Working at the Heart of Communities and with Local, Regional and National Bodies to Tackle Extremism

Kalsoom Bashir
Prevent Objectives (2011)

• Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it

• Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support

• Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address
Respond to the ideological challenge: Islam V ISIS

• ISIS: Islamist extremists subscribe to an extreme, fundamentalist, puritanical, supremacist, far right and violent interpretation of Islam known as Salafi-jihadism

• Rather than rooted in the classical Islamic tradition, this ideology is in fact a modern religious-political ideology but which falsely portrays itself as being authentic Islam – which can be confusing to people (Muslims and non) whose understanding of Islam may be weak.
Working with communities and local authorities: Teaching counter-narratives

• Working in partnership with local authorities and local women’s groups
• Example: Leeds
• Many participants expressed low self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, little confidence
• Ability to communicate effectively in the English language was an impediment as well as wider social, religious and cultural barriers that often debilitate these women
• Prior to programme, participants had little knowledge of theological counter-narratives to extremist ideology
• Programme analysed religious, political and ideological outlook from 7th century Khawarij, 11th-13th century Ismaili Assassins, up to modern day al-Qaida. The extremist narrative espoused by Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, Usama Bin Laden, Anwar al Awlaki and others was dissected.

• Vulnerabilities that may be exploited to hook young people into an AQ mindset

• Messages and methods used for recruitment by extremist organisations, which included the use of false dichotomies of ‘Islamic values v British values’

• AQ narrative of a global conspiracy of oppression and double standards towards Muslims by the West and the decontextualised use of medieval precedents.

• Dispelling belief militant jihad is compulsory on all Muslims as articulated by AQ and ISIS

• Islamic theology highlighted how citizenship is a sacred contract which must be respected.
Counter-narrative: Do Muslims need to make hijrah or live in an Islamic state?

- The example at the time of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh
- Muslims migrated to Abyssinia – did not migrate to Medina when the Prophet lived there. Continued to leave under the rule of the then Christian King Negus who was described as just and fair.
- Muslims even served in Negus’ army. Similar to Muslims today.
- No obligation to make hijrah – view advocated by those who believe in outdated and binary worldview of Dar al Islam v Kufr
- History testifies to there being many different Muslim states with multiple leaders as opposed to a single Caliph and state
- Many classical scholars considered it a form of extremism to exaggerate the issue of the caliphate
Impact

• “if I knew this information ten years ago when my children were teenagers, I would have taught them about the issues raised in this course. This is the first time I’ve been educated on such a crucial and important topic.”

• Muslim women wanted to actively do more to reclaim their faith from violent extremists who they felt had hijacked Islam to commit acts of terror.

• Very few women were aware of ideology or counter-narratives.
Respond to ideological challenge
Campaigns

1. Jihad Against Violence (2011)
   • encouraged women and men to stand up to all forms of violence, to educate
     and raise awareness, and to challenge those who perversely use Islam to
     incite or carry out terrorism

     • people from over 32 countries signed the JAV Declaration

2. Standing up to extremist Anjem Choudary: National Memorial Arboretum
   (2010)
Respond to the ideological challenge:
Key issue: Identity and belonging

• Common arguments of both far right and Islamist extremists:
  • You can’t be British and Muslim!
  • British Values V Muslim Values!

• Important we address anti-Muslim prejudice and issues of belonging.

• But understand radicalisers try to suggest The ‘West is at War with Islam,’ create an environment of alienation
Responding to ideological challenge
Working with the Media

1. Countering the British V Muslim argument
2. Sun editorial: TOGETHER we can defeat IS
   • “First we must not give way to Islamophobia.”
   • IS represents tiny minority of Muslims – most British Muslims are proud to belong to both a nationality and a religion which value peace, tolerance and the sanctity of life.”
   • “They consider IS a disgusting perversion of their faith, not its lion hearted champions.”
ONE VOICE
Britain gets behind Sun campaign

Help us to make a stand

Islam is peace. Not evil

Please say No to hate
After Tunisian Massacre: Manifesto Against Hate

Muslim Leaders Join Forces with Sun to Combat Extremism in the UK

1. Democracy and rule of law
2. Report extremist propaganda
3. Respect of different faiths
4. Community inclusion
5. Stamp out hate preaching
6. We are all British
7. Educate our young people
8. Defence in the home
9. Open the door to the young
10. Feel empowered
Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism
Working in Communities: Making A Stand
Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism: Making A Stand

• 9 cities across England and Wales, engaged directly with hundreds of Muslim women

• Taught women theological counter-narratives to extremist ideology
• Helped them to recognise early signs of radicalisation
• Signposted them to external agencies who could provide help to vulnerable individuals in their family or community
• Encouraged them to take the lead in challenging extremism in their communities and to exert influence in their mosques and communities.
Language barriers

Lack of engagement with agencies

Parents closing down debate
Lack of religious knowledge

Media

Cultural gap

Misogyny/female leadership

Concerns about madrassa & Mosque curriculum

Concerns about preachers

Weak Muslim leadership

Internet
Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism

Resources: Combatting ISIS Social Media

• Videos by young Muslim men and women speaking directly to the camera discouraging people from travelling to Syria – 20’000 views

• A community response to extremism with Avon and Somerset police

• After Bethnal Green girls, Letter to young girls went viral. Was being read out in assemblies: 40’000 views in one day

• Other videos have included Boko Haram’s abuse of women and girls: 75’000 views

• Developed free online countering extremism resources24 with London Grid for Learning, a consortium made up of the 33 London local authorities and 2,500 schools, which provide extensive ICT services.
Working with sectors and institutions: Schools and police

• Delivered training to approximately 3000 teachers and schools across the country on how to safeguard children from extremism whether far right or Islamist.

• Focussing on vulnerabilities, role of schools, open up discussion

• Schools maybe the only place where a child is given assistance or whose view maybe countered.

• Not about spying, criminalising or closing down discussion

• Challenging anti-Muslim prejudice

• Helped support Met Police and local police campaigns to discourage travel to Syria.
Challenges

• Rising above the hysteria, fear mongering and myths about Prevent which currently exists
  ➢ “Prevent is about the criminalisation of Muslims and/or Islam”
  ➢ “This is about encouraging front line workers to spy on pupils”
  ➢ “Prevent is Islamophobic”

• Do not always rely on the reporting of media stories

• Inability to distinguish extreme views from conservative Muslim practice

• Parents may not be on your side

• Perception that all Muslims oppose Prevent: Not true

• Preventing Prevent lobby: seek to misinform public and Muslim communities about Prevent and create fear
Our work is an example of Prevent in action

• Protecting the most vulnerable
• Tackling far right and Islamist extremism which dehumanise others and can encourage violence
• Challenging anti-Muslim prejudice, anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred
• Promoting British Muslim identity
• Protecting our country from terrorism
Further Information

• **W**: [www.wewillinspire.com](http://www.wewillinspire.com)
• **E**: [info@wewillinspire.com](mailto:info@wewillinspire.com)
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