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# The Unity Programme : The Muslim communities in Newcastle : Final report

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# **The Unity Programme: The Muslim Communities in Newcastle**

**Final report**

**Pasha Associates**

&

**Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit**  
University of Salford

October 2008





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## Introduction

Muslims are the single largest religious minority in the UK today (Alam and Husband, 2006). Since the disturbances in various Northern towns in 2001, the events in the United States on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and the events in the UK on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, the Muslim population in Britain has become surrounded by discussions on terrorism, conflict, radicalisation and segregation. This has led to a position where communities have arguably become stigmatised as 'threatening' (Werbner, 2005) and much of the recent literature has focused on preventing extremism.

In February 2007 Communities and Local Government (CLG) began a programme which aimed to support initiatives around community engagement and social cohesion, which specifically appeared to deal with the development of violent extremism. According to the CLG this will be broadly achieved by:

- Establishing communities in which Muslims identify themselves with and are accepted by the wider community;
- Supporting communities that reject extremist ideology and actively condemn violent extremism;
- Isolating violent extremism activity and supporting and co-operating with the Police and security services; and
- Capacity building communities to develop mechanisms to deal with problems where they arise and supporting diversionary activity for those at risk.

In late 2007 Newcastle City Council commissioned Pasha Associates in partnership with the University of Salford to explore these issues broadly with relation to the local Muslim community in Newcastle. More specifically, the Council wanted the research team to consider the following issues:

- The Muslim community in Newcastle, including ethnic, cultural and theological groupings;
- The diversity and dynamics of local Muslim communities;
- The key local, national and global issues for Muslim communities;
- The socio-economic profile of Muslim communities;
- Leadership, governance and engagement within Muslim communities;
- Experience of racism and Islamophobia;
- The role of younger people within the Muslim communities;

- The role of mosques within these communities;
- Key issues relating to young people;
- Key issues relating to women;
- Inter-generational relationships within Muslim families and communities;
- Muslim community views on violent extremist political Islamic groups; and
- Perceptions of relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

In recognition of the broad based objectives for the study, discussions were held between the research team and Council officers regarding identifying those objectives which were felt should be given greater priority. It was agreed that more detailed attention should be given to the issues affecting Muslim women, young men and the role of the mosques within the community.

The report provides an overview of these issues based on both analysis of relevant secondary local and national information and direct engagement with different sections of the Muslim community: women; young people; Imams and other leading members of the local mosques.

The report is structured in the following way. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Muslim community in the UK and Newcastle. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the factors of theo-political influences for Muslims in Britain while Chapter 3 considers effective engagement with Muslim communities based on a literature and good practice review. These three initial chapters provide the context for the report in terms of a backdrop to a review of local information about Muslim communities in Newcastle (Chapter 4) and the findings from the community engagement exercises with the different sections of the Muslim community in Newcastle (Chapter 5). The final element of the report (Chapter 6) provides a synopsis of the issues emerging from the consultation events and offers advice on how to take these issues forward.

## **Chapter 1: Overview of the Muslim community in the UK and Newcastle**

Until the 2001 Census there was no systematic data on the emergent religions in the UK. The question enquiring about an individual's religion was optional, but 92% of respondents provided an answer. The Census was adjusted for a 2% 'undercount'. Although there has been some criticism of the Census data, this still remains the most comprehensive source of data on faith communities. It shows that Muslims accounted for 3.1 % of the population (a total of 1.5 million Muslims) in England, compared to 72% Christians. Most people from emerging faith communities (not exclusively Muslim) live in London, East and West Midlands, Eastern Lancashire, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

'Muslims tend to be less ethnically homogeneous than other faith communities. For the Sikh and Hindu community, for example, just over 96% identify themselves as Asian or British Asian. The comparative figure for the Muslim community, however, is 74%. In addition, 12% of the Muslim population identified themselves as White; 7 % are Black; 4% are Chinese or Other Ethnic Group; and 4% are Mixed (which includes having one white parent or other mixed parentage). This heterogeneity is particularly prevalent in London; however, in the North of England the Muslim community is predominantly South Asian (mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi). There are more Muslim males than females, indeed, Census data 2001 suggests that there are 1067 Muslim males per every 1000 Muslim females (taken from Beckford *et al.*, 2006).

According to the Census 2001 within Newcastle-upon-Tyne there were 9,430 Muslims – 3.6% of the overall population.

### **Socio-economic and demographic information**

Based on information derived from the 2001 Census Muslims are more likely to be disadvantaged than other faith communities:

“They display low rates of labour market participation, the highest male unemployment rate, larger families, a higher percentage in social housing, the highest incidence of over-crowding and are most likely to live in deprived localities. The percentage with higher educational qualifications is low and the percentage working in blue-collar occupations is high” (Beckford *et al*, 2006, p. 10).

Comparing these indicators across different faith communities, Hindus tend to have the most favourable socio-economic status. The relative disadvantage can be seen to have multiple causes, including the predominantly rural peasant background in the sending areas; historical migration patterns; employment opportunities; poor educational levels; harassment; and geographical concentration in areas of decline and deprivation (Beckford *et al* 2006).

Unemployment rates are highest for Muslims (nearly 18% of those aged 16-24 and nearly 14% of those aged over 25) and economic activity is low (50% of those 25+ compared to average of 67%). Furthermore, there are factors that are particular to the Muslim community; for example, low representation of women in the workplace. By way of comparison, the Sikh community has significantly higher levels of female engagement in formal labour market. Indeed, 29% of Muslim women aged 25+ are economically active (compared to 59% average). Within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities this is even lower (21% and 15% respectively). This may be because of the traditional cultural values, together with early marriage and large family size – average household size (inclusive of all members) was 3.8 compared with 2.4 for England as a whole. Muslims have the highest actual and potential fertility rate.

“Socio-economic indicators from the Census reveal a consistent picture of the vulnerable position of the aggregated Muslim population compared to people from other minority faith groups” (Beckford *et al*, 2006, p. 18).

Muslims have the lowest proportion of men in white collar groups (based on Standard Occupational Classification, SOC): 42% compared on average with 50%, plus average of 80% Jewish men and 63% Hindus. There are a high percentage of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men who work in trades such as taxi driving and restaurants, with little career progression (ONS, 2004). Employment opportunities are directly linked to a number of factors including education. In terms of educational attainment 41% of Muslims (aged 16-64) had no educational qualifications compared to less than 30% for all other groups.

In terms of housing, members of Muslim communities tend to be concentrated in flats and terraced housing. There are high levels of overcrowding, which are seen to have a knock-on effect on children’s life chances – 40% of Muslims live in overcrowded conditions compared to just over 10% for England as a whole. In terms of housing deprivation, 40% of the Muslim population are affected by this compared to 15% for the population of England as a whole. The highest rate occurs in Yorkshire & Humber (48%).

In terms of regional variations in religious composition, the population of the North East is 1.1% Muslim. This is the lowest percentage in England with the exception of the South West (0.5%). In terms of the highest proportions this is led by London (8.5%), West Midlands (4.1%), and Yorkshire & Humber (3.8%).

The Muslim community has a youthful profile: the mean age across the community is around 26 years, compared to around 39 for all England: the Jewish and Christian groups have the oldest profile (43 and 41 respectively).

Members of Muslim communities tend to be concentrated in certain geographical areas, rather than residentially mixed, which may indicate the strong social networks within the communities. A total of 33% of the Muslim population is located in the 10% most deprived areas. There is a potential tension for policy and service delivery here as there is a need to focus on tackling social exclusion in these areas, but any efforts to do this can lead to perception that they are getting more favourable treatment, which has implications for community cohesion (as seen in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley (Home Office, 2001). The Cattle report (Home Office, 2001) suggests the need for ethnically mixed housing and schools, the opening of Mosques to meetings of people of different faiths, improving facilities used by all rather than targeting at specific groups. However, there is a question mark about the extent to which the conclusions of this report, based on the specific residential mix in specific North West towns are directly transferable to the situation in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

### **Experiences of Anti-Social behaviour and discrimination**

The need for protection from discrimination has been a key issue for Muslim communities for a number of years (Open Society Institute, 2005). This is particularly acute post-September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, where it is suggested that religion is more important than ethnicity in terms of who is most likely to experience racism and discrimination (Sheridan, 2002). Discrimination is often focused on those who have visible markers of their religion (particularly in terms of dress) (Hopkins, 2004).

Discrimination is often based on Islamophobia and stereotypes. (Open Society Institute, 2005). 'Islamophobia refers to prejudice or discrimination against Islam and, therefore, against Muslims. The term came into more common use after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks but has been contested from both 'sides'; being seen as inadequate to cover the full range of apathy or hostility towards Islam, while also being seen as a term that is used to undermine any criticism of Islam.' The Runnymede Trust has identified eight components which they say defines Islamophobia. This definition, from the 1997 document 'Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All' is widely accepted, including by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. The eight components are:

1. Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change.
2. Islam is seen as separate and 'other'. It does not have values in common with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them.
3. Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist.
4. Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism and engaged in a 'clash of civilisations'.

5. Islam is seen as a political ideology and is used for political or military advantage.
6. Criticisms made of the West by Islam are rejected out of hand.
7. Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.
8. Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural or normal.

To be a British Muslim is defined “solely in terms of negativity, deprivation, disadvantage and alienation” (Alexander, 2000, p. 6).

There is also a perception that members of the Muslim population are increasingly discriminated against within the criminal justice system (Open Society Institute, 2005). Policies such as ‘stop and search’ has exacerbated this and this has again increased as a result of the anti-terrorism legislation. Recently published figures show that, relative to the general population, Asian people were twice as likely to be stopped and searched as White people (Ministry of Justice 2008)

There is some evidence that Muslim women experience a ‘triple bind’, being discriminated against due to gender, class and race.

### **Muslim women**

With reference to Muslim women, it was found that women’s voices are seldom heard; therefore, Muslim women should be targeted when seeking the views of Muslim communities (Communities and Local Government, 2006).

There is a need to ensure that resources are not just targeted at so called ‘fluffy’ initiatives (i.e. sewing classes, henna design), but rather, women should be encouraged to become more involved in children’s schools and other areas intrinsic to community members’ lives. The women who attended the PET event also expressed a desire to be more involved in the teaching at the mosques but there are barriers to this being possible.

Attempts have been made, however, for more sustainable engagement with Muslim women; for example, the Muslim Women’s Group set up by the Minister for Women which acts as a channel of communication between Muslim women and Cabinet. Furthermore, there is the Muslim Women’s Network (MWN), again linked to the Minister for Women.

What needs to be considered is how to engage with those individuals who are not linked in as well, those without English language skills, or those whose cultural norms may, in some way, obstruct their engagement (Communities and Local Government, 2006).

With regards to young people, it is suggested that the 'models' their parents experienced do not always allow them to express themselves in ways appropriate to the societies with which they now identify (Fitzgerald, 2007). For example, many young people feel that mosque committees are not in touch with today's issues of British Muslims (Communities and Local Government, 2006). It is suggested that such committees are often a 'springboard' to public life' (Communities and Local Government, 2006). Some parents and Imams, however, may discourage young people from involvement at this level. There is, therefore, a need for 'political capacity building' amongst young Muslims (Fitzgerald, 2007). The women who attended the *engaging with Muslim women* event suggested the need for more out-of school activities for children (Communities and Local Government, 2006). What appears to be the key issue is the need for a more inclusive approach towards young people. It is suggested that if they are excluded they are, to some extent, more susceptible to extremist versions of Islam (Fitzgerald, 2007).

### **The role of the Mosque**

A Mosque is a place of worship for the Muslim communities. There are now over 1000 Mosques across the UK (MCB, 2006), which provide places of prayer, enlightenment, refuge and comfort for the Muslim communities (Masood, 2005). It has been highlighted that mosque facilities are one of the most valuable assets the Muslim communities possess (Maqsood, 2005). Their role is two-fold; firstly as a place of worship and secondly meeting educational and social needs (MCB, 2006).

Historically the mosque had four major roles: a place of worship; a place of education; a judicial court; and a place for political and administrative decision making (Alavi, 1990).

The role of the Imam in British mosques has changed over the years in response to the changing socio-economic needs of the Muslim communities (MCB, 2006). Their role goes beyond leading daily prayer to being perceived as leaders, guides and scholars towards acting as informal reference points for a range of personal and social problems (MCB, 2006). However, there have been calls in recent years for more training for Imams, as well as the need to train Imams from the UK rather than relying on those from overseas (Maqsood, 2005; MCB, 2006).

It is also felt that there is a need to re-think the role of mosques to give them more of a community feel and make them less 'cliquish' and sectarian (Maqsood, 2005).

"The role of Imams and the way mosques are run will undoubtedly be a significant factor in the future of multi-faith Britain. However, if policy makers, communities and ultimately the wider society are to harness the positive aspects of this vast religious network of institutions, a much greater understanding needs to be arrived at in terms of both the role and nature of Imams and mosques and their position in British society" (MCB, 2006, p. 3).



## **Chapter 2: An Introduction to factors of Theo-Political influences for Muslims in Britain**

### **Introduction**

As noted earlier, the Muslim community in Britain is not homogenous. Its variance can be drawn upon lines of ethnicity, kinship, nationality, global and regional locality, sectarianism as well as socio-economic backgrounds. In Britain, immigrant settlement patterns may also influence interpretations of religious doctrine due to social/cultural dynamics within individual migrant communities where they live. According to the 2001 Census, Britain is home to approximately 1.6 million Muslims, however despite global events bringing them to the attention of the masses, very little is understood regarding the background of Islam and Muslims. The purpose of this chapter is to put into context the diverse backgrounds of Islamic influences on Muslim socio-political dynamics.

### **Background**

The majority of Muslims in Britain have origins in South Asia, which is reflected in the backgrounds of the schools of thought prevalent amongst British Muslims today. Post war Britain had seen the arrival of South Asians, but the communities that were formed had to create their own interpretations of identity in their journey to becoming 'British Muslims'. This journey has been filled with numerous challenges for those that arrived in the 50's, 60's and later. The demise of the textile mills in the 70's, unemployment and racist hostilities from the National Front, as well as the events in the following decades such as the Satanic Verses affair and their general opposition to the first Gulf War, placed them under scrutiny of their 'British' credentials particularly in the light of Norman Tebbit's 'cricket test' in 1991 on loyalty to the UK. In 2001, civil disturbances in the northern towns of England further demonstrated pointers to disenfranchisement of South Asian Muslims, but then September 11<sup>th</sup> of the same year ensured that 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of Muslim immigrants would remain embroiled within the socio-political scene merely by proxy through being Muslims. It is, therefore, essential to contextualise that the aim of this paper is not to analyse Islam, but to explain the background to pluralism amongst Muslims and to draw upon any drivers that could justify and motivate a radicalisation of Muslims. This chapter sets out a basic interpretation of how best to understand Muslim communities in terms of what Muslims regard as the various 'schools of thought' and 'schools of law' and will argue the existence of a separate entity of 'movements', which could influence Muslims.

## **The notion of Ummah**

Amongst much of the commentary on pluralism amongst Muslims, it is felt, that the notion of 'Ummah' is not given the prominence it deserves to provide the contextual basis of a basic premise for commonality amongst Muslims. Ummah gives Muslims an inter-connection, through a strong notion of brotherhood. This brotherhood theoretically transcends national, cultural and kinship boundaries, to provide a unifying identity as brothers and sisters in Islam. This notion of Ummah provides explanations for a whole host of interpretations of Muslim reasoning. For instance, in global terms Muslims would resonate with the Palestinian cause as a cause for the 'whole Muslim Ummah'. This notion of Ummah has, therefore, been a very powerful tool to both unite Muslims but has also been used by extremists to galvanise Muslims who may be at risk of radicalism; giving justification to 'fight against the west', in order to directly respond against certain 'causes' such as Chechnya, Palestine and Kashmir, which affect the Muslim Ummah in those lands. Ummah should not, however, be translated as a negative entity. It is an extremely powerful concept which gives Muslims a great deal of unity and puts emphasis on Muslims to act in a manner which promotes them in a positive light, not only amongst one another but also among non-Muslims. The notion of Muslim Ummah can also provide an understanding of why multi-ethnic Muslims may interact with each other in positive manners such as has been observed in the Women study circles in Newcastle and also choose to live near each other because of shared Muslim Ummah identities and value systems as well as a requirement to have the same shared cultural and religious amenities in their vicinities.

## **Islamic Traditions**

Islam has two main traditions – Shia and Sunni, and from them culminates what can be referred to as certain 'schools of thought' and 'schools of law'. Sunni and Shia Muslims constitute between 80-85% and 15-20% of the world's Muslim population, respectively. The two branches were borne out of the immediate fractions following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). From there on Islam as a religion took its teachings and reference to societal and daily life, not only from the Quran and Caliphate rulers' interpretations of jurisprudence in the light of the Quran, but also from culmination of the *Hadith*, which were interpretations of the Prophet's life and were collated into volumes. Although Muslims from all divides agree with the Quran as an unquestionable and original text, its interpretations through the Hadith, forms part of the differences between the strands of Islam. Today, Shia Islam has a main following in Iran, although they are also found in Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, India, Afghanistan and Lebanon as sizeable minorities.

Although there can be significant differences in the interpretations of the Quran and Hadith between Sunni's and Shia's, the two traditions still hold the same fundamental beliefs of Islam which is why they are both referred to as 'traditions'. What follows is a simplistic explanation to a complexity that has been extremely challenging to compile, partly because there is so much overlap between the various schools of thought. But its complexity is also due

to the fact that individuals will be individuals and although they may broadly hold the views of a particular school of thought, they may also 'buy in' to viewpoints from alternative schools of thought.

Many scholars, academics and theologians would cite Islam as having up to 73 sects. In order to simplify this complexity, we have tried to explain 'Islamic Schools of Thought' in a contextual manner by referring to the notion of Schools of Law as the fundamental basis to how Islamic pluralism can be understood. From this we have laid out the concept of 'Contemporary Schools of Thought' as a way in which to explain the basis of theological influencing practices over the last two centuries. Finally, the notion of 'Islamic Movements' as an influencing factor for some Muslims, is explained.

For ease of explanation of a complex range of issues, there are four areas to consider. First, the 'School of Law', which is based on religious practice in terms of, for example, rituals for prayer as influenced by the 5 main Imams in Islam. Secondly, the 'classical schools of thought' which refers to the early teachings of each of these 5 Imams from the early 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D. Thirdly, what we will call the 'contemporary schools of thought' based on how the classical schools have evolved over the past few centuries. Finally, Islamic movements that have arisen through various historic episodes will be reflected upon.

## **Schools of Law**

In its first few centuries, Islam started to expand across and beyond the Arab peninsula and it became important to apply Islamic interpretations to religious practice, belief structure and interpretations of Islamic law. The interpretations of the practice of Islamic teachings were then influenced by 5 main scholars or Imams. Four of these Imams were within the Sunni tradition and the fifth, Imam Jafar, was of the Shia tradition. The concept of 'School of Law' is drawn out of these Imams' interpretations of practice of Islamic teachings. The School of Law provides advice on interpretations of the Quran and Hadith on prayer and the conduct of lifestyle. Whereas followers of the four Sunni Imams can have overlap between each other, followers of Shia'ism abide primarily on advice handed by Imam Jafar.

The Sunni tradition has been influenced by four Imams between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. These were, Imam Abu Hanifa (725 A.D) has the largest followers amongst Muslims and its school of law, Imam Maalik Ibn Anas (714 A.D), Imam Shafi'ee (765 A.D) and Imam Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Hambal (855 A.D)

## **Classical Schools of Thought**

Following the teachings of each respective Imam, directions have been embodied into Schools of Thought. These schools of thought have also been influenced by the cultures of the environments they have been adopted within and wherever each Imam has influenced greater, so that region has more followers of that school of thought. Hence, the Hanafi school is found

predominantly amongst South Asians, Iraq, Turkey, Northern and Central Asia. The Maaliki school amongst the African continent, Hamballi School amongst the Saudi and United Arab Emirates and Shafi'ee School amongst East Africans, Southern Arab peninsular and South East Asians. Finally Jafari school amongst Iranians, Shia Iraqis and Shia Pakistani.

The origins of these schools of thought have been based primarily on teachings of the Imams. However, over time we have seen these traditional schools of thought being weaved through new interpretations which, at times, has seen the bringing together of multiple schools of thought. Hence in relative terms we have 'new' interpretations of 'traditional' Islam influenced by not just early scholarly teachings of the early Imams but also through influences of regionalism, culture, ethnicity, family, kinship and even global politics.

### **Contemporary Schools of Thought**

Before detailing how contemporary schools of thought have developed, an important additional factor to also reflect upon is the position of 'Sufism' within Islamic tradition. Both Sunn'ism and Shia'ism have to some degree acknowledged Sufism as either a separate tradition or an integral part of their tradition. Sufism is the practice of Islam through a spiritual and mystical component. It is organised through orders and led through spiritual guidance by a Pir, Sheikh, Walli (these can be classed by their followers as spiritual mystics, spiritual guiders or religious guiders). The propagation of Islam across the Indian Sub-continent has been said to be through the activities and influences of Pir's and Sufi's. Sufism has now, for some, become an independent school of thought but there is no doubt that its practices of Islam have impacted on contemporary schools of thought either by way of people rejecting elements of its practice or by way of adopting parts of its practice.

Some of the contemporary schools of thoughts are as follows, although not exhaustive, are representative of a proportion of Newcastle's Muslim communities;

- **Barelwi:** The Barelwi school of thought has the largest following amongst Muslims in Britain and is made up primarily of Hanafi teachings and followers are therefore Sunni. They are also linked to having close ties with Sufiism. Traditionally the Barelwi order has been linked to rural areas of the Indian sub-continent, which is why they draw close relationship with Sufi traditions as early Pirs had legacies in rural areas. There are, however different 'types' of Barelwis. However, their critics from other schools associate them with practices they call 'un-Islamic', such as considering 'Pirs' as intermediaries to God in prayer practices. However, in reality Barelwis may differ from person to person and as collectives from village to village.

- ***Naqshbandi:*** The Naqshbandi order is becoming more prominent in Britain and is derived through the Sufi tradition, although some commentators would argue they are an 'extreme version' of Barelwi. This is just one of a variety of orders derived from Sufi tradition and is considered to be the largest and most influential of all Sufi orders. Its founder Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari promoted spiritual and moral enlightenment through manners of religious meditation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which form the basis of this form of Sufism and is still continued through Sheikhs who are revered by their followers.
- ***Deobandi:*** The city of Deoband in India, is where the Deoband school started in 1867. Generally Deobandi's viewed the influence of Hindu culture in Indian sub-continent as a threat to 'pure' Islamic teachings. Their traditional background is, as with Barelwi, also Hanafi Sunni, but they are generally at odds with Barelwi's for the reasons cited above, i.e., Sufi traditional influences on Barelwiism, which they consider to be 'un-Islamic'. They have a conservative view of Islam especially in their appearance through strict interpretation. Their heritage as a school of thought has been linked to the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial India, where they felt Islam was under threat, so they outwardly took physical traits of identifying themselves as Muslims through their style of dress and as a defence mechanism. Deobandi's define religion as a personal matter, separate to the domains of politics and government and believe they can live as a minority in non-Islamic countries if there is tolerance towards them. They are generally opposed to the Barelwi stance of Sufi influence as a deviation from true Islamic teachings. Some Deobandi's may be sympathetic to the Salafi school of thought, which is quite a strict adherence to an 'Islamic way of life', but on the whole it would be incorrect to consider Deobandi's as purely Salafi.
- ***Salafi:*** A major factor of Salafi view is its opposition to Sufi influence to interpretation of Islam. Salafi's have a very strict and conservative interpretation of the Quran and interpretation of Islam. Salafi believe that their interpretation of Islam is in accordance with original text and practice from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The rise of Salafi's came about primarily in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through a notion of a sense of decline in Islam, but they are also referred to as Wahabbis who have origins in the process of the formation of the state of Saudi Arabia earlier in the seventeenth century. The state of Saudi Arabia has since the 1970's been 'exporting' Wahabbism across the globe and has made a concerted effort to spread Wahabbi/ Salafi thought as a pure doctrine to follow. Some Wahabbi groups have such a strong view of their way of interpreting Islam that they consider followers of other schools of thought as sometimes causing heresy and 'un-Islamic'.

## Islamic Movements

Many of the movements mentioned below are followers of Salafi/Wahabbi schools of thought. This is understandable when central to the roots to this school of thought is the strict positioning of Islam based on a personal and societal requirement to adhere to their interpretation of Islam. Many of them were borne out of a political backdrop of revivalist movements against colonialism. In terms of these movements, these have generally been considered to be 'reformist Salafis' who believe in personal and social transformation through education and propagation and 'Jihadist Salafis' who believe in the necessity of violence to achieve social and religious goals. This is by no means an exhaustive list and is to exemplify the motivating factors in contemporary theo-politics amongst Muslims. It is to provide background to information on theo-politics amongst Muslims, and is not expected to be a description of the position of Newcastle's Muslim Communities.

**Wahabbism:** Although Wahabbism was described earlier as a contemporary school of thought it is heavily inspirational in various movements. Its origins are found within the positioning of the tribe of Saud in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the state which holds two of the most sacred sites in Islam, the Kaaba in the city of Makka, and the burial site for the Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him) in the city of Medina so, therefore, it has religious importance for Muslims. In the seventeenth century the leaders of the Saud tribe aligned themselves with the teachings of al-Wahab in order to lay claim to the leadership of the state. This was based on a strict alliance of doctrine, with its extreme form viewing Muslims that do not conform to their teachings as being non-Muslims and their viewpoints to therefore be challenged. The Saudis began promoting Wahabbism through funds generated by oil wealth and through the establishments of Saudi institutions such as the Islamic University in Medina. During the 1980's, Saudi Arabia, along with the US and Britain helped the Afghani 'Mujahideen' movement against the Soviet invasion. Wahabbism was therefore becoming part of the Afghani military resistance. However, in the 1990's once promoting Wahabism across the globe, the Saudi state alienated a number of Wahabi inspired groups by supporting US forces in the Gulf War and allowing non-Muslim forces into the lands of Islamic heritage. This has thought to be a catalyst for developing an international revolutionary Wahabbism, which can even be opposed to the Saudi state – an example would be Al-Qaida. Despite Wahbbism being propagated through the Saudi's, due to the positioning of Saudi policy, Wahabbis across the globe are largely in two camps, pro-Saudi and anti-Saudi.

The issues highlighted as grievances that some of these internationalist revolutionary Wahabbi groups have capitalised upon are the Palestinian cause, Chechnya, the Balkan conflict and Bosnian Muslim genocide, the Satanic Verses and the perceived demonisation of Islam and Islamic ideals. These issues have been capitalised by certain groups.

***Tabligh-i-Jamaat*** : This was founded in 1920 in colonial India by Muhammad Ilyas who was a Deobani and believed in a grass root revival of Islam through which Muslims would generate an awareness of its principles amongst each other. It undertakes missionary within the Muslim community, through volunteers, by promoting brotherhood amongst Muslims and inviting Muslims to attend its gatherings. Tabligh-i-Jamaat, although having a strong Deobandi heritage, is today considered by some to be a Wahabbi/Salafi movement.

***Jamaati Islami***: This is a revivalist movement started by Maulana Mawdudi originally in colonial India and then applied his writings and works in Pakistan. He believed in the strict adherence to Shariah as opposed to what were deemed as local customs. He believed that there should be no separation between state and religion. He believed in an 'amir' to rule the state with a council of advisors and referred to the system as a 'theo-democracy'. Mawdudi was critical of conservative 'ulemas' or religious scholars and believed Muslims should be empowered as individuals to make their own determinations by their own understanding of the Quran. He was, however, conservative regarding dress codes and believed Muslim women should cover their faces when in public. Jamaat-Islami activity today restricts itself to preaching Islam within and amongst Muslims in their communities.

***Hizb –ut Tahrir (HT)***: This is the most controversial Islamic political movement in Britain at present. Although it has had offshoot organisations/movements arising from it abroad, in Britain it has largely remained known as HT. This is a movement that has been inspired in 1953 by its Palestinian founder, An-Nabhani, whose central message was that the reason for the demise of Muslim countries was because of the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. He believed the reconstitution of a 'Khalifa' state was the only way to bring about Muslim glory and its development was a Muslim obligation. He went on to state the requirement of 'liberating' non-Muslim state through offensive jihad. HT in Britain claim to be non-violent, but reject all forms of secular ideology in secular society including democracy, which is considered an 'infidel' system and refuse to participate in political systems in Britain. However, this could be changing as in some parts of the country HT members have been known to become involved in public debates. Calls from Tony Blair, as Prime Minister, to ban HT resonated with a profile of it as a dangerous and extremist organisation and movement. Although as an organisation it is banned in many countries across the globe including in some Muslim countries, this is not the case in Britain. It is understood to be popular amongst the student populous across Britain. However, there is no evidence of it being active at University campuses in Newcastle. The debate for banning or not banning HT continues. It is essential to help facilitate and create civic and political engagement for young Muslim people who may air and reason grievances without having to turn to such an organisation which, for some period of its history, refused to participate or engage in political dialogue.

## **Tackling Radicalism**

The Government's recent 'Prevent' Strategy draws upon inequalities in society and community cohesion to be important factors for counteracting the threat of terrorism. It highlights an importance of understanding communities and the dynamics of communities. It is, therefore, important to note that although the pluralism which exists amongst Muslims is a complex weave of religious doctrine as well as influences of cultures and kinship, Muslims must be viewed and understood in manners that reflect their diversity. This complexity may be difficult to disentangle but it is important not to demonise any element of its followers from whichever strand of Islamic discourse, as this will alienate them from dialogue. Therefore, just because followers of Salafi school of thought may be deemed as conservative, from this it must not be viewed that they are beyond consultation or communication and be prone to radicalism. What motivates individuals to potentially turn to radicalism can be a whole host of factors, including a general alienation from society. In accordance with the 'Prevent' strategy, a better understanding of Muslims amongst non-Muslims is essential to promote community cohesion. Building resilience within Muslim Communities is essential, some work of which is already being undertaken in Newcastle, such as DEEN, Islamic Centre for Diversity and the study circles, however, more can be done such as mentoring programmes for young Muslims. In Objective 5 of the 'Prevent' Strategy document, the emphasis is placed upon addressing grievances, which can be achieved through building confidence within Muslim communities to convey their grievances. This can only be achieved by ensuring firstly that organisations are made aware of Islamic communities and Muslims, followed by work done to build confidence among Muslims.

Radicalism can ultimately only be addressed if the causes for radicalism and alienation of Muslims are tackled. This can partly be achieved by tackling institutional and societal inequalities but many would also argue, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, that through Britain's position on foreign policy radicalism could be addressed, which is why the message of Al-Qaida does resonate for the few who turn to a perverse form of theo-politics to justify their acts of extremism.

## **Mosques in Newcastle**

Most mosques in Britain still associate themselves with the main generic strands of traditions, i.e., they consider themselves as 'Sunni' or 'Shia'. Only a very few of them identify themselves as being part of a contemporary school of thought, i.e, Barelwi or Deobandi and this can be due to a variety of reasons, such as congregations attending may do so for just prayer purposes and not for religious guidance or they may not have a 'communal linkage' with a particular mosque (through, for instance, relatives). The complexity of identifying a mosque by its school of thought can be even more confusing when two different contemporary schools of thought mosques, such as a Barelwi mosque and a Deoband mosque, may both identify themselves as 'Sunni mosques'. In chapter 5 the mosques in Newcastle and comments on issues around engagement with them is discussed. However, how they considered to identify themselves and their congregations is as follows:

<b>Mosque Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tradition</b>	<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Main Ethnic Groups</b>
Shajhalal Mosque	26-28 Sceptre Street	Sunni	Deobandi, Barelwi	Bangladeshi
Newcastle Central Masjid	Grainger Park Road	Sunni	Neutral*	Multi Ethnic
Shi'a Mosque	52a Wingrove Road	Shia	Shia	Iranian, Iraqi & Pakistani
Madina Masjid Mosque	4-36 Wingrove Gardens	Sunni	Barelwi & Jamaat Islami	Pakistani
Malvern Street Mosque	4 Malvern Street	Sunni	Barelwi,	Pakistani
Iranian Mosque	Bentinck Road	Shia	Shia	Iranian
Turkish Mosque	35 Grainger Park Road	Sufi	Sufi	Turkish
Al Raza Mosque	98 Stanton Street	Barelwi Naqshbandi	Barelwi Naqshbandi Sufi	Pakistani
Newcastle University Mosque	King George V Building,	Sunni	Neutral*	Multi-Ethnic
Northumbria University Mosque	Prayer Room, Ground Floor, Northumberland Building	Sunni	Neutral*	Multi-Ethnic
Heaton Mosque	1 Rothbury Terrace, Heaton	Sunni	Barelwi,	Pakistani
Bangladesh Community Centre & Mosque	246 Elswick Road	Sunni	Deobandi, Barelwi	Bangladeshi

\*These mosques are communal and although adhere to the generic Sunni traditions, do not align themselves to any particular positioning and are visited by Muslims from a variety of ethnic backgrounds primarily as a place of worship.

It should also be noted that new mosques could convene at any point in local settings for a variety of reasons. These could be in newly identified communal spaces and settings or even in peoples homes so, therefore, the aforementioned list may not be an absolute list of mosques in Newcastle.



## **Chapter 3: Effective engagement with Muslim communities: a literature and good practice review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to present a review of the national, regional and local practice (both good and bad) in the engagement of Muslim communities. An overview of engagement is then presented in order to examine what community engagement is, the importance of engaging with communities and some broad principles to ensure engagement is effective. Specific examples of engagement with Muslims, as well as other communities, are reviewed as well as issues which need to be considered when engaging with communities and their members. The lessons which can be learned in order to provide a strategic and evidence based way forward are also highlighted.

### **What is ‘community engagement’?**

Community engagement is used to describe a wide range of activities that assists the communication process between various stakeholders and local community members. It has been said that there are a number of different levels of community engagement, these may include: information-giving, consultation, involvement, empowerment and capacity building:

- *Information-giving* - This is the simplest form of engagement and refers to the provision of information to a particular community.
- *Consultation* - Where the views and opinions of community members are actively sought in order to inform the decision-making process.
- *Involvement* - Where community members are actively involved in the decision making process and are supported to work proactively with other key stakeholders
- *Empowerment and capacity building* - This is an intensive level of community engagement where other stakeholders take an enabling role to support community members in developing and implementing their own decisions and plans.

It is not suggested that any single one of these levels is ‘better’ in some way than another, rather any engagement needs to be situated within the appropriate context, purpose and issue in hand.

## **Why is community engagement important?**

The practice of community engagement is used to enable effective communication and involvement between community members and other key stakeholders. Engaging with members of communities helps to enable all stakeholders to develop a vision for communities in partnership with existing community members to create a shared vision for how communities should live together and an understanding as to how communities currently live. When people are involved in the planning, design and development of their community and issues which directly affect their community, it engenders a greater sense of community spirit, belonging and ownership. This in turn raises expectations, encourages commitment to an area and helps in creating 'sustainable communities' (Communities and Local Government, 2007).

## **Ensuring effective engagement**

Effective engagement is not an easy target to achieve for a number of reasons, including: apathy, lack of understanding or capacity available on behalf of local community members. Equally stakeholders need to be committed to the dynamic and challenging process community engagement often entails. Therefore, in order to help ensure that attempts at fostering community engagement are successful it is important to take a systematic approach. As such it is important to consider:

- Who the community is;
- Who you will consult/engage with;
- Appropriate methods for engaging with communities and sections thereof;
- How you are going to support the development of skills and capacity building within communities;
- Who is responsible for implementation;
- Available resources;
- What you are going to do with the information obtained; and
- How you will provide feedback to the community.

In order to ensure that any performance of community engagement is successful it is vital it is monitored and evaluated.

## The engagement of Muslim communities

### The policy backdrop

Recently, there has been a growing amount of work around engaging with members of Muslim communities.

As mentioned previously, the London bombings on July 7<sup>th</sup> highlighted the importance of community engagement and, indeed, the lack of it. In the aftermath of this attack on London, the Home Office launched Preventing Extremism Together (PET) to work with the Muslim community with the aim of combating extremism and its causes. Indeed, it has been argued that community engagement needs to be put at the *heart* of counter-terrorism (DEMOS, 2006).

The Government's current strategy, created in 2003, is known as CONTEST. It is based on four Ps (see Home Office, 2006):

- *Preventing* terrorism by tackling the radicalisation of individuals;
- *Pursuing* terrorists and those that sponsor them;
- *Protecting* the public, key national services and UK interests overseas; and
- *Preparing* for the consequences.

It is suggested, however, that prior to the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombings, the *Prevention* strand of this approach did not get adequate attention or resources (DEMOS, 2006).

Preventing Extremism Together (PET) established 7 working groups to consider the following issues (Communities and Local Government, 2005):

- Engaging with young people;
- Education (providing education that meets the needs of the Muslim community);
- Engaging with Muslim women
- Supporting regional and local initiatives and community action;
- Imam training and accreditation and the role of mosques;
- Community security (including addressing Islamophobia, protecting Muslims from extremism and increasing confidence in Police); and
- Tackling extremism and radicalisation.

One thousand British Muslims took part in the consultations and a timetable of six weeks was given for the groups to discuss and reach their recommendations. These groups went on to produce 64 recommendations; 27 were for government to take forward while the remainder were for the communities themselves (Communities and Local Government, undated). Three of the main recommendations for communities to take forward (with Government support) involve three different initiatives. The first is the Scholars' Roadshows, which have been taking place across the UK and involve influential 'mainstream' scholars speaking to young Muslims to give 'effective arguments against extremist justification for terrorism' (Communities and Local Government, undated). This includes the setting up of a website where people can access transcripts from the Roadshows and vote on where future events should be held (Radical Middle Way, undated). Indeed, the Internet is seen as an important way of connecting people and promoting positive images, particularly for young people (FitzGerald, 2007).

The second initiative involves setting up six regional forums (known as Muslim Forums against Extremism and Islamophobia), which bring together communities and local agencies and offer a 'safe space for sharing views' (Communities and Local Government, undated). The third initiative was the creation of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB), which was to be lead by Muslim communities to look at accreditation of Imams and better governance of mosques.

There are of course criticisms of the Government's approach, particularly in terms of the perception that Government is 'appeasing' extremists (DEMOS, 2006). One commentator also raises questions about the members of MINABs steering committee, particularly with regards to groups with alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas (Goodman, 2007). They argue that ultimately there is a need for a national advisory body:

"but it would be fatal to the struggle against extremism were the allies of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood to regulate and ultimately control - under the politically acceptable jargon of best practice and quality standards - Britain's Islamic religious institutions".

### **The experience of engagement with Muslim communities**

Putting the recommendations and the criticisms of those aside, it is necessary to consider the actual approaches taken for engaging with Muslim communities in the aftermath of the bombings, experience of these, and look at the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches.

Consultation with some of those who attended the various workshops that were held as part of PET highlighted that there was a feeling that it was a waste of time and Government would ultimately just pick the particular issues that concerned the Government's agenda (DEMOS, 2006). Criticisms were directed at the way this engagement process was seen to be rushed (DEMOS, 2006). Indeed, if the aim is to foster sustainable dialogue between

communities, a six week consultation period perhaps does not do justice to the importance of the issues under discussion. There were also concerns expressed about consulting with 'the usual suspects', thus every time Government seeks to consult with the Muslim communities they are drawing on the views of the same people. Indeed, it has been argued that:

"Ministers (and some opposition spokespersons) publicly demand too much from Muslim community leaders who are not representative enough to deliver in any case" (Democratic Audit, 2006, p.11).

There were even criticisms levelled at the timing of the engagement meetings, particularly when some people were sent invitations to attend meetings during Eid, thus showing a lack of cultural understanding on the part of those who were organising the consultation process (DEMOS, 2006).

One of the biggest criticisms that emerged was that it was felt that certain subjects were 'out of bounds' in terms of the discussions. There are those, for example, who are deeply unhappy about foreign policy (particularly with regards to Iraq). Commentators also highlight that Muslim communities suffer deprivation, discrimination and social exclusion. One report in particular highlights that Muslim communities suffer three types of exclusion: exclusion through violence; economic exclusion; and political and public exclusion (Open Society Institute, 2005). Unfortunately, such 'grievances' were not open for discussion, which in some respects was seen to hinder the community engagement process (Open Society Institute, 2005).

According to DEMOS (2006) there are a number of good reasons for making community engagement central to counter-terrorism. For example, communities are vital sources of information and intelligence, acting in many respects as an 'early warning system'. Consultation with community members who took part in the working groups highlighted that some members had seen signs of radicalisation emerging during the 1990s linked to activity in Bosnia. During this time, it is suggested that London became one of the most important hubs for Al Qaida activity (DEMOS, 2006). What is interesting is that the focus on community engagement can sometimes be met with resentment as the focus seems to be limited to tackling terrorism. Engagement has, therefore, emerged as the result of a 'crisis' rather than a matter of course and, as a result, questions arose over the possible sustainability of any outcomes: "A sudden rush to engage groups primarily on issues of security in response to an immediate crisis could only expect to have limited success" (FitzGerald, 2007, p.13).

It has emerged that community members have clearly been seeing the signs of problems to come, but as little or no engagement has taken place; there have been no 'structures' in place for the sharing of such information. It is suggested that:

“The more authorities can win hearts and minds within the Muslim communities, the more likely they are to gain the vital intelligence that can save lives” (Democratic Audit, 2006, p.11).

DEMOS (2006) claim that it has become clear that communities are ideally placed and can act on these warnings to divert young and/or susceptible people from extremism. Thus acting as a ‘self policing’ mechanism.

DEMOS (2006) suggest that a community-based approach towards counter-terrorism should be underpinned by four basic principles, these are expanded upon below:

1. it must be locally based, as well as recognising and responding to differences within the Muslim community;
2. There needs to be an understanding of faith;
3. The policy-making process must be transparent and accountable; and
4. Government needs to ‘recognise and respond to grievances of Muslim communities’.

In the first instance, local community groups, for example, can be very effective in helping groups overcome economic and social disadvantage. It is felt that these should be encouraged and strengthened, particularly those who show good practice. However, any work at a local level needs to be underpinned by a national strategy (DEMOS, 2006).

Secondly, research highlights the need to work with more faith-based organisations. The Salafi community in particular is highlighted as one of the groups to work with, as this is one that ‘creates most unease’ (DEMOS, 2006). The basis of these arguments is that community engagement is not just about working with mainstream groups, but also those with more radical ideas, whilst recognising the need to be able to distinguish between radicals and violent extremists (DEMOS, 2006).

### ***Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme***

Launched in 2003, the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme places the creation of common ground between communities at the heart of community cohesion (Home Office, 2003). Recognising the importance of faith when looking at communities, and related values, is seen as a real resource in implementing of community cohesion strategies. Faith-based organisations are often the main points of access to some communities.

The Middlesbrough Pathfinder are working with local faith communities around initiatives such as the development of an inter-faith council, but also ensuring that women and young people are involved. It has been claimed that this has not been an easy process and involves working through inter-faith issues (Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme, undated).

Similarly, Southwark Pathfinder has been working with Southwark Community Empowerment Network and the Multi Faith Forum on engaging with faith communities. They have planned a programme of cross-faith events.

The importance of faith is also highlighted in a recent consultation by Communities and Local Government (2007), which looks at the need for inter-faith dialogue and the commitment to developing a new 'inter faith strategy'.

Thirdly, it is clear that in order for any policy to be transparent and credible the process needs to be clear and accountable.

#### ***Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)***

According to Fitzgerald (2007) another example of good practice comes from the US. The FBI has taken steps to open up their engagement process by regularly opening itself up to questioning in public meetings. This highlights that engagement is a two-way process, involving some element of sharing of information as well as building up the trust of those with whom you wish to engage.

Fourthly, as has been mentioned previously, it is felt that Government needs to recognise and respond to issues such as poverty social exclusion, educational/employment under-achievement, as well as foreign policy. The argument is clearly for the need to open up the debate to topics that may make Government uncomfortable, but only by doing this will they fully gain the trust of communities. There is the need to foster a climate where debate is encouraged, rather than the perception that when members of the Muslim communities express opinions they are going to become involved in violence and extremism (Fitzgerald, 2007), "An increasing political assertiveness by British Muslims should not be mistaken for a desire for separateness". It is highlighted that what needs to be considered with regards to terrorism is the fact that international networks 'feed' off local everyday grievances and terrorism is about exploit rifts for revolutionary purposes (Fitzgerald, 2007).

#### ***Cross cultural round table - Canada***

Good practice examples can be drawn from Canada, which has developed a model of public engagement (see Innovative Research Group, 2004). In particular they have a 'cross cultural round table', which includes different groups of people being brought together to talk about common issues, rather than separate groups all working separately. These round table discussions have also become an important source of intelligence (Fitzgerald, 2007).

Women and young people often do not have a very pro-active role in their local mosque, yet mosques can be an important and influential community resource. One report highlights that the Bradford Council of Mosques, for example, has introduced notions of citizenship into the teaching at the mosque schools, with the aim of showing that Islamic values are consistent with core British values (Communities and Local Government, 2005). Part of this teaching is aimed at showing that Islam does not permit the harming or terrorisation of UK citizens as well as learning ways to identify and avoid those who preach such views (Islam Online, 2007). There have been some criticisms levelled at some of the content of the teaching; for instance, there were proposals that in one example the students were to be asked what they would do if a friend bought a large quantity of fertilizer and announced that they planned to build a bomb out of it. It is argued that extremism can occur in all communities and the British National Party is highlighted as an example of this. Therefore, "The issue of terror and extremism needs to be addressed across the board rather than saying: 'Here, Muslims, go into your corner and have your curriculum'" (Islam Online, 2007).

Recent research from the MCB (2006) highlights that not enough Imams are being developed from within Britain and the existing training is inadequate or has serious shortcomings. As this report highlights, the role of Imams goes beyond leading daily prayer to being perceived as leaders, guides and scholars, acting as informal reference points for a range of personal and social problems. Those who took part in the MCB research felt that any accreditation needed to be carried out by a Muslim organisation, independent of Government control and influence. The report highlights need for cultural awareness, need to combat negative media and need for more involvement of women, etc. They also highlight the need for a community engagement strategy for the MCB and seminar programmes for British Muslims.

What emerges from the literature is that there appears to be contradictory ideas from Government who, on the one hand want partnership working but on the other hand expect people to put up with certain situations for the sake of 'national security'. It has been argued, however, that "the things we do in the name of 'security' alienate the very people we need to engage" (DEMOS, 2006). Examples can be found in the approach of some counter-terrorist interventions, such as the Forest Gate raid, which led to the arrest of two brothers and the shooting of one of them. The brothers were later released, without charge, but such interventions are clearly damaging to community relations. These measures affect the ability to gain the trust of the very communities whose cooperation is vital. It is felt that the Police and Security Service cannot act without consent of those they are there to protect and need to secure active consent if they are to carry on intervening in ways that are affecting people's lives. Simply put, people should not have to just 'put up and shut up' (DEMOS, 2006).

Although the actions of the police have come under scrutiny, there are examples of good practice by the police with regards to community engagement which can be drawn upon.

## **'Operation Overt'**

'Operation Overt' in High Wycombe was borne out of the alleged plot to blow up Heathrow airport. Muslim groups in this area had concerns over how the raids were being handled. The concern for the police team was to communicate with and reassure the Muslim community in High Wycombe. They developed a number of aims, in particular the need to understand and effectively police the needs of the Muslim community; to ensure multi-agency coordination; and the need to understand and manage the needs of immediate and extended family of those involved in on-going investigations.

The objective was to establish clear lines of communication and strengthen relationships between the police and the Muslim communities. The approach taken in High Wycombe was to appoint a Muslim Community and Diversity Officer, who offered support for families displaced by police searches. The community assisted in identifying points of contact who could act as information points and the police were keen to ensure that the community were always given up-to-date information. The methods of engagement included public meetings, meetings with Muslim women, meetings at youth forums, as well as a sporting event for the police and the public.

There have been a number of positive outcomes of this operation. In particular, youth engagement through sport is an area they have been keen to continue developing and the Muslim Youth Forum is now active in High Wycombe, with a long term aim to include young people from the non-Muslim community as well. It was also the first time the Muslim community acknowledged extremist elements and engaged with police and other agencies to address this issue. The operation has led to the creation of a network of contacts that can help communication. A cohesion plan has also been developed by the Muslim community, which focuses on engagement through initiatives such as meetings in mosques and *Understanding Islam* courses. - See Thornton and Mason (2007).

## **Metropolitan Police Service - Cultural and Communities Resource Unit (CCRU)**

The Cultural and Communities Resource Unit (CCRU) runs a confidential database of officers who volunteer expertise in particular areas. This means that the police can match up 'life skills' as well as professional skills, for example, matching up an Arabic speaking officer to work with the Algerian community.

## **Muslim Contact Unit (MCU)**

MPS also have the Muslim Contact Unit, which aims to provide communication channels to reassure and impart advice; work in partnership with these communities to develop strategies to counter extremism and radicalisation; and provide advice to the MPS as a whole on security issues affecting Muslims in London<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Metropolitan Police Authority:  
<http://www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/mpa/2006/060727/08b.htm>

One of the key issues highlighted is the need for the police to develop relationships with Muslim communities that are not related to security or terrorism (DEMOS, 2006).

Ultimately what needs to be recognised is that this is relatively new ground where little work has been done, however, it is possible that knowledge and practice can be drawn from engagement that has occurred with other communities. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003) for example, gathered the views of Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs with regards to involvement in urban regeneration. Although the focus is slightly different to the debates raised in this review, they highlight a list of considerations for engagement with communities, which can just as easily apply to the current context:

- Communities know what is best for them;
- There is a need to listen to the voices of the people;
- To achieve outcomes, initiatives have to come from local communities; and
- Need to work through the people who are actually relating to people so that trust and confidence can grow.

### **Concluding comments**

This chapter has drawn on a number of sources to look at the issue of community engagement and why it is important, as well as providing examples of community engagement in practice, drawing on examples of efforts that have been made to engage with Muslim communities as well as examples of good practice from engaging with other communities. What has emerged from this review is that caution is needed in any future efforts to engage with Muslim communities. A number of working conclusions/recommendations based on this initial review of the literature available can be identified:

- There is a need to ensure that engagement is not replicated. Replication/duplication can be perceived as a waste and may give the perception that engagement is merely tokenistic. Authorities, therefore, need to find out what forms of engagement are already taking place and see how the capacity of these can be built;
- It is clear that for engagement to be successful time needs to be taken;
- Engagement should be seen as an organic process that needs to be boundless i.e. although an authority might have an agenda this should be flexible enough for community members to bring their grievance and concerns;

- Engagement needs to take place at a range of different levels and sections of communities, including engaging with more difficult (possibly radical) groups. This is not an easy task and, as highlighted in this review, some commentators raise questions about the involvement of certain groups. At the same time we have to be careful of focusing on 'mainstream' groups as it implies selectivity about who we engage with (see Fitzgerald, 2007). One of the key issues is avoiding engaging with the 'usual suspects', as well as ensuring that the management committees within Muslim organisations, like other communities, reflect the characteristics of the people who use the service (DEMOS, 2006);
- There is the need for a reciprocal approach to cultural sensitivity and recognition of cultural differences; for example, needs to be gender and culturally sensitive;
- Community engagement inevitably draws upon wider issues (national and international). There appears to be a need for room for such issues to be aired in order for engagement to move forward;
- Engagement should not simply just take place as a reaction to a crisis situation. In a multi-layered and multi-cultural society efforts to engage with different communities should be a matter of course. The impetus for engagement with Muslim communities has been the threat of terrorism. Clearly, from a counter-terrorism perspective, community engagement is becoming increasingly important, however, this should not be seen as the sole reason to engage with Muslim communities; and
- There is a need for engaging Muslims in areas not defined by faith. This may mean linking Muslim groups with other groups sharing common interests. This brings people together for common goals rather than singling certain groups out.

In conclusion it needs to be emphasised that although it is acknowledged that there is a certain degree of exclusion within our communities, recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006) found that with some young British-Pakistani men in Bradford, "far from feeling disempowered, disengaged, excluded or otherwise victimised, the men were connected to their city, faith and heritage". Care should be taken to ensure that generalisations about a 'community' based on faith, ethnicity or any other homogenising factor does not unwittingly create exclusion where none previously existed. It has also been suggested that the community is 'closing in on itself' and is 'bruised' from poor attempts to engage combined with a lack of consistency from Government (DEMOS, 2006). However, this review has highlighted a number of areas of good practice that others can draw upon with regards to community engagement and from whom lessons can be learned.



## **Section 4: The Muslim community in Newcastle**

### **Introduction**

This fourth section provides an overview of the Muslim community in Newcastle-upon-Tyne drawing on existing secondary information. As part of the research process for the study, a pro forma was distributed to a wide range of statutory and voluntary/community-based organisations operating within the City to identify additional sources of information at the local level. However, such information was not forthcoming and the general impression gleaned from follow-up discussions with a number of the agencies contacted was that they had only a limited appreciation of the Muslim community. In view of this, this section draws heavily on the 2001 Census data although the authors recognise that this information must be treated with a degree of caution given that it is now seven years out of date. In similarity with other areas of the country, Newcastle-upon-Tyne is likely to have recently experienced a dynamism within the local BME community due to the influx of new community groups (such as asylum seekers and refugees) and to migrant workers from Europe. This will have had an impact on the composition and diversity of the traditional Muslim community, although the nature of this impact is difficult to substantiate in view of the lack of information generally about the BME and, more specifically, Muslim communities.

### **Composition**

Information from the 2001 Census show that people who described themselves as Muslim in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne area accounted for 3.6% (9430 people) of the local population.

Table 1 below shows the relationship between religion and ethnicity in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Table: 1 Ethnic origin by religious beliefs

	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Any other religion	No religion	Religion not stated
<b>All people</b>	70.64	0.27	0.64	0.32	3.63	0.45	0.19	16.02	7.84
<b>White</b>	74.81	0.12	0.02	0.34	0.27	0.01	0.18	16.34	7.90
<b>Mixed</b>	40.01	0.39	0.66	0.00	22.04	0.26	0.70	25.54	10.41
<b>Asian</b>	2.14	0.31	13.87	0.03	65.49	9.90	0.12	1.93	6.22
Indian	5.01	0.00	48.85	0.00	3.36	34.96	0.29	3.84	3.68
Pakistani	0.68	0.06	0.06	0.06	92.30	0.06	0.00	0.74	6.02
Bangladeshi	0.23	0.00	0.15	0.00	90.41	0.00	0.00	0.50	8.71
Other	5.95	3.88	7.04	0.00	62.26	4.98	0.61	6.31	8.98
<b>Black or Black British</b>	63.92	0.00	0.31	0.31	21.58	0.00	0.63	5.84	7.40
<b>Chinese or Other Ethnic Group</b>	23.87	11.75	0.31	0.19	18.95	0.00	0.59	37.48	6.86
Chinese	29.67	9.55	0.16	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.32	52.77	7.36
Other	15.88	14.78	0.51	0.44	44.85	0.00	0.96	16.40	6.18

Source: Census 2001 (taken from Newcastle City Council's Religion and Belief Equality Plan 2008-2009)

As table 1 shows, the majority of the Muslim population is of South Asian origin (65.49%) followed by people of Mixed ethnic origin (22.04%), Black or Black British (21.58%), then Chinese or Other Ethnic Group (18.95%).

At a regional level, the Census 2001 states that around 80% of people living in the North East stated they were Christian, which was the highest proportion in England and Wales. This was followed by people stating they have no religious beliefs (11%). Those who identified themselves as Muslim were the next largest group, making up around 1.1% of the North East population, compared with 3.1% across the country.

Although the North East is a predominantly white region, the distribution of BME communities in the area show some distinct patterns, particularly in relation to those of Asian or British Asian ethnic origin from mainly Muslim backgrounds (Nayak et al., 2006). According to the Census 2001, Newcastle has the largest group of Asians and British Asians in the North East (6.9%) followed by South Tyneside (2.7%), North Tyneside (1.9%), Sunderland (1.9%) and then Gateshead (1.6%).

Newcastle City Council's Religion and Belief Equality Plan also states that the Muslim community tend to have a younger age profile and have larger family sizes. These characteristics are reflected in the Census 2001, which found that Muslims were the youngest faith community and over half were under the age of 25.

## **Community cohesion**

Newcastle City Council's Community Cohesion Strategy (2007) states that anti-Islamic feeling after the 9/11 attacks has had an effect on local cohesion. The Community Cohesion Strategy refers to an investigation carried out in 2005, into the experiences of young Bangladeshi's growing up in Newcastle, which found that the racism they experience was more anti-Islamic post September 11<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the Strategy also refers on Islamophobic chants by Newcastle United fans at football games which received considerable local and national interest from the media.

## **Changing population**

The dispersal of asylum seekers has also had an impact on the population. Figures provided by the North East Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support shows that, at March 2002, there were 1751 individuals and 1091 households residing in Newcastle (The 2003/2004 Newcastle BME Housing Research Project).

## **Areas of the City**

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) a number of places in Newcastle fall within the bottom 10% of the most deprived areas in the country. These include:

- Benwell, Scotswood, Elswick (Inner West);
- Byker, South Heaton, Walker and Walkergate (Outer East);
- Most of Blakelaw, Fawdon, and Kenton; and
- Small parts of Denton and Woolsington.

In 2005/06, 85% of asylum seekers in the area were housed in the Inner West or Outer East areas of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

There are higher levels of BME communities living in certain wards of the City, including:

- Elswick (25.5%);
- Wingrove (24.7%);
- Moorside (16.2%); and
- Fenham (10.1%).

Source: The 2003/2004 Newcastle BME Housing Research Project

## **Community/Voluntary Groups**

There are a number of general BME organisations in Newcastle, as well as more specific organisations for the Muslim community. Advice and support often comes from the mosques and their associated community groups and Islamic centres. Examples of some of the organisations in Newcastle include:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Community Welfare Rights Service;
- Pakistan Muslim Association;
- Newcastle Mosque and Islamic Centre;
- Gateshead Muslim Society;
- Muslim Welfare House;
- Tawheed Islamic Centre; and
- Heaton Mosque & Islamic Centre.

A more extensive list of organisations is given in Appendix 1.

## **Chapter 5: Muslim Community Engagement in Newcastle**

### **Introduction**

For many Muslim communities across Britain, the phrase 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) has translated into a cumbersome blame thrust upon them for acts of extremism, not just in global terms but within the Britain most call home. It was, therefore, essential that the work undertaken to gather views and opinions from Muslims in Newcastle would be based firmly upon building relationships with people in order to ascertain an accuracy of feelings as well as experiences of 'being a Muslim in Newcastle'. The Unity Project Steering Group had played an instrumental part in allaying potential fears people may have had regarding the purposes of our research. But despite this, at times, it still felt that the 'War on Terror', as coined in governmental terms, was for many, a synonym for a 'War on Muslims' and that research and community work done with Muslims was because they were justified suspects.

The evocative nature as to how any projects associated with the PVE Pathfinder Fund could be taken was given great consideration, both in the manner in which contact was made with individuals and the manner in which focus group discussions were facilitated.

The focus groups concentrated on two aspects of the community, Muslim women and young Muslim men. A third grouping, Imams and Mosque Committee members, were also consulted but a focus group of delegates from mosques was not possible due to logistical complications of not being able to bring mosque leadership together collectively. It also must be highlighted that the mosques in Newcastle showed little evidence of any unity amongst them (for instance there was no 'Council of Mosques' type of forum). Mosque committee members were also difficult to contact as they were individuals, contactable through personal links of home telephone numbers and home addresses. Muslim women were relatively easier to make contact with. Firstly, through events held specifically for Muslim women by Newcastle City Council and, secondly, through invitation to attend study circles held by Muslim women across the city. Young Muslim men were identified by enterprising youth work undertaken by an officer at Newcastle City Council, who was of Asian heritage and had worked with the Asian Communities in Newcastle for over twenty years. Most of these young men were referrals identified to be 'vulnerable of falling foul to the law'. They came from socially and economically poor backgrounds. They had poor or no school attendance. An additional number of young Muslim men were also identified through links made with university students with whom discussion meetings were held.

## Community engagement approach

Originally, the focus groups were designed to discuss areas highlighted by the Communities and Local Government 'hearts and minds' document with a series of questions linked to each section. These were:

1. Promoting shared Values;
2. Supporting and nurturing civic and theological leadership,
3. Supporting local solutions.
4. Increasing the resilience of key organisations and institutions and supporting early intervention;
5. Building civic capacity and leadership;
6. Capacity and skills development; and
7. Strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders.

Not all of these areas resonated viewpoints from the focus groups and required translation into contextual terms such as framing question, for example 'what is it like to be a Muslim in Newcastle?' and questions regarding British or Muslim identity for individuals. Because of the sensitive nature of PVE, and the complexity of overlapping issues each focus group was facilitated in accordance to what delegates felt were the most pertinent issues arising. We, therefore, did not strictly adhere to the 7 discrete themes mentioned in the document but have covered all seven to varying degrees.

For a small minority of people a guarantee of anonymity was essential, again reflecting the sensitivity some felt regarding the whole PVE agenda. They had concerns as individuals and a lack of confidence in how 'authorities' might 'identify' any views that could be viewed as 'out of step' with 'conventional views', despite the fact that these individuals had not expressed any opinions which could be considered 'extreme' or radical. A reflection, perhaps, of the unease which can be levelled at individuals feeling a sense of alienation. However, the overwhelming majority of people were very open to discuss issues and welcomed the opportunity for dialogue. Many people felt that discussions and debates acted out in the media and social forums did not portray issues associated with the 'middle ground' of being a Muslim in Britain today. For example, extreme acts of terrorism and the nature of terrorism is readily discussed and analysed, less so the experience of everyday life for Muslims. Yet this is of greater consequence and is related to the social and economic well being of a community that is not well understood by a large majority of the population.

## **Participant profiles**

Newcastle's Muslim communities are ethnically extremely diverse and this was reflected in the backgrounds of people who were consulted. This diversity is a major factor in the way in which the Muslim communities of Newcastle are evolving in the manner they seem to be. Whereas the traditional ethnic heritage of Newcastle's Muslim Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community had predominantly been South Asian (Pakistani & Bangladeshi), this is now no longer the case. Not only is there a strong presence of Middle Eastern (Iraqi, Yemeni, Egyptian, Sudanese, Palestinian), Turkish and Iranian people but a strong contingent of European (Irish, German and English) Muslims, which has given rise to Muslims questioning and re-evaluating cultural customs and notions of a 'South Asian notion of Islam'. This was a particularly interesting element to the work undertaken with Muslim women. Where required the term 'revert' will be used to describe individuals who had converted to become Muslims from either another faith or from a position of no-faith. In the consultations this has been associated mostly with 'European White' Muslims.

Young men analysed were predominantly from South Asian backgrounds, either of Pakistani, Kashmiri or Bangladeshi heritage between the ages of 14-25, although most of the youth referral individuals were between 14-16.

The mosques in Newcastle are based on either lines of ethnic heritage or followers of particular schools of thought. However, this is not necessarily a rigid rule that excludes the right for individuals to attend a mosque as entrance to any mosque for prayers or religious rituals is not restricted through any formal mechanism - a practice recognised across the Islamic world. The lack of steadfast rules is exemplified by the main Imam at the Madina Masjid being of Indian heritage, with a predominantly Pakistani, Kashmiri and Bangladeshi congregation. However, in some traditional mosques such as the Shah Jalal Mosque the committee and Imam were predominantly Bangladeshi, with the congregation also being of that ethnic heritage. This has traditionally served to solve linguistic and spiritual needs of a community that spoke the same cultural language and followed the same Islamic school of thought. The Newcastle University Mosque had an extremely diverse range of ethnicities attending, mainly due to the profile of its student population. However, many local people also attended this mosque as it provided a host of spiritual, religious and social activities, such as Islamic study circles and days out excursions.

## **Issues arising for Muslim women**

In total 4 discussion groups were conducted, the first through an event held by the Newcastle City Council. In total approximately 80 women were consulted. The term 'approximately', is used because some women 'dipped in and out' of discussions. Only a few were ready to provide contact details. The majority of Muslim women considered themselves to be practicing Muslims.

Muslim women in Newcastle are extremely active. They were very much committed to better dialogue with non-Muslims and also with Muslim men to ensure their rights were upheld. It was brought to count by experienced community workers that the drive by Muslim women for issues they thought needed to be addressed was led by a combination of factors. This was mainly due to women from various ethnic groups challenging South Asian cultural stance on Islamic traditions.

The issues addressed in the focus groups with Muslim women will be discussed within the following themes: promoting shared values; supporting and nurturing civic and theological leadership; supporting local solutions; and strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders

### **Promoting Shared Values**

Many Muslim women had suffered a great deal of racism and Islamophobic hostility towards them, particularly since 9/11 and since 7/7. This for them undermined any sense of commonality of values that could be promoted. This was not only in experiences of racism from individuals but at their place work, from the police and also from Council staff. Numerous examples were cited from individuals such as a woman being called a terrorist whilst walking down a main street in the City Centre, through to an individual having a home visit from a Council Officer and being told to remove the boiler and then being told that 'you lived where you came from without gas, so you can do it here!'. Many had little or no confidence in reporting crime. Nobody we spoke to was aware of anti hate crime initiatives such as ARCH. The confidence levels amongst women we spoke to regarding the police was extremely low. One Muslim White woman claimed she had been stopped by the police, whilst wearing a hijab (Islamic head scarf), in a place where 15 minutes earlier she had not when she was not wearing the headscarf.

They felt the headscarf, which for many was an uncompromising practice of faith, was not in line with a prescribed order of 'shared values' and that the role of the media had further exasperated the position of Muslim women who chose to wear hijab. Indeed a few women said that ideally they would even want to wear the 'niqaab' (full face veil), but felt they couldn't because of the hostility they may face. They felt the concept of 'hijab' had been polluted by the media and it was misunderstood as a repressive symbol, therefore, disregarding any intellectual position Muslim women had on it. The hijab identified Muslim women which for some meant they were easy targets for discrimination.

At one meeting issues such as the Danish 'cartoon caricatures' of the Prophet of Islam was raised as an example of the complexity of speaking about 'shared values'. It was viewed that there was little consideration of 'shared values' when it came to religions or cultures that were not based into a 'Christian British White' framework of values. Shared values were ultimately associated with a commonality of human values on the basis of mutual respect and understanding and required all communities, including the Muslim community, to re-evaluate what was meant by 'shared values'.

The question was posed 'What is life like for Muslims in Newcastle?' A sizeable number of Muslim women felt that discrimination was just a part of life living in Britain and that Newcastle was no different. Many of them had children who were experiencing racism on a day to day basis, from ages as young as 5. Discrimination and racism was seen as a part of life and many would not even consider reporting it unless it was extreme. Generally, it was felt that their quality of life in Newcastle was good but for the prevalence of racist and ignorant attitudes of some people and elements of institutions. They felt confidence in establishments such as the Council and the Police would help but at present this was not the case. They felt the BME communities were strong and resilient. They also felt that the increased interaction amongst Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds was challenging the traditional ways in which Muslim communities from the same cultural backgrounds functioned. This was also challenging a whole host of matters pertinent to the way in which traditionally mono-cultural communities functioned. For example, Muslim women were now requiring additional measures, such as a separate provision for them to attend mosques, which is not the case in the majority of mosques in Newcastle.

Muslim women stated they still wanted to live in areas where their cultural amenities would be available but also wanted good, adequate housing and good schooling. However, they wanted greater education and tolerance towards them particularly from people working in prominent positions. One woman explained how her son came home from school crying because his teacher told the school that Islam had spread by the sword. This was a reflection of the barbarism her and others said people associated with Islam and questioned the education system in what it was teaching.

In terms of women's views on whether wearing a Hijab lead to different experiences for Muslim women in Newcastle compared to not wearing a hijab, the discussion was very revealing. The 'hijab debate' has gained particular prominence from comments made by Jack Straw regarding the 'niqaab' (full face veil). The hijab was considered an important part of Islamic identity for many of the Muslim women. Even those Muslim women who did not wear it still respected it as an item of Islamic identity. Overwhelmingly, women felt that because of the levels of ignorance people had of the hijab, it left them targets for discriminatory attitudes and actual acts of discrimination and harassment. This had been played out in places of employment and through negative attitudes from some service providers. Wearing the hijab was seen to impact on the experience for Muslim women, as they felt they would be more likely to receive discriminatory experiences.

The question of identity is complex for Muslims, according to the discussions held. For most, British identity was not problematic but being viewed as being British, by the general public, is about feeling accepted. For some people in Britain they view Islam and Muslims as an 'Eastern' religion with 'Eastern' traditions and 'Eastern' looking people, which did not fit into a 'Western' system of values. They felt this concept was deeply rooted in the mindset of non-acceptability in some British White people and this alienates some Muslims from feeling totally British. They also felt being British was not

irreconcilable with being Muslim. Being a British Muslim was very much a part of identity, especially amongst the second and third generation from migrant community Muslims. This multiple identity concept is no different to the complexity of British identity associated with any ethnic community but somehow Muslim communities felt they have to prove their British credentials after 7/7 and this point was made in one-to-one meetings held throughout the study.

One Iraqi woman who had lived in Britain for over 20 years felt she had never been accepted as British, despite her attempts through learning to speak English and trying to integrate to local customs. Indeed, the levels of racism she had systematically experienced made her feel rejected from British society and she gave an emotional account that she had no home anywhere. For her the irony was her homeland, Iraq, was now 'invaded' by the country she does not feel accepted by.

### **Supporting and nurturing civic and theological leadership**

Mosque leadership was heavily criticised by a large proportion of women we spoke to. Firstly, its criticism was based on the fact that the mosques were not united on issues affecting the community, such as declarations of moon citing, which defines calendar dates such as Ramadan and Eid. Mosque leadership were seen to pander to community politics rather than being resolute on uniting the community.

Many, but particularly younger participants, felt little confidence in the older Imams who had come from South Asia and had little or no understanding of English. They felt these Imams were ill equipped in dealing with contemporary issues affecting the community, such as youth disaffection. Many highlighted the University Mosque as a good example of how mosques should operate, with considered matters for Muslim women catered for and hailed as a success in that it was led by young Imams who came from different parts of the world. Some concerns were raised that this mosque still needed to cater for some of the female congregational needs but it was seen as a better equipped mosque than others. The Imam at the Madina Mosque was also cited as a progressive young Imam, of whom many spoke highly. Most other mosques were seen as being inconsiderate to the requirements of Muslim women, with the majority not even having separate prayer space for women.

The Imams and mosque communities were heavily criticised as not doing anything to promote the positive images of Muslims and Islam in the aftermath of global events such as 9/11, 7/7, the Afghan and Iraq wars. The Islamic Diversity Centre (IDC) was seen to be doing more about promoting dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims than mosque leadership.

Civic leadership was considered vital for good community relations. This was not only via political leadership through Muslim Councillors but also management, which was not necessarily achieved through posts held by Muslims but through management which had a progressive understanding of Muslims and the potentials for discrimination.

## **Supporting local solutions**

There was awareness of local initiatives such as IDC, both because of the nature of the work they did but also because they were based in the heart of the community.

The police was again cited as the most critical organisation where understanding regarding Muslim communities needed to be built up. The City Council was also needed to increase resilience, by way of understanding Islam and Muslims. Most of the discussions here were heavily weighed with examples of poor experiences with the police and with officers of the Council.

In relation to their views on whether people from the community are being radicalised by extremists and who they feel is most 'at risk' of this, the overwhelming majority of people felt that, in their view, people in Newcastle were not being radicalised. However, some did feel that British and American foreign policy was making people angry, as it was seen as unjust. There was an interesting dynamic given that most vulnerable were young people who would feel alienated from mainstream society, experience racism and equated their experiences to injustices against the Muslim world and then be motivated by some movement or organisation. What seemed to be void in this equation, for Newcastle, was the lack of any activities from any particular extremist movement or organisation. In some one to one discussions, individuals mentioned that certain books which had strong Salafi Conservatism associations in the text could be found in local libraries, which they equated to influencing young people to become sympathetic to certain hard line radical groups. Making organisations and institutions resilient to Islamophobia was seen as an essential element of early intervention, as it brought Muslims into the fold of society and influenced the cohesion of communities.

## **Strengthening the role of faith institutions and leaders**

As a mechanism to deal with the threat of radicalism, the overwhelming view was that faith institutions were embroiled in community politics and any mechanism to deal with strengthening faith institutions had to be sensitive to this. It was also claimed that the Muslim community should itself try to find mechanisms from within. However, the Council could play a pivotal role in supporting work towards this.

## **Concluding comments**

Muslim women in Newcastle are extremely active and are challenging not just the traditional South Asian Muslim communities, but the general community by becoming much more active. They are suffering racist and Islamophobic attitudes by virtue of the symbolism associated with the Hijab. They are confronting, at times, strong negative attitudes towards Muslims by virtue of being open targets because of their Hijab. The hijab in feminist term is not viewed with any intellectual integrity as a symbol of Eastern feminism but merely dismissed as a symbol of male oppression. Many had experienced

racist attitudes from front line staff of service providers and from the Police. This was leading to mistrust and a lack of confidence toward a host of agencies, establishments and institutions.

Feeling British and having a multitude of identities was not problematic for Muslim women. However, for them this was not a guarantee that they are accepted in British society. For many there is an underlying profile in the mindset of the indigenous British White community that 'being British' actually meant being British White.

The mosques offered very poor leadership as they were embroiled in community politics. Many did not cater for Muslim women to pray. The need for Imams and mosque management committees to play a greater role in representing Muslim communities in a positive light was felt to be required.

### **Issues arising for young men**

The majority of these young men were referrals to the Youth Inclusion Programme and considered to be 'vulnerable of falling foul to the law'. Some of the responses are also from young people who we made contact with through the community directly. The referred young men were low school attendants or had dropped out of school. Their ages ranged between 15 and 18. All the young men were second or third generation Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Kashmiri heritage. The nature of questioning differed to those asked from Muslim women or Imams. In total 3 focus groups were held and 4 one to one discussions.

### **Sense of identify**

The participants were asked to consider the following four related questions: Do you consider yourself to be British? Do you consider yourself to be Asian? Do you consider yourself to be Muslim? How would you define each? Each section of the question was asked in turn with the young men asked to define themselves in relation to each. Overwhelmingly each considered himself to be British. Asked to define what this meant, they said 'speaking English', 'making money', 'having a British Passport' and 'being born here'. They all also considered themselves to be Asian. This meant 'family', 'religion', 'culture and background' and the 'community where they lived'. Finally they all considered themselves Muslim. This meant 'the mosque', being a 'believer in religion', 'no alcohol' and to be 'seen as a terrorist'. When asked which they would consider best defined them, they said Asian and Muslim. This was interesting because when analysing what they felt defined each distinct identity, British identity was very much associated with a socio- economic requirement, such as linguistic tools, passport and economic sustainability. Asian and Muslim identities had overlaps of what defined them through community, culture, family and kinship. Yet Muslim identity was also tainted by the way in which they felt it was perceived by wider society through association with terrorism.

As with Muslim women, among the young men there seems to be no problem with adopting a 'British' identity, but again it was within the realms of having a multiple identity of being able to say 'British Asian Muslim'. Asked if they would support England in a major sporting event, they all said yes, even if England played against their parent's native country. When asked where they would consider 'home' to be, again all considered home to equate to living in the West End or Heaton.

### **The experience of living in Newcastle**

In relation to their views and experiences of being a young Muslim man in Newcastle, many considered the environment to be dangerous because of the presence of drugs and crime. They thought racism was rife and that nothing would be done about it, mainly because no-one cares. The police were viewed as racist and were thought to not want to do anything about complaints made to them. Confidence towards the police was very low. All the individuals in our discussions had been stopped and searched by police officers, some regularly were subjected to the 'stop and search' approach by the police. This made individuals feel angry towards authority and have little or no confidence in such institutions.

As Muslims, they thought they were viewed by a large proportion of White people as terrorists. This gave some young Asian men that were involved in crime a form of 'street credibility'. They also felt that the general public do not consider Muslims as British but as foreigners.

The younger age group felt that schools had little or no understanding of race and racism. They were seriously concerned that the placement of the new Academy was in a white area that they felt was a racist area and could lead to racial attacks. They felt no confidence in teaching staff or the police in their ability to deal with such matters that might emerge.

### **Attendance at the local Mosques**

Most attended mosque on Friday (Jumma Islamic 'Sabbath' prayer), and felt it to be an important thing to do but did not really take much notice in the Imams talk. They attended, undertook the prayer and then left.

The only other times they would attend their local mosque would be during religious events such as Eid or for a funeral prayer.

### **Spheres of influence**

The issue of whether community elders or mosque Imams have influence over young people was discussed. Generally, family elders were seen as still having influence. It was felt that Imams were also influential but not enough to keep some young people away from crime and criminal activity. A major influence on some young people was the drugs trade. It was seen as an escape from poverty and made making money achievable. Some thought that the drugs trade was going to get even worse, as the younger generation were going to push the barriers of criminality further in order to 'prove' themselves

to their peers. It was acknowledged that the Asian community elders frowned on the drugs trade but turned a blind eye when it involved their family members. From this, a concern raised is the disenfranchisement from the labour market and what it could mean to this community.

### **Views on terrorism**

The older 19 -25 age group had a view that terrorists were bred through global injustices and inequalities. One participant mentioned that young people who are angered by society can find an understanding in why terrorists do what they do. This was a virtually identical point raised with Muslim women at another meeting.

Some of the younger age groups, deploring what had happened in London on 7/7 felt Imams had influenced young people and believe 'brainwashing' is the cause. Others felt that although terrorism had nothing to do with Islam, it was necessary in order to 'do something' about injustices.

### **Terrorist activism**

The younger men thought that a 'life of grief', is ultimately what many thought could lead to being involved in an extremist act (e.g. bombing). Further translation of this phrase was equated to alienation from wider society. This alienation could be economic, from being seen to be victimised by the police as well as generally being unable to influence the well being of their family and surroundings.

### **Public perceptions of Islam**

With regard to the participants' views on public perceptions of Islam, the overwhelming majority highlighted the negative images portrayed by the media of Muslims. Muslims and Islam was seen to be an extreme religion. This made young men feel alienated further from White people. Many did have white friends, but felt that the element of race was still a predominant concern when they viewed white people. Many even had White girlfriends but still felt alienated from White people which has been made worse since 7/7 and the negative associations regarding Muslims. Some used the negativity associated with Muslims to give them a tougher image, they felt it could give them 'street respect' which can be translated as making them look fearless.

### **Concluding comments**

'At risk' is an important element to take account when considering radicalisation. Who is 'at risk' of becoming radicalised is an essential tool in tackling extremism. Whereas some commentators have added opinion that socio-economic deprivation can fuel angry young men to turn to extremism, this is not a conclusion drawn from meeting these 'angry young men' in Newcastle. Whereas they may be at risk of criminality in terms of drug crime, their transition to extremism will not be based on merely socio-economic terms. Racism is a major part of their life experience, whether this is at school

or from their translation of episodes with the police. Some of them see the negative imagery associated with Muslims as terrorists as a badge of honour. Again an emphasis is required to better educate schools, civic services, the police and employers to become more aware as well as a call for greater responsibility from the media.

## **Issues arising in relation to the role of the local Mosques**

### **Background**

Although the history of mosques in Britain can be assigned as far back as 1860, to Cardiff, mosques in our cities today are commonplace and indeed can reflect the ethnic make-up of our communities. Many of the most established mosques today once acted as communal focus points of worship for the migrant communities of the 50's, 60's and 70's, the majority of whom were of South Asian heritage. Some of these mosques were converted houses, bought through pooling resources from the community. The function of the mosque was not just to lead on matters of worship but to also teach children how to read the Quran in Arabic, a practice deemed essential to most Muslims. In Newcastle there are a number of mosques which have been established within communities of particular ethnicity, for example the 'Shah Jalal Mosque' by the local Bangladeshi community. This had traditionally served a community of the same culture a number of purposes such as providing a place of worship and religious practice through the commonality of language, culture and kinship. In Newcastle, mosques and community leadership through mosques have gone through the same experiences observed across the country. Mosques and mosque committees had traditionally been extremely powerful within their communities in the 70's, 80's and 90's and were controlled by first generation migrant 'fathers and uncles', many of whom could not speak English. However, as their children grew into second generation adults, the legitimacy of their representation of the community as well as their lack of ability to articulate matters affecting the community was called into question. This frustration translated itself in the incapability of any Muslim leadership to deal with more 'global' issues affecting the Muslim community, such as the Salman Rushdie affair, the first Gulf War and the late response to Bosnian Muslim massacres. Feeling agitated with weak responses from Muslim leadership some Muslims, particularly the young, viewed a crisis in community leadership and many started to question and criticise mosque committees and mosque leadership. Some commentators have maintained that this crisis created an environment which allowed radical messages to be accepted by many angry young men, who were not only experiencing inequalities in Britain but saw their faith and religion 'under attack', their community leadership weak to respond and extrapolated their local grievances to the position of the global 'plight' Muslims found themselves in across the world.

In Newcastle, as is the case with a large proportion of mosques in Britain, mosque leadership through its committee members can be embroiled in community politics. Community politics can be defined as matters associated with clan or 'Biradari' structures which have origins from where these communities originate, which for many is in South Asia. This can act as a barrier to co-operation between mosques, almost as much as 'theological' differences from following different schools of thought. Some of the ways of strengthening mosque leadership and assisting the process of inter-mosque co-operation is by employing Imams who can speak in English and are encouraged to play a significant part of community cohesion initiatives. In Newcastle a good example of where this is happening could be cited at the Madina Masjid. This mosque has a young Imam who speaks in English and engages with a cross section of the community. He also plays an active role in youth development activities.

## **Findings**

Unfortunately, and despite numerous attempts, not all mosques were forthcoming in agreeing to be involved in the consultation exercise. This may have been due to a number of legitimate factors and not necessarily due to a lack of wanting to co-operate.

Committee members of a prominent mosque and a local Imam were interviewed. Their details are available from the research team but for purposes of this report their identity is anonymous. They were extremely honest and open and were an important asset of information.

## **Mosques as vehicles of community leadership**

Mosque leadership was associated with the immediate vicinity of the community where congregations came from. However, the leaderships were not influential in anything more than providing spiritual guidance. The lack of unity amongst mosques was acknowledged. This was seen to be inherently due to the various schools of thought influencing each mosque, as well as the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds people forming the mosques came from. Another element of criticism that figured prominently was that amongst the various mosque committees, 'they all want to be leaders of the community', and so this hindered any potential co-operation that could take place. It was also viewed that a problem for the Muslim community had been, that traditionally the community had imported Imams from Asia, and that these individuals were ill equipped to know how to deal with issues affecting British Muslim communities. Also, because these Imams had little or no command of English, they alienated themselves from young people.

## **Issues affecting Muslim communities in Newcastle**

Poor attitudes towards Muslim people were considered a major issue, particularly after 9/11. However, they did not generally accept that Newcastle was any better or worse than any other place in Britain when it came to negative attitudes towards Muslims. Much of this was seen to be due to

British foreign policy as well as negative media and simplistic explanations of the complexity of radicalism. Racism and Islamophobia were now intertwined for many people, highlighted in the way the term 'Paki' was now deemed a derogatory term for Muslims.

### **Views on the factors influencing radicalism**

This was not considered to be simple to answer as the matter was complex. It was viewed that Muslims were being 'provoked' to always explain themselves rather than dealing with the root causes of why people may feel angry with British or American foreign policy, which was readily associated with acts of terrorism. However, it was important to acknowledge that there was a difference between being angry at the political position of foreign policy and becoming an extremist and bombing innocent people. The promotion of Islam through radical Islamic movement, could give young angry Muslims justification to sympathise with the extremist agenda.

### **Tackling extremism**

It was deemed essential to ensure alienation of communities was tackled, in particular, through engagement with young people. Engagement would require skilled individuals and not just done tokenistic. 'DEEN' was highlighted as an organisation undertaking activities with young people. Schools were also viewed important to play a role. It was considered that if young people had positive experiences at school of different people, then this would have a positive impact on them. It was also highlighted that many young people were not interested in terrorism.

### **Preventing Violent Extremism: Prevention or Cure?**

The PVE agenda has, understandably, been subject to debate regarding the balance that should be made between matters of security and the threat to citizens and a model of engagement and development with our communities. A recent document by the CLG 'Next Step For Communities', goes beyond the 'Prevent' strategy published earlier to detail how the engagement with and empowerment of Muslim communities is an essential tool in the fight against terrorism. Although the need for better security is an essential requirement and must not be compromised, this has to be complimented with robust strategies and initiatives which will engage, empower and develop our communities to live and work with each other and tackle collectively inequalities and some of the grievances faced by our communities. Indeed, the CLG emphasises and recognises 'solely security based responses' will not counter the threats we face from radicalism.

In November 2001, when George W Bush said 'You are either with us or against us', this was used by radical groups to emphasise and give currency to the 'them and us' message based on inequalities and grievances Muslims felt. The best way to tackle this is by ensuring a sense of belonging is fostered and actively promoted. This would mean tackling the social, economic and institutional inequalities that occur and are at the heart of some of the

grievances felt by Muslims. If greater emphasis to the response to terrorism is given to security, then this will encourage a mindset of alienation and exclusion and would be counter-productive. In our engagement with Muslims in Newcastle, they had grievances of how they were perceived by non-Muslims, the media, public services and the police. However, the rejection of extremism from within the Muslim communities will not take place through merely having cohesive communities. An essential element is the democratic and political empowerment of these communities. Muslim communities require faith in the democratic system to be responsive to their grievances. They need to be confident that their politicians will listen and be committed to tackling some of the legitimate grievances they have.

Newcastle's Muslim communities are multi-ethnic and are successful examples of how community cohesion can work. The largest mosques operating in the city are multi-ethnic and, therefore, provide a great resource to the city in understanding how community relationships between diverse ethnic groups can be harmonised.

Since the McPherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence highlighted the phenomenon of 'Institutional Racism', an analysis needs to be made as to how this impacted on the development of institutions and services in Newcastle. Barriers to progression and institutional cultures need to be constantly reviewed to enable a greater sense of belonging amongst Muslims in civic life.

In Newcastle, a response to the 'Prevent' strategy based on the CLG document approach would produce greater results in ensuring its Muslim communities exclude messages of extremism and see themselves as a valuable part of British society.

## **Chapter 6: Emerging themes and recommendations**

### **Introduction**

This final chapter provides a summary of the main themes emerging from the consultations with the Muslim community in Newcastle. It also provides an overview of the current national policy context relevant to the study. The chapter concludes with a series of recommendations for action and suggested research priorities for the future.

Prior to discussing the emerging themes it is important to re-iterate an earlier point in the report concerning interpretation of the findings from the consultation exercise on the extent to which those views may or may not be representative of the Muslim community in Newcastle. The number of individuals who participated in the focus groups and personal interviews was relatively small and they were by and large, self-selecting. The limited time frame available for the empirical work made it difficult to pursue a more inclusive approach and engage with a larger number of community members. Furthermore, the sensitive nature of the subject under discussion could have deterred particular individuals from taking part in the consultations whose voices are of equal importance as those presented in this report. That having been said, the study has identified a number of issues which are likely to reflect some of the views of the wider Muslim community.

### **Emerging themes**

Before addressing the specific themes identified by the three community groups consulted: young people, women and those representing the mosques, it is worth highlighting issues which were found to be common across these three groups. First, the consultations with key stakeholders and service providers during the initial stages of the study revealed a lack of knowledge of the local Muslim community and more generally, the BME community. This lack of awareness of the characteristics, needs and aspirations of the Muslim community invariably impacts on the provision of services to this section of the community. Secondly, there was a wealth of evidence that racism and Islamophobia was a significant problem for many within the Muslim community and that it was encountered within a wide range of situations. The perceived discriminatory practices undertaken by some organisations towards the Muslim community was also noted. Thirdly, a general comment was made by community members concerning their perception of the lack of equality of opportunity in terms of both accessing services and the extent to which services fully responded to their needs. Specific examples quoted included access to social housing and the education system. Fourthly, community members generally characterised their relationship with the police as being poor and furthermore, felt that the police generally had a negative perception of the Muslim community and that this greatly influenced their dealings with the community and especially, their interactions with young Muslims. Fifthly, unlike some Muslim communities in

other parts of the country, the Muslim community in Newcastle generally felt that there was a lack of community leadership within the community itself with the mosques not seeing themselves as fulfilling such a role. The absence of strong leadership led many within the community feeling that their interests and concerns were not adequately represented either within or outside the community. Sixth, there was an overwhelming recognition among those consulted that they regarded themselves as being British and did not feel that this conflicted with their identify as a Muslim and they were generally comfortable with the dual identify of a 'British Muslim.' Seventh, a great deal of concern was expressed about the perception of the Muslim community by the wider community, especially the White majority. A lack of understanding of the significance of culture and dress for Muslims by the wider community had lead to instances of racist behaviour based on negative stereotypical views of Muslim extremists. Finally, and associated with this latter point, a general level of ignorance was described to exist among the wider community (and to some extent this was also evident among some service providers) about the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity among the BME community in Newcastle. Again, this impacts on the ability of services to be responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of the different ethnic and cultural groups and reinforces the point made above concerning problematic access to services and equality of opportunity.

In addition, to these common issues which were identified across the consultation groups, specific issues relating to the three community groups consulted were also identified and these will now be discussed in turn.

### **Muslim women**

The women consulted felt that the wider community had a negative perception of Muslim women, especially those who wore the traditional dress with such women being perceived as repressed which was associated with potential extremist views. This had lead to instances of racism towards this section of the Muslim community.

The women also felt that the mosques in the city, being male dominated, were not receptive to women and that the opportunities to engage in theological debate with those involved in the mosques and have any influence were limited. However, the women were not necessarily advocating a more direct or formal role within the activities of the mosques (e.g. by joining the mosque committee) but rather that the mosques become more inclusive in their approach.

A sense of exclusion from opportunities for influence was also extended to local democratic practices and civil life generally. Again, such forums were seen as being male dominated with a lack of opportunity for women to express their views or enter into informed debate. Hence, there was a general sense that Muslim women were very much on the periphery of structures which enabled Muslim women's views to be taken into account: women did not feel empowered to enter such structures but rather relied on more informal groups and networks of like minded women to discuss issues

pertinent to themselves. However, such voices generally remained outside the formal mechanisms of influence and there was a call for greater recognition of the potential contribution that Muslim women could make both in terms of their views on theology and more widely in relation to the role of Muslim women in British society.

It was felt that Muslim women were embracing of the idea of multi-ethnicity among the Muslim community and it was felt that this greater diversity could challenge some of the old cultural traditions of Muslim values.

### **Young people**

Young Muslims tended to regard racism towards them as part of their 'way of life' in that they experienced such behaviour and attitude from a relatively young age and in a wide range of situations. In part, such racist behaviour was seen as permeating from a perception among the wider community that all Muslims were extremists or at least had the potential to become so. Some of the young Muslims appeared to embrace the label of being a possible terrorist as it gave them status and a sense of importance. This reflects, in part, the lack of positive role models for young Muslim men from within their community (noted by the lack of community leadership as highlighted earlier). The absence of such role models has meant that some young Muslims have been strongly influenced by their peers and sought to gain a degree of personal prestige by being involved in anti-social and criminal activities as a way of defining themselves: there is evidence of the involvement of young Muslims in drug selling and petty crime.

Relationships with the police were felt to be poor and young Muslims expressed a sense of mis-trust of the police. In some cases, this was felt to reflect the heavy-handed approach that some elements of the police had towards young Muslim men: 'stop and search' being an example of this. This lack of confidence in the police also extended to other public bodies in that they were not seen as responding to the needs of this section of the Muslim community. Many of the young people felt alienated from the local democratic processes that existed with little opportunity to voice their concerns. This further enhanced their desire to make themselves more 'visible' and 'be heard' through involvement in a range of anti-social activities.

### **Mosques**

In Newcastle, mosques have always and continue to be an important cornerstone of Muslim life however they are only part of a mosaic of influential elements to the community, such as family, 'biradari' (clan), and peer pressure amongst the young. Mosques primarily provide spiritual and religious guidance, but they have been criticised for being weak in community leadership, reflected in a lack of collaboration between mosques in matters affecting Newcastle's Muslim communities as a whole. In the discussions, we have had with Mosques, they have welcomed consultation regarding Preventing Violent Extremism, but they would not see themselves as central to addressing such issues. Again, they place emphasis on greater overall

dialogue between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Although the simplistic national portrayal of recruiting extremists is played out as being attributed to the role of mosques, this is not cited as the case in the Newcastle mosques. The PVE Agenda is viewed as an opportunity to bridge gaps between the Muslim and non Muslim communities and a chance for the Muslim community to be viewed as an extremely valuable contributor to British society.

Imams play a key role in improving relationships, not just between the mosque and civic institutions, but also with young Muslims who may be searching for strong identity to define their position within their faith and their kin. The role of the mosque was perceived by the Muslim community to be as theological leader, rather than a social enterprise. However, there was a desire to enhance the latter through dynamic Imams who could converse in multiple community languages, especially English, and be able to understand issues affecting contemporary Muslim communities.

Any approach to effectively address the objectives of PVE must not be targeted directly and solely through mosques. Mosques should be viewed as just one of the elements of Muslim life. Not all Muslims attend mosques. In addition, Muslims who feel marginalised by society may not attend Mosque study circles or religious gatherings either.

Civic institutions should work alongside Mosque committees and Imams, but understand that as with any organisational structure 'committee members' or 'operational leadership' dynamics and influence of power will differ from organisation to organisation. Similarly, any two mosques may differ in whether it would be more beneficial to work directly with an Imam or with the mosque committee. Generally, it is the Imam who leads on influence associated with matters of faith and religion. Committees generally have greater influence on matters regarding the administration of the mosque.

## **Current National Policy Context**

In June 2008, the Home Office produced the Prevent Strategy and it's strategy for delivery. The Prevent Strategy is one of four areas in the Government's Contest counter-terrorism strategy, which focuses on, and is underpinned by, five strategic and two enabling objectives. These objectives are:

- to undermine extremist ideology; support mainstream voices;
- to disrupt those who promote violent extremism; strengthen vulnerable institutions in the UK;
- to support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists;

- to increase the resilience of communities to engage with and resist violent extremists;
- to effectively address grievances;
- to develop understanding, intelligence, analysis and evaluation; and
- to improve strategic communications.

Following the publication of 'Prevent', the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produced a document entitled 'Preventing Violent Extremism - Next Step for Communities'. This document has a vision enshrined within the principles of community cohesion, where a 'sense of belonging' and 'shared values' are central to a way forward in tackling extremism. It recognises that a solely security based response would not be appropriate in dealing with the threat of extremism. The DCLG document places an emphasis on consultation and engagement as a manner to address the underlying inequalities that can add to the alienation of individuals and make them susceptible to voices of extremism. Our findings would resonate strongly with this course of action.

At a local level, there seems to be issues surrounding the whole notion of 'shared values' and whether there is enough understanding or interaction between communities to facilitate an understanding of 'shared values'. Muslims we spoke to largely recounted their experiences with White non-Muslims as negative, blighted by ignorance, racism or institutional racism. A PVE strategy, with an emphasis on security, will alienate and isolate the Muslim community and will encourage a mindset of 'them and us', making the environment rife for radical views on 'western society as unfair and unjust' to be embraced.

The democratic system requires some deliberation into how it is translated by the Muslim community. Many we spoke to felt disillusioned with not being able to influence policy at local or particularly at national level. This became all the more frustrating when, as a community, they were having to deal with the fallout of, for instance, foreign policy, such as the Islamophobia many had to endure during the invasion of Iraq. This makes it particularly difficult for the community to voice grievances. Furthermore, it has a detrimental impact in the notion of feeling belonged, which is given such prominence in the CLG document cited above.

Amongst some Muslims living in local communities of Newcastle, there is still a mistrust associated with the PVE agenda. Since the events of 9/11, many have had negative experiences and would equate themselves to having adopted a siege mentality, always under scrutiny by institutions, the police, the media and a proportion of the non Muslim community. This can only be addressed by strategies ensuring resilience is installed by making Muslim communities feel a part of Newcastle as a whole, by ensuring barriers between communities are removed and replaced by trust and understanding. By tackling institutional and societal inequalities and bringing together all

communities through a model of shared values and mutual respect a sizeable impact can be made on any potential threat posed by extremist ideologies. Building upon this, there can be scope for the Muslim community to become more engaged in democratic systems, empowering itself to voice grievances. The PVE agenda has to be trusted by the Muslim community if it is to be effective. Its success is largely dependant on a strategy which is based on the principles of community empowerment and engagement as is highlighted in the approach made by the DCLG, a perspective which is underlined by the work undertaken in Newcastle.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the work undertaken for this project and the evidence gathered, the research team would suggest a number of recommendations that could build on this study and develop the themes identified in this report.

The proposed recommendations are as follows:

1. The opportunity for securing more longer-term funding from central government for this programme would necessitate the development of a strategic framework which should provide a clear direction for the future funding of local initiatives under the programme. This will require the development of a series of explicit objectives for the programme which would need to be closely linked with achievable and expected outputs and associated timescales. In this way, the allocation of future funding is undertaken on a strategic rather than ad hoc basis. This would also provide all stakeholders, including the Muslim community, with a detailed appreciation of the focus of the framework and encourage dialogue about this.

Within the context of this strategic framework a number of issues arising from this study should be addressed:

- Investigation of the level of understanding and perception among service providers towards the Muslim community and the BME community generally. Consideration should also be given to the development of 'community profiles' i.e. an overview of each ethnic group which details their main characteristics and particularly, highlights those aspects of their culture, ethnic origin and religious beliefs which are unique to that group. This information could then be used by service providers at both a strategic and operational level to inform their relationships with members of the particular communities concerned. Salford City Council had embarked on such a programme and has actively involved the communities themselves in defining and compiling the material to be included in the community profile document.

- Further work needs to be undertaken to fully understand the perception of Muslims in Newcastle by the wider community and particularly, how such perceptions are formulated and reinforced;
  - Investigation should be undertaken to determine the extent to which equality of opportunity exists for the Muslim community in relation to access to services;
  - A review of existing community consultation and engagement approaches and methods to ensure that they are inclusive of the Muslim community, facilitate representation from the various sections of the community and are deemed to be relevant to their interests;
  - Work with Imams to facilitate greater collaboration between the mosques and build capacity among key individuals to enable them to embrace community leadership roles. Particular emphasis should be given to identifying common issues across the various mosques which would facilitate greater collaboration;
  - Evaluate the extent to which the Muslim community has developed a 'sense of belonging' both on a spatial level, through attachment to their community, and in terms of their self-identification as being British. Further work should be undertaken to assess what this sense of belonging means for inter-generational relationships within the Muslim community and in terms of their interactions with the wider community.
2. In recognition that not all aspects of the original study brief have been considered in detail, it is recommended that additional work is undertaken to investigate the following:
- The nature of inter-generational relationships within the Muslim community and the impact of these in relation to community leadership and the activities and behaviour of young people;
  - The degree of community dynamism within traditional Muslim community areas as 'new' communities (e.g. asylum seekers and refugees and migrant workers) settle in the area. What impact does this greater ethnic and cultural diversity have on the sense of 'community' for Muslims and for community cohesion and integration generally;
  - The perception of relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims and particularly the White British. To what extent are these relationships based on positive views, such as 'shared values' rather than negative ones, such as suspicion and ignorance.

## **The way forward: Further research**

On the basis of the research undertaken for this study, the issues arising and the wider premise of the original study brief, we would advocate the need for further research in relation to the following:

- Inter-generational relationships between young Muslims and their parents and how this impacts on community influence, sense of self, community attachment, informal support networks and avenues for grievance for young people;
- The views of the Muslim community in areas where there has recently been a high degree of transience (reflective of the recent influx of migrant workers and asylum seekers/refugees) towards community cohesion and community and personal safety; and
- The level of understanding among the White British community towards the Muslim community and how perceptions and stereotypes are established and reinforced. The emphasis should be on different White British communities, differentiated according to spatial patterns of settlement (i.e. those living in ethnically diverse areas of Newcastle compared with those living in predominantly White only areas).

## Appendix 1: List of organisations

Organisation	Address
Shahjalal Mosque	26-28 Sceptre Street, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6PQ
Heaton Mosque	1 Rothbury Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5XH
Madina Majid Mosque	4-36 Wingrove Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9HS
Heaton Mosque	1 Rothbury Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5XH
EMTEP	136 West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9QA
NESCA	234 Stanton Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5LJ
Millin Centre	160-164 Ellesmere Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8TR
Shi'a Mosque	52a Wingrove Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9BQ
Malvern St Mosque	4 Malvern Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6SU
Al Raza Mosque	98 Stanton Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5LE
DEEN	72 Sceptre Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6PR
Newcastle Muslim Centre	Bentinck Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6UX
Muongano Community Association	51 Church Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1UE
Wadajir Group	87 Monday Crescent, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5BG
Bentinck TARA & Community House	90-100 Durham Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6XQ
Newcastle Bangladesh Association	39 Cotswold Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7AE
Newcastle Bangladeshi Youth Forum	17 Cliftonville Avenue, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8RT
Arthur's Hill Asian Residents Association	7 Belsay Place, Arthur's Hill, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE4 5NX
Pakistani Muslim Association	4 Warenford PIC, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2ED

Sudanese Community Group	Heaton Library, Heaton Park View, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5AH
Turkish Community Association	35 Grainger Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8SA
Arabic Women's Group	10 Dilston Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5NP
Bangladeshi Women's Group	Callerton House, Callerton Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5NQ
Bangladeshi Community Centre and Mosque	246 Elswick Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6SN
Newcastle Central Masjid	Grainger Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8RR
Iranian Mosque	Bentinck Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6UT
Turkish Mosque	35 Grainger Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 8SA
Newcastle University Mosque	King George V Building, King's Road, Northumberland Building, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU
Northumbria University Mosque	Prayer Room, Ground Floor, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST
Bangladeshi Association	9 Willerby Drive, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5LL
Kiran Group	Office 4 Cookery Block Heaton Education Centre, Trewhitt Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 5DY

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