows names of delegates elected to the Woking Muslim Forum:



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Delegates agreed that the next steps are:

- For the chairman to call a meeting within a month of all Sub-Committee Chairs & Members to discuss taking the work forward and decide on the regularity of Forum meetings as well as Sub-Committee meetings.
- For Woking Borough Council to provide some logistical/financial support to enable the Woking Muslim Forum to meet regularly and carry out work for the benefit of everyone in Woking.
- For Woking Muslim Forum to start work in partnership with the Woking Borough Council and in particular, for the Chair to meet all relevant officers/stakeholders in his new capacity as soon as possible.
- To agree within one year a constitution and election process of members

Delegates also agreed the working principles of the Woking Muslim Forum. These are:

- Respect each other
- Don't criticise
- Represent all mainstream Muslim faiths
- Cross party, non-political, non-denomination, cross ethnicity
- Honesty and transparency
- Be focused
- Run with the majority, follow protocols of fair representation
- Confidentiality of discussions – Chatham House Rules
- Work professionally
- All principles should be adhered according to Islamic values.

5. Some participant views/comments

This was an important and critical event for Woking the outcome of which has been extremely positive. The main aim of the two-day training was to support community members in increasing their understanding of Preventing Violent Extremism. This was achieved and delegates ultimately became comfortable with the Prevent strategy and accepted the benefit of Prevent to the community. Delegates also understood their responsibilities in supporting to combat the threat of terrorism.

The second aim was to build trust, confidence and a partnership working approach – all members of the community that had attended the training from different political and religious denominations worked together to find a solution to meet the challenges and issues facing their communities. The creation of Woking Muslim Forum is a major step and community leaders should be congratulated and supported in making this happen.

As one delegate wrote:

“I believe we all witnessed a minor miracle that there was not an argument over the weekend between the attending parties. This was such a positive sign - But it would be VERY beneficial if the Waterhouse consulting group could follow up once a quarter until we are all happy that the Forum is firmly established and operating”.

Empowerment of Muslim communities is critical to working in partnership, building trust and defeating terrorism. This was central to the two-day programme and 100% of the delegates felt more confident, aware and empowered. One delegate wrote about what he is taking away with him:

“Taking control of the agenda and deciding ourselves what is important for the local community rather than someone else deciding this. Plan ahead and have a focused strategy”

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Another delegate wrote: *'I have learned many factors but the Communication and Building Trust are the main ones, which I will be using'*.

The training concluded with extremely positive feedback from the group, with 100% of delegates agreeing they would recommend the training to others one delegate wrote "Training was very enjoyable, most comprehensive, coherent and professionally delivered".

6. Recommendations

Our key recommendations based on the two-day programme and the views of the delegates are as follows;

- 4) The Woking Muslim Forum (WMF) has a huge potential to *work for the common good* and, therefore, should be financially supported to help achieve its goals particularly, the four identified priority areas of:
 - Youth
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Participant's recommendations

We received a number of feedback from participants who felt that this training is critical and would recommend to key community figures elsewhere in the country. However, there were some specific needs which they identified and expressed. These included:

- 'Are there any more 'in depth' workshops on how to identify potential problems with youth going off the right path?
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Appendix I

List of Delegates that attended the training on the 12th and 13TH December 2009

Azhar Hussain
Khalid Malik
Majid Khurshid
M. Ilyas Raja
Fawad Mir
Riasat Khan
Cllr Mohammed Iqbal
Prof. Nisar Ahmad Khan
Shehraz Mohammad
M. Abdul Ghafoor
M. Sakhawat Khan
M. Amin
M. Bashir
Sajid Mahmood
M. Zubair
Nasir Qureshi
Sajjad Hussain
Dr. M. Idrees Awan
Mumtaz Saleem
Mahmadur Rashid
Mohammed Jameel
Naveed Hassnan
Tahir Hussain
Riasat Khan
Professor Sulemani



NB. A registration form was circulated for trainees to sign - some delegates may not have completed this.