



MEND submission to the consultation on the “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper; Building Stronger, More United Communities”

Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government

Submission from Muslim Engagement and Development
(MEND) to the consultation on the “*Integrated Communities
Strategy Green Paper; Building Stronger, More United
Communities*”

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Table of Contents

<i>Introducing MEND’s submission to the consultation on the “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper; Building Stronger, More United Communities”</i>	2
<i>Executive Summary</i>	6
<i>Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper: Introduction</i>	11
<i>Chapter 1. Strengthening Leadership</i>	14
<i>Chapter 2. Supporting new migrants and resident communities</i>	17
<i>Chapter 3. Education and young people</i>	19
<i>Chapter 4: Boosting English language skills</i>	22
<i>Chapter 5. Places and Community</i>	25
<i>Chapter 6. Increasing Economic Opportunity</i>	27
<i>Chapter 7. Rights and Freedoms</i>	29
<i>Chapter 8. Measuring Success</i>	36
<i>MEND’s recommendations to promote integrated communities</i>	37

Introducing MEND's submission to the consultation on the "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper; Building Stronger, More United Communities"

Introducing Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND)

Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) is a community funded organisation that seeks to empower and encourage British Muslims within local communities to be more actively involved in British media and politics. For too long, British Muslims have remained on the margins of public and political debate about their religion and place in modern Britain and the level of Muslim participation in media and politics remains woefully low. As such, MEND seeks to enable British Muslims to engage more effectively with political and media institutions and play a greater role in British politics and society by instilling confidence, competence, and awareness within them.

Contextualising the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper

MEND welcomes government efforts to enhance cohesion and social interactions amongst different communities, and fully supports its stated desire to build communities "where many religions, cultures and opinions are celebrated".¹ In attempting to draw attention to integration as a crucial component of British life, the Government's recently published "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper; Building Stronger, More United Communities", would appear to demonstrate the Government's commitment to protecting and celebrating Britain's diverse and multi-cultural communities.

While debates have raged for many years regarding the benefits of varying approaches to community cohesion, Britain has always claimed to embody a proud history of supporting multiculturalist principles advocating respect and celebration of the multitude of diverse ethnic and religious identities that have led themselves to a British identity built upon pluralism and collaboration. Ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, and new residents, provide diverse sources of innovation, knowledge and experiences, thereby adding richness to our national identity and leading Britain to a fuller and better understanding of today's world. Engaging and sharing spaces with people from different backgrounds develops an appreciation of cultural diversity, whilst also leading to a greater sensitivity towards lives, cultures and challenges beyond national boundaries.

Despite its legacy of plurality, Britain faces today a multitude of challenges. These challenges are characterised by a climate of anti-Muslim hostility, the ongoing retreat from our multiculturalist tradition over the last decade, and the systematic discrimination of minorities which was exposed by the Macpherson Inquiry as early as 1999. More recently, we were reminded about issues of by the Government's *Race Disparity Audit* of October 2017, followed by the Windrush Scandal and last month's report by the UN Special Rapporteur on racism, E. Tendayi Achiume, in which she highlighted the "normalisation of hateful, stigmatising discourse" against minorities in Britain.² These issues demand prompt and fair attention from all branches of the Government, media, and wider society.

Against this backdrop of hostility towards minorities and Muslims in particular, the British Muslim community is a vibrant and heterogeneous one, whose contributions to Britain are

¹ "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper", *HM Government*, March 2018, p. 10, accessed 14.05.2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

² "UN rights expert hails UK for anti-racism action but raises serious concerns over Immigration Policy, Prevent programme and Brexit", *United Nations Human Rights - Office of the High Commissioner*, May 11, 2018, accessed 04.06.2018, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23074&LangID=E>

numerous and multi-layered. Muslim contributions to Britain include but are in no way limited to:

- There are more than 13,400 Muslim-owned businesses in London alone, creating over 70,000 jobs. As such, Muslim owned firms represent a third of small to medium enterprises in the capital.³
- British Muslims donate more to charity than any other group, donating an average of £371 each.⁴ Indeed, during Ramadan 2016, British Muslims donated £100 million, which is equivalent to £38 per second.⁵
- British Muslims contribute over £31 billion to the UK economy.⁶ Meanwhile, the halal food industry in Britain is worth £1 billion, with the global halal food market estimated to be worth £685 billion.⁷
- The public sector draws heavily on skilled professionals from Muslims-majority countries, with 26% of doctors working in the NHS being Asian or Asian British.⁸
- Muslims are eager to participate in society and support their communities. In the last month, alone two Muslims have been appointed Mayor: Mayor of Swindon, Junab Ali, was re-elected in May 2018 for a fourth term and Magid Magid was elected in Sheffield.
- There are currently 650 British Muslims soldiers in the British Army.⁹ In 2006 Jabron Hashmi became the first British Muslim soldier to die in Afghanistan. He was 24 years old. His older brother, Zeeshan, who had also worked in the British Army, said: "Jabron was a committed soldier and a committed Muslim. He was fiercely proud of his Islamic background and he was equally proud of being British and was very proud to live in Britain."¹⁰
- A number of high profile Muslims excel in all realms of British public life. One need not look far to witness the contributions of Muslim figures such as Sayeeda Warsi, Naz Shah, Rushanara Ali, Nazir Afzal, Mohammed Farah, Mohammed Salah, Nadiya Hussein, and James Caan in all realms of life, be it within sports, media, politics, criminal justice or business.

³ *The Muslim Pound: Celebrating the Muslim Contribution to the UK Economy*, report, Muslim Council of Britain, 2013, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The-Muslim-Pound-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Tom Moseley, "Which Religion Gives The Most To Charity?," HuffPost UK, October 03, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/07/21/muslims-give-most_n_3630830.html.

⁵ Nick Donaldson, "Ramadan - making a real difference," Charity Commission, July 14, 2016, <https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/2016/07/14/ramadan-making-a-real-difference/>.

⁶ Asa Bennett, "British Muslims Add Over £31 BILLION To UK Economy," The Huffington Post, October 29, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/10/29/uk-muslims-economy_n_4170781.html.

⁷ *The Muslim Pound: Celebrating the Muslim Contribution to the UK Economy*, report, Muslim Council of Britain, 2013, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The-Muslim-Pound-FINAL.pdf>.

⁸ Haroon Siddique, "Figures show extent of NHS reliance on foreign nationals," The Guardian, January 26, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/26/nhs-foreign-nationals-immigration-health-service>.

⁹ "About Us." Armed Forces Muslim Association. Accessed June 4, 2018. <http://afma.org.uk/about-us/>.

¹⁰ "British Muslim soldiers." The Open University. Accessed June 27, 2017. <http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/blogs/british-muslim-soldiers>.

However, despite their important social, economic, and civic contributions and the fact that 95% of Muslims feel a strong sense of loyalty to the country, as evidenced by a targeted BBC poll,¹¹ Muslims are frequently engulfed in a climate of suspicion; are often accused of being a community possessing little interest in being a full part of British society; and face high levels of discrimination and socio-economic barriers to their active participation in social, political, civic, and economic life.

Indeed, studies have shown that Muslims experience the highest level of disadvantage in the labour market and, according to the National Equality Panel, the greatest “ethnic penalty”.¹² Meanwhile, Muslims also suffer from the highest levels of overcrowding¹³ and remain concentrated in some of the most deprived local authorities, with 46% of Muslims living in the 10% most deprived districts in England and Wales.¹⁴ Furthermore, Muslims continue to be over-policed and over-represented in the Criminal Justice System, with powers such as Stop and Search and an array of counter-terror measures disproportionately impacting them and contributing to their further stigmatisation and marginalisation.

Such challenges will necessarily affect the ways in which both Muslims and wider society perceive British Muslims and their place in society. These issues also impact British Muslims’ abilities to enjoy and exercise their fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. Meanwhile, the often poisonous narrative surrounding Muslims in Britain remains a threat to our democracy and multicultural tradition, whilst also having the potential to marginalise a segment of society which is eager to positively contribute to British life.

The Government’s *Integrated Communities Strategy* ought to be analysed against this context, and against the general public anxiety about multiculturalism. It is no coincidence that 43% of individuals surveyed by YouGov believe that the relationships between different communities in Britain will deteriorate in the next few years, and more than two thirds of Conservative Leave voters believe that multiculturalism is not working.¹⁵ The current climate and narrative against minorities contributes dramatically to strengthening the idea that they constitute a risk for Britain, and that the country would in fact be better off with less or without multiculturalism.

Limitations of commentary

The following submission will attempt to explore and address some of the questions posed by the Government within the Green Paper and highlight what we believe may be opportunities and problems arising from it.

However, we wish to highlight that our commentary only extends to our areas of expertise and the fields in which our work is focussed. As such, there may be issues within the strategy

¹¹ “Most British Muslims ‘oppose Muhammad cartoons reprisals’”, *BBC News*, accessed 15.05.2018, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31293196>

¹² “Muslim Contribution and Labour Market Empowerment”, *MEND*, <https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/images1.pdf>

¹³ “Race Disparity Audit Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website”, *Cabinet Office*, October 2017 (revised March 2018), accessed 15.05.2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RD_A_report_March_2018.pdf

¹⁴ ‘2011 Census Data On Nomis,’ 2011 Census - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics, accessed May 12, 2017, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>.

¹⁵ “Multiculturalism has failed, believe substantial minority of Britons”, *The Guardian*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/14/multiculturalism-failed-substantial-minority-britons-integration-rivers-blood-enoch-powell>

proposed by the Green Paper that our analysis does not explore. For example, there may be economic concerns that are best addressed by the relevant experts in this field.

Executive Summary

MEND's observations regarding the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*

In analysing the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*, MEND would like to highlight the below observations and conclusions.

General observations and conclusions:

- The Green Paper is littered with references and allusions reminiscent of counter-terror strategies that have previously been condemned as hugely damaging to cohesion and inclusion of minorities. This fear has been heightened with the publication of the Home Office's updated counter-terror strategy "CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism", which explicitly mentions this Green Paper in outlining its strategy. It is imperative that strategies of community integration and of counter-terrorism do not overlap, as this can only result in the further securitisation of an already problematic tripartite relationship between government, society and minorities.
- The Green Paper fails to fully extrapolate strategies of integration based on the figures of the 2017 *Race Disparity Audit*.
- The Green Paper strongly relies on the highly criticised 2016 Casey Review. As a consequence, its analysis and suggested strategies are inherently tainted by the same flawed evidence and lack of understanding that has guided the Government's policies on community cohesion and integration thus far.
- The overall approach of the Green Paper is highly problematic. By unilaterally shifting the responsibility and blame for a lack of social inclusion almost entirely onto minority communities, it de-contextualises barriers to inclusion and examines them in a vacuum. While there are brief mentions of hate crimes contributing to isolation, there is a concerning lack of analysis of institutionalised and systematic racism in Britain. Similarly, there is no mention of the way developments, such as the Government's "hostile environment" policy, the PREVENT strategy, and Brexit, have further contributed to creating a climate of fear, mistrust and disillusionment that prevents BAME individuals from fully and actively participating in British society. Without a stronger focus on the broader issues and mechanisms of socio-economic discrimination and exclusion, the Green Paper will be confined to be a collection of half measures that will be insufficient to bring about positive change.
- With the exception of a few practical steps scattered through the Green Paper, it does not seem to offer any clear policy pledges that could be measured against set targets. Instead, much of the Green Paper revolves around generic, subjective, and dangerously loose definitions and conclusions.
- The absence of any form of introspection and self-criticism results in the very limited understanding of some of the key causes that contribute to limiting integration between communities and, in turn, between them and broader society. For example, there is no mention of the impact of the Government's policy of austerity and cuts to public service affect minorities' access to health services, nor is there mention of severely reduced police budgets at a time in which hate crime against minorities is on the rise. Furthermore, there is an absence of commentary on how elements of the British media contributes to spreading harmful narratives surrounding minorities, as well as a lack of analysis regarding the Government's recent cancellation of the second part of the Leveson inquiry. Any serious effort to address the challenges identified by the Green Paper requires a better contextualisation of the issues within the broader social, political and economic framework in which minorities are positioned.

- The Government's current policy of disengagement from non-violent Muslim organisations creates a huge strain on Muslim communities who feel they are not properly represented nor acknowledged. In light of the current mistrust between the Government and the Muslim community, it is imperative that the relationship is recalibrated in an effort to extend the Government's dialogue and engagement to individuals and organisations that so far have been left out of the process.

Introduction:

- The Green Paper's proposal to deploy "tailored local plans and interventions" to address the issue of isolated community suggests that it is merely envisioning a further extension of its powers into areas such as the family, education, the voluntary sector and even religion.¹⁶ This could result in the further interference of the Government into the private life of British citizens, as well as a concerning attempt to assume the role of inspector of whatever it considers constitutes a segregating or "self-segregating" behaviour.

Strengthening Leadership:

- In line with the Casey Review, it would appear that the Green Paper assumes problematic ideologies to be those perceived as being at odds with thus far ill-defined "fundamental British Values". With no explicit guidance on what explicitly constitutes British values, the terminology implies that it would be the Government's prerogative to set a threshold for multiculturalism. This raises questions surrounding how one measures and identifies ideologies relative to British values. For example, how does the right to religious dress or religious slaughter fit into this evaluation?

Supporting new migrants and resident communities:

- We are further concerned that the Government's emphasis on "British values"¹⁷ draws from controversial counter-terror guidance. The reliance on ill-defined "British values" puts minorities, and especially new migrants, at risk of being "Othered" and problematised purely on the basis of their ethno-cultural and religious identities. Furthermore, it would be impossible for new arrivals to adopt "our values" if we cannot say what they are.
- By relying upon and pushing these "British values" the Government is effectively framing rights and responsibilities for new migrants under the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) umbrella. It is imperative that strategies of community integration and of counter-terrorism do not overlap, as this can only result in the further securitisation of an already problematic tripartite relationship between government, society and minorities.
- The Controlling Migration Fund risks increasing societal divide along ethnic and economic lines, shifting the blame for current economic difficulties faced by local authorities squarely onto minorities.

Education and young people:

- In its analysis of British schools, the Green Paper is misguided in its assumption that segregation is a matter of choice and its framing of its limited understanding of segregation exclusively within ethnicity lines, thereby failing to provide meaningful analysis of other

¹⁶ Martin Parson, "Casey's proposal were an attack on religious freedom. Javid was right to bin them", March 15, 2018, accessed 16.05.2018, <https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2018/03/martin-parsons-caseys-proposals-were-an-attack-on-religious-freedom-javid-was-right-to-bin-them.html>

¹⁷ "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper", p. 25.

factors that can contribute to uneven concentrations of different ethnicities and backgrounds, such as social class or opportunities for social mobility.

- The Green Paper places the onus and responsibility for segregation squarely on minority communities with no insight into the parallel responsibilities and required interactions from majority communities. For example, many majority white single-sex public schools also do not afford opportunities for their pupils to “mix with people with different backgrounds”.
- Through its emphasis on “Fundamental British Values” and through overlapping educational goals and counter-terrorism strategies, the Government risks further turning schools into locations of securitisation, with negative consequences for the educational attainment of children, their development and their perceptions of their place in society.
- An area in need of address is the Green Paper’s omission of exploration of the impacts of racist and religiously motivated bullying on the social mixing of pupils from different social, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

Boosting English language skills:

- Both the Casey Review and the Green Paper are fundamentally flawed in their conclusions that language barriers are the ultimate hindrance to employment and ultimately to full socio-economic and civic participation. However, while we disagree that language barriers are the primary concern with regards to accessing the labour market, we firmly agree that economic empowerment is an essential component in ensuring that Muslims and minority communities have all the opportunities necessary for them to be fully engaged within social, economic, political and civic life. As such, MEND argues that the barriers to Muslim economic empowerment is an area that needs to be tackled by both governmental and industry initiatives designed to address religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion.
- If the Government is serious about its intention to promote English language learning as a mechanism for promoting socio-economic inclusion, the appropriate funding needs to be made available and individuals need to be supported in accessing the support that they require. Defunding programs such as ESOL is in direct opposition to what is required.

Places and Community:

- By excluding an exploration of Islamophobia, hatred, and similar mechanisms of socio-economic and civic exclusion, the Green Paper does not provide any assessment as to what drives minorities to live in “segregated” areas. Therefore, while many of its proposals are welcome, such as “shared activities through culture and sport” or “shared community spaces”, there is a clear lack of a holistic understanding of the conditions surrounding the issues that motivate and drive segregation. As such, efforts to ensure that communities have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds, while noble, will always be marred by wider processes and products of prejudice and social-exclusion. Therefore, such aims cannot be achieved without challenging anti-Muslim and anti-minority narratives that are prolific throughout public, political and media discourses. Without tackling problems such as racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, it is difficult to see how initiatives to persuade minority communities to consider living in a wider range of communities can be successful.

Increasing Economic Opportunity:

- MEND welcomes the Government's emphasis on the role that economic opportunities play in strengthening integration and inclusion, as well as its efforts in supporting people who are not currently active in the labour market.
- However, this chapter of the Green Paper is somewhat narrow in scope and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the causes of the phenomenon. MEND maintains that, in order to encourage economic integration, it is critical to tackle religious discrimination in the workplace and to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, while simultaneously improving access to employment for British Muslim women.

Rights and Freedoms:

- Parts of the Green Paper are concerning for its overly aggressive focus on Islamic beliefs and practices, seemingly identifying them as belonging to "cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain."¹⁸ This is a reason for great concern, as it opens a number of related issues that distort the nature of the problem while generating alarmism about Islam, stigmatising the Muslim community, and overlooking other crucial problems that limit British Muslims' socio-economic and civic inclusion within society.
- Muslim women are frequently considered to be victims of their religious and/or cultural heritage without having actually been consulted on the matter.¹⁹ This paints a generalised and incomplete picture, whilst simultaneously presenting solutions and approaches that do not resonate with the women that they are intended to help.
- While British Muslim women's lives are framed within their ethno-cultural and religious circumstances, the challenges they face cannot and should not be completely dislocated from structural disadvantages that all British women face more generally. Moreover, political and media discourses that serve only to perpetuate stereotypes of Muslim women can only ever be counterproductive for all women by misrepresenting the nature - or worse, completely distracting from - the issues that they actually face. Therefore, while cultural practices should be examined, women's issues do not exist in a vacuum and need to be confronted with appropriate honesty and nuance.
- While strengthening protections and rights afforded to women to ensure their equality is a fundamental calling, it is imperative that any changes in this area remain non-discriminatory in focus. Furthermore, with regards to nikah, any proposals must be consulted upon with Muslim communities and a broad spectrum of Muslim women specifically, in order to ensure that their interests are being maintained and in order to avoid any unforeseen consequences and hardships.
- It is important that the issue of Shariah councils is addressed honestly and openly in full consultation with Muslim women. The Green Paper's approach ignores the protections that women are able to access through Sharia councils which they may not feel able to access without them. In November 2106, The Muslim Women's Network told the Home Affairs Select Committee that if Sharia Councils were to be banned, Muslim women would be left

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Moosavi, "Orientalism at home."

without protections against “abusive relationships”, because they would not feel that they could leave the marriage in a way that is compliant with their Islamic values.²⁰

- Whilst paying lip service to “supporting faith communities”, the Green Paper fails to mention that the Government has systematically undermined its relationship with Muslim communities by an active policy of disengagement with faith based institutions it finds ‘undesirable’. As noted by Dominic Grieve in the *Citizens UK* report “The Missing Muslims”, “There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this.”²¹ On the Government’s side, this entails engaging – rather than boycotting – Muslim organisations that hold different views from theirs in order to enable it to “hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK’s Muslim communities.”
- The call for a “clearer interpretation of Islam for life in the UK” is extremely worrying for the Muslim community and needs to be clarified. The concern is that a certain liberal interpretation of ‘acceptable Islam’ will be championed by consultation with Government selected ‘Muslim clerics’, whilst mainstream conservative views will be marginalised as ‘extremist’. This is unacceptable and the Muslim community as a whole should be empowered to consider such matters. We are also concerned that Islam has been singled out in this manner, without references to any other faith groups. We would thus infer that the Government is perfectly happy with orthodox Christian or Jewish practice, and if this is the case, the basis of this position should be explicitly stated.

²⁰ “Sharia Councils”, Home Affairs Committee, November 1, 2016, accessed 04.06.2018, <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/76b3f1e0-29be-498f-9325-62d15033c20f>

²¹ “The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All”, Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life, accessed 04.06.2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/newcitizens/pages/1261/attachments/original/1499106471/Missing_Muslims_Report_-_Electronic_copy.pdf?1499106471

Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper: Introduction

Preliminary observations

The Government's reliance on the 2016 Casey Review, mentioned 19 times throughout the report, is a reason for severe concern due. The highly criticised methodologies and focus of the Casey Review make it inappropriate to constitute the foundation of any strategy designed to honestly address integrated communities. Indeed, the Casey Review has been widely criticised and largely discredited for its flawed methodology based on policy-based evidence and for its almost exclusive focus on Muslim communities, which are mentioned over 249 times throughout the report.²²

It is widely acknowledged that the Casey Review framed issues of community cohesion as a problem of self-segregation, placing far less emphasis on the socio-economic barriers that Muslims and BAME individuals more generally face in their everyday life.²³ Conveniently focusing on what would appear to be manageable issues and solutions, the Casey Review failed to address the underlying roots and causes to effectively address the problems. In other words, the Casey review focused on seemingly problematic communities (something that can easily be highlighted as a concrete concern), whilst largely ignoring wider issues of discrimination, injustice and lack of access (problems that are exponentially harder to explain and tackle). The result of this approach effectively shifts the responsibilities for barriers to civic participation away from the failures of the Government and places it on the diverse socio-cultural norms of minority communities.²⁴

Despite these clear flaws, the Casey Review heavily informs the Green Paper in key areas of intervention, from school and residential segregation to language barriers and personal and religious values and norms. As a consequence, the Green Paper's proposed strategies and concerns are formulated on the basis of flawed evidence and approaches. Therefore, rather than proposing new and potentially fruitful strategies to deliver positive change, the Green Paper analysis and suggested strategies are inherently tainted by the same lack of understanding that has guided Government's policies on community cohesion and integration thus far.

In order to honestly and effectively approach an understanding of the challenges to facilitating and building integrated communities, it is necessary to develop a more sophisticated and nuanced analysis of the multitude of socio-economic issues faced by BAME individuals. Perhaps because of its reliance on the Casey Review, the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* fails to achieve this.

The Green Paper's reliance on the Casey Review is an issue that will be returned to throughout our analysis of the questions posed within it.

²² "Casey report criticised for focus on UK Muslim community", *The Guardian*, December 5, 2016, accessed 16.05.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/05/casey-report-criticised-for-focus-on-uk-muslim-communities>

²³ Dame Louise Casey DBE CB, "The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration", *Department for Communities and Local Government*, pp. 10-12, December 2016, accessed 16.05.2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

²⁴ Colin Talbot, "Louise Casey and "Listening to Troubled Families": an (almost) worthless piece of 'research' leading to dangerous policy prescriptions", July 18 2012, accessed 16.05.2018, <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/whitehallwatch/2012/07/louise-casey-and-listening-to-troubled-families-an-almost-worthless-piece-of-research-leading-to-dangerous-policy-prescriptions-2/>

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

We define integrated communities as communities where people - whatever their background - live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Do you agree with our definition?

MEND agrees with the Green Paper's definition of integrated communities as spaces where people from different backgrounds "live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities". The inclusion of shared opportunities is particularly heartening as it highlights the importance of overcoming socio-economic discrimination and exclusion as an imperative step in furthering community inclusion.

We believe that the varied nature and scale of integration challenges means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to tackle the issues specific to particular places. Do you agree?

The Government's suggestion to deploy "tailored local plans and interventions" to address the issue of isolated community suggests that it is merely envisioning a further extension of its powers into areas such as the family, education, the voluntary sector and even religion.²⁵ This could result in the further interference of the Government into the private life of British citizens, as well as a concerning attempt to assume the role of inspector of whatever it considers constitutes a segregating or 'self-segregating' behaviour.

In November 2017 we witnessed the dangerous impact of this approach, when Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, announced that inspectors would be allowed to question primary school girls who wear the hijab (notably excluding any requirement to question children from other faiths wearing the Sikh top knot or Jewish kippa, for example). The proposal was criticised by over a thousand teachers, academics and grassroots leaders, who claimed that "the singling out of Muslim children for investigation is unacceptable", and contributed in spreading the idea that British Muslims belong to a community "at risk".²⁶ The Government has a natural responsibility to protect its citizens, however, this should be attempted through legitimate safeguarding measures and should not rely on the indiscriminate and systematic targeting of minorities merely on the basis of cultural and religious identities.

Do you have any examples of successful approaches to encourage integration that you wish to highlight, particularly approaches which have been subject to evaluation?

A key to full integration is to encourage full an active engagement in all spheres of public life. Citizens feel that they have a greater stake in society when they feel that they are involved, that their contributions are valued, and that their interests are being protected.

Civic engagement of British Muslims is MEND's raison d'être and we achieve this in a variety of ways. Our approach involves an emphasis on a combination of both bottom up and top down initiatives.

²⁵ Martin Parson, "Casey's proposal were an attack on religious freedom. Javid was right to bin them", March 15, 2018, accessed 16.05.2018, <https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2018/03/martin-parsons-caseys-proposals-were-an-attack-on-religious-freedom-javid-was-right-to-bin-them.html>

²⁶ "Over 1,000 Teacher And Academics Want To Know Why School Inspectors Are Asking Kids About Their Hijabs", *Buzzfeed*, November 29, 2017, accessed 16.05.2018, https://www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/teachers-and-academics-hijab-ofsted?utm_term=.fnQzdKbMI#.bgIKkbNqY

Grassroots empowerment

This area of our work involves community engagement through initiatives such as:

- **Education:** We provide a curriculum of education resources and training workshops designed to encourage Muslim empowerment in politics and media. These initiatives range from one page factsheets and easy to read guides on areas such as media regulation and counter-terror, to masterclasses focussed on issues such as how parliament works, and culminate in full day workshops on areas such as equalities and the criminal justice system.
- **Wider community engagement:** We encourage wider community engagement through local intercommunity events and activities, as well as through collaborative projects with non-Muslim organisations.
- **Local campaigns:** we run and facilitate a number of local and national campaigns each year, most notably, Islamophobia Awareness Month and our Get Out And Vote campaign. These campaigns are hugely beneficial in encouraging civic participation and inter-community engagement

Advocacy work

Our advocacy work is hugely important in ensuring that the interests of minority communities are protected. While the mechanisms of this work may appear irrelevant to integration, the results of this advocacy work is paramount to successful inclusion strategies. For example, the impact of Islamophobia across the UK is one of the most significant barriers to British Muslims' engagement in social, civic, economic, and political life. Our advocacy work is therefore essential in overcoming this barrier to integration. The final chapter in this submission outlines our blueprint to tackling Islamophobia as a crucial development in encouraging inter-community cohesion and facilitating the opportunities for British Muslims to fully enjoy their rights and freedoms in every realm of public life.

Chapter 1. Strengthening Leadership

Preliminary observations

In examining the role of community leaders, Chapter 1 of the Green Paper relies on Dame Louise Casey's statement that:

"Too many leaders in public and faith institutions and in communities have allowed diversity and difference to become separatism and segregation that has divided communities... Whether the drivers for this have been fear of accusations of racism, of wanting to be welcoming, tolerant and accepting of foreign cultures, or concerns about disrepute or loss of support, the results have been more harmful than good."²⁷

The overarching tone and focus of the Casey Review, which has consequently infiltrated and directed the Green Paper, frames the issue of faith leaders' alleged separation and segregation of communities firmly within the Muslim community. Indeed, the Green Paper explicitly references a "mono-cultural inner-city community from a predominantly Muslim and Pakistani background".²⁸ In line with the Casey Review and through positioning the Muslim community as a particularly troubling congregation of seemingly asocial individuals, the overtone of the Paper further elevates the Government's inquiry into questions of faith, inter-faith relations and religious diversity.

Thus, the resulting premise that the Green Paper is built upon is the assumption that certain cultural and religious practices are a hindrance to community cohesion.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?

Independently of the overall Green Paper, capacity building amongst leaders may seem like an honourable and unproblematic suggestion for encouraging integrated communities. However, we are concerned that the starting point of the Green Paper strategy of 'Strengthening Leadership' is, once again, the Casey Review.

Furthermore, considering the worrying overlaps between the Green Paper and UK counter-terror strategies, it is important to ensure that the funding referred to in this chapter which is designated for a Cohesion and Integration Network remains separate from counter-terror initiatives. In other words, the damaging impact of PREVENT in creating suspect communities and marginalising young people must be mitigated and it is imperative that schemes intended to empower young leaders remain separate.

As such, the framework within which the Paper intends to "build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes" needs to be thoroughly examined. Most notably, there are two questions that must be critically addressed:

1. What are the specific integration outcomes that leaders are required to promote?
2. How are suitable leaders to be identified for support?

²⁷ "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper", p. 17.

²⁸ Ibid. 29

What are the specific integration outcomes that leaders are required to promote?

In line with the Casey Review, it would appear that the Green Paper assumes problematic ideologies to be those perceived as being at odds with thus far ill-defined “fundamental British Values”. With no explicit guidance on what explicitly constitutes British values, the terminology implies that it would be the Government’s prerogative to set a threshold for multiculturalism. This raises questions surrounding how one measures and identifies ideologies relative to British values. For example, how does the right to religious dress or religious slaughter fit into this evaluation?

Moreover, the Green Paper repeatedly emphasises the need of community leaders “to champion our shared values”.²⁹ However, the Green Paper does not offer anything new in relation to a definition of “shared values”, instead relying upon the definitions of “Fundamental British Values”³⁰ previously expounded within counter-terror strategies and legislation. As such, these shared values are deemed to be “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs”.³¹ Consequently, the Green paper implies that it will be controversial counter-terror measures that are used to set the standards for tolerable community behaviours. As such, the idea of a Government-led programme to educate community leaders to spread “our shared values”, dangerously resembles the postulates of the PREVENT strategy; a strategy which is already marred in controversy and deeply criticised for its impacts in stigmatising and alienating vulnerable minorities.

In absence of reliable guidance on which values are to be supported and which are to be deemed “at odds with the views of mainstream society”,³² this approach ultimately exposes minority communities, and Muslims specifically, to the risk of being subject to increasing scrutiny not for an alleged alienation from mainstream society, but for not conforming to the Government’s views on what should be mainstream society’s values.

Rather than strengthening multiculturalism, this approach actively undermines it by pre-cognitively questioning Muslims’ compatibility with British life and their ability to be an active member of society. Furthermore, by pre-problematising Muslim identities, Muslims are continually forced to actively prove their loyalty and attachment to Britain. This only serves to fuel the toxic narratives surrounding Muslims and severely damage Muslims’ own perceptions of their value and place in society.

How are suitable leaders to be identified for support?

For some time, Muslim organisations have noted that the only Muslims which the Government engages with or provides platform are those who subscribe to its policies and approaches. However, these individuals frequently fail to sufficiently represent the multitude of views that the Muslim community holds on political and social issues. A particularly damaging example of this is the recent appointment of Sara Khan as the new Commissioner for Countering Extremism. This appointment attracted sever criticism from Muslim communities due to Ms Khan’s alienation from mainstream Muslim interests.

Indeed, the Government’s current policy of disengagement from non-violent Muslim organisations creates a huge strain on Muslim communities who feel they are not properly represented nor acknowledged. In light of the current mistrust between the Government and

²⁹ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper”, p. 17

³⁰ which are mentioned over 20 times within the Green Paper

³¹ Ibid. p. 28.

³² “The Casey Review...”, p. 143.

the Muslim community, it is imperative that the relationship is recalibrated in an effort to extend the Government's dialogue and engagement to individuals and organisations that so far have been left out of the process. As noted by Dominic Grieve in the *Citizens UK* report "The Missing Muslims", "There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this."³³ On the Government's side, this entails engaging – rather than boycotting – Muslim organisations that hold different views from theirs.

Moreover, in terms of supporting local leaders, it is imperative that the leaders supported are honest representatives of the communities they serve and do not become mere "government stooges" as so many have done before.

³³ "The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All", Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life, accessed 04.06.2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/newcitizens/pages/1261/attachments/original/1499106471/Missing_Muslims_Report_-_Electronic_copy.pdf?1499106471

Chapter 2. Supporting new migrants and resident communities

Preliminary observations

MEND acknowledges that the impact of immigration is an important issue to address, and welcomes efforts to ensure that fair and just treatment and opportunities are provided for new migrants.

We believe that the Government, in addressing the issues surrounding the policy of “hostile environment”, should commission methodologically sound research to understand, explain and tackle the overarching issues burdening local authorities. In employing methodologically informed research, this allows for targeted and positive intervention to support both local communities and the opportunities of new arrivals to fully participate in socio-civic life.

An honest and methodologically informed approach to immigration would involve a revision of the Government’s hard stance on immigration, and a concerted effort to ensure that new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are afforded a chance to positively contribute to society. Simultaneously, a genuine, state-led effort to tackle socio-economic disparities and wealth concentration would significantly unburden local authorities, making them less dependent on ad-hoc financial support.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes measures to support recent migrants so that they have the information they need to integrate into society and understand British values and their rights and responsibilities. Do you agree with this approach?

While agreeing with the idea that new migrants should be provided with information regarding their rights and responsibilities in modern day Britain, we are concerned that the Government’s emphasis on “British values”³⁴ draws again from controversial counter-terror guidance. The reliance on ill-defined “British values” puts minorities, and especially new migrants, at risk of being “Othered” and problematised purely on the basis of their ethno-cultural and religious identities. Furthermore, it would be impossible for new arrivals to adopt “our values” if we cannot say what they are.

By relying upon and pushing these “British values” the Government is effectively framing rights and responsibilities for new migrants under the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) umbrella. It is imperative that strategies of community integration and of counter-terrorism do not overlap, as this can only result in the further securitisation of already problematic tripartite relationship between government, society and minorities.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of discussion within the Paper surrounding educating migrants and refugees so that they “understand social norms and the consequences of behaving in an anti-social way”.³⁵ There is no doubt that adhering to norms such as respect for others and the protection of rights should be an expectation for new arrivals into the UK. However, it is important that the associated problems do not become classified or viewed as problems that are in any way exclusive to those communities.

For example, against the context of the refugee crisis and following the New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Cologne, Belgium introduced courses for male refugees to educate them on issues of consent and respect for women. While perhaps necessary, there is an argument to be made that such education is required, not just for refugee and migrant men, but rather all men could

³⁴ Ibid. p. 25.

³⁵ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper”, p. 22

benefit from it as these issues of consent and sexual violence are pervasive across society. A case in point is the fact that In 2009, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission said that every year an estimated 3 million women experience rape, domestic violence, stalking or some other kind of abuse. In reality, the actual figures are far higher as domestic violence and rape go largely unreported.

Consequently, while a focus on norms and values may be noble, it must be matched by equal fervor in its promotion to all groups within society, not just new arrivals. To place the emphasis on new arrivals not only opens them to scrutiny, undue problematisation and marginalisation, but may also obscure the causes of certain issues, resulting in inadequate methods to tackle them.

The Controlling Migration Fund was constructed to deal with the short-term migration pressures and associated costs that local authorities can encounter. Do you think it adequately achieves this objective?

We are concerned about the scope and implementation of measures such as the Controlling Migration Fund, particularly in light of the current Government's "hostile environment" and hard stance on immigration. In the context of the current and widespread climate of hostility against minorities, the Controlling Migration Fund risks increasing societal divide along ethnic and economic lines, shifting the blame for current economic difficulties faced by local authorities squarely onto minorities. As stated by Jonathan Bartley in 2016, the narrative surrounding (now former) Home Secretary Amber Rudd's Controlling Migration Fund seems to imply "that migrants are to blame for the problems our country faces".³⁶ Indeed, the risks of portraying migrants as an unbearable strain on resources only contributes in fuelling anxieties between communities, while simultaneously failing to address the wider issues of wealth concentration and socio-economic disparities. Considering that one third of Britons who voted for the UK to leave the European Union did so to "regain control over immigration and its own borders",³⁷ the current narrative of blaming migrants for local issues risks furthering the fracture between minorities and broader society.

Indeed, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance concluded that Brexit Britain is affected by a "considerable intolerant political discourse focusing on immigration and contributing to an increase in xenophobic sentiment".³⁸ This poisonous narrative once again shifts the blame of Britain's problems squarely onto migrants, or individuals who visibly belong to minority communities. Thus, the Controlling Migration Fund is but another instrument to problematise the presence of minority and immigrant communities.

³⁶ "Rudd's 'controlling migration fund' blames migrants for Government failings, say Greens", October 4, 2016, accessed 16.05.2018, <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2016/10/04/rudds-%E2%80%98controlling-migration-fund%E2%80%99-blames-migrants-for-government-failings.-say-greens/>

³⁷ "How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday... and why", Lord Ashcroft Polls, June 24, 2016, accessed 16.05.2018, <http://lordashcrofthpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>

³⁸ "Brexit vote has led to noticeable rise in UK xenophobia, watchdog warns", *The Independent*, October 4, 2016, accessed 16.05.2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-vote-has-led-to-noticeable-rise-in-uk-xenophobia-watchdog-warns-a7343646.html>

Chapter 3. Education and young people

Preliminary observations

While agreeing that it is essential for children to be given all the necessary tools and opportunities to experience diversity and to be prepared for life in a pluralistic society, we are concerned that this Chapter begins by stressing the importance of teaching children “about fundamental British values”.³⁹ Once again, the Green Paper relies on CVE definitions of British values, without adding anything new to our understanding of them, and ignoring the many problems that this approach already entails.

In its analysis of British schools, the Green Paper is based upon flawed foundations underpinning the entire study. In particular, it is misguided in its assumption that segregation is a matter of choice and an exclusive matter of ethnicity. The Government states that “there is a relatively high degree of separation of pupils of different ethnicities across schools and in some areas the distribution of ethnic minority pupils in schools is uneven in comparison to the population residing in the wider area”. As such, the Government frames its limited understanding of segregation exclusively within ethnicity lines, thereby failing to provide meaningful analysis of other factors that can contribute to uneven concentrations of different ethnicities and backgrounds, such as social class or opportunities for social mobility.

Furthermore, it places the onus and responsibility for segregation squarely on minority communities with no insight into the parallel responsibilities and required interactions from majority communities. For example, many majority white single-sex public schools also do not afford opportunities for their pupils to “mix with people with different backgrounds”. Indeed, it pays no mention to the highly segregated “white community” in Britain, which according to a study by Semynov and Glikman, has one of the highest percentage across European countries of self-segregation, social distance (i.e. the physical distance created between members of the majority population and members of subordinate ethnic minorities), and perception of threat (negative attitudes toward out-group populations).⁴⁰

Furthermore, the Green Paper seems to rely on the assumption that ethnic minorities are a monolithic bloc that is directly comparable and oppositional to a white majority. Evidence of this can be seen in the negative connotation implied by the statement that “60% of minority ethnic pupils were in schools where minority ethnic pupils were in the majority”.⁴¹ The Green Paper ties this data with a “high degree of separation of pupils” and lack of “opportunities for children and young people to mix with others from different backgrounds”.⁴² This is a premature conclusion to draw without any explanation of the ethnic makeup of these ethnic minorities. It is perfectly possible that these students experience extensive exposure to pupils of different ethnicities, cultures and religions from their own, however, the Green Paper ignores these interactions whilst also disregarding how they may compare to the experiences of children in schools which are almost exclusively populated by students from White British backgrounds.

³⁹ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...”, p. 14

⁴⁰ Moshe Semynov and Anya Glikman, “Ethnic Residential Segregation, Social Contacts, and Anti-Minority Attitudes in European Societies”, *European Sociological Review*, Volume 25, Issue 6, 1 December 2009, pp. 693–708, <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcn075>

⁴¹ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...” p. 26.

⁴² Ibid.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?

MEND fully agrees with the overarching principle that all children and young people should be given all the tools necessary to prepare them for life in modern Britain and have ample opportunities for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. However, we have fundamental concerns over what the Green Paper suggests to be “prepared for life in modern Britain”. In particular, we object to the emphasis that this chapter of the Green Paper places on teaching children “about Fundamental British values”⁴³ and the conflation of this approach with existing problematic CVE strategies.

A vast body of existing research highlights the inherent issues in placing a positive duty on teachers to identify signs of radicalisation and extremism, especially when their compliance with this guidance has a direct impact upon their schools’ Ofsted ratings. The duty imposed upon under-equipped teachers to judge behaviours, beliefs and identities on the basis of ill-defined “Fundamental British Values”, has already resulted in “the systematic breach of children’s human rights in the school setting”, such as “the right to education, the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of religion, the right to privacy, the right to freedom from discrimination”.⁴⁴ By overlapping educational goals and counter-terrorism strategies, the Government risks further turning schools into locations of securitisation, with negative consequences for the educational attainment of children, their development and their perceptions of their place in society.

Meanwhile, emphasis on these unclear British Values has the consequence of damaging multicultural traditions by problematising cultural identities purely on the basis that they deviate from the norms of the majority population. An example of this can be seen in Chief Inspector of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman’s, proposal for inspectors to question primary school girls in hijab. The proposal resulted in the country’s largest teaching union accusing Ms Spielman of “pressuring schools into banning the hijab worn by young girls”, and of putting Muslim girls at risk of “increased physical and verbal attacks”.⁴⁵

Another area in need of address is the Green Paper’s omission of exploration of the impacts of racist and religiously motivated bullying on the social mixing of pupils from different social, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The Green Paper outlines the Government’s concern surrounding home education, stressing “cases where children are not receiving a suitable education”, or even cases in which they have been taught “to hate and be intolerant”.⁴⁶ However, a recent study conducted by sociologists Martin Myers and Kalwant Bhopal, found that Muslim families in Britain are increasingly educating their children at home due to racist bullying and marginalisation, with many lamenting “racism within schools” and the climate of suspicion emerging from the Trojan Horse scandal as the key factors behind their choice to educate their children at home.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is surprising that

⁴³ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...”, p. 14

⁴⁴ “Preventing Education? Human Rights And UK Counter-Terrorism Policy In Schools”, *RightsWatch*, July 2016, p. 5, accessed 17.05.2018, <http://rwuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/preventing-education-final-to-print-3.compressed-1.pdf>

⁴⁵ “Teaching union criticises Ofsted chief over hijab ban for young girls”, *The Guardian*, March 30, 2018, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/mar/30/teaching-union-criticises-ofsted-chief-amanda-spielman-over-hijab-ban-for-young-girls>

⁴⁶ Ibid. 27.

⁴⁷ Martin Myers and Kalwant Bhopal, “Muslims, home education and risk in British society”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Volume 39, 2018 - Issue 2, pp. 212-226, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2017.1406337>

the Green Paper makes no mention of ingrained racist practices in British schools, nor any mention of racist and Islamophobic bullying.

MEND has long maintained that tackling racist bullying at school is an important step in the fight against Islamophobia and the exclusion of British Muslims from social, civic, economic and political life in the UK. Indeed, between 2012-13, ChildLine found a 69% increase on the previous year in counselling related to racist bullying, with terms like “bomber” and “terrorist” being frequently used, along with children being told to “go back to where you came from”.⁴⁸ More recently, the NSPCC reported a dramatic increase in helpline calls relating to racial and religious bullying or hate crimes following the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in 2017.⁴⁹

We fully agree with the Green Paper’s conclusion that schools play a vital role in educating children on how to be members of a diverse and pluralistic society. However, rather than placing such emphasis on narratives surrounding “Fundamental British Values”, schools need to be supported in encouraging multicultural exchange, respect, celebration and appreciation. Therefore, schools are in need of greater support in terms of both the curriculum and teacher training. Areas to address this include:

- Prioritising PSHE and PSRE in the national curriculum to prepare young people for life in a diverse and pluralistic society.
- Developing training programmes and resources for teachers focussed on tackling bullying based on race, religion, disability or sexuality.
- Developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other forms of hatred.
- Supporting community and school-led programmes that encourage cultural exchange between pupils of different racial, religious, ethnic and other backgrounds.
- Supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst giving greater emphasis within the national curriculum to shared histories and the contributions of minority communities in building our society.

⁴⁸ “MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017”, *MEND*, p. 17, accessed 17.05.2018, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres.pdf

⁴⁹ “NSPCC reports increase in race and faith-based bullying following attacks in Manchester and London”, *MEND*, June 29 2017, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://mend.org.uk/news/nsppcc-reports-increase-race-faith-based-bullying-following-attacks-manchester-london/>

Chapter 4: Boosting English language skills

Preliminary observations

MEND agrees that developing language skills is a crucial step to undertake in order to facilitate social interaction and promote active political, civic, and economic engagement. As such, efforts to improve the language skills of migrants and new residents are generally welcome.

However, MEND is concerned that the Green Paper has not overcome the baggage of the problematic conclusions originally expounded by the Casey Review. This contributes to a simplistic and ultimately damaging narrative surrounding language and ethno-religious minorities. Indeed, the original publication of the Casey Review created an unnecessary wave of hysteria, seemingly culminating in then Prime Minister, David Cameron, threatening the mass deportation of Muslim women who could not speak English.⁵⁰ The focus of the Green Paper in this regard seems to have done little to take a more nuanced and research driven understanding of the issues.

The Green Paper states that “the challenge” is “too many people who don’t speak English”,⁵¹ yet the figure used (around 770,000 people) to support this claim combines both those who “could speak English but not well” and those who “could not speak English at all”. The difference is significant because the actual amount of those who cannot “speak English at all” is 138,000 people (0.3% of the population).⁵² As such, it is imperative that perspective is maintained so as not to create hysteria around a problem that, while in need of address, is in no way indicative of a mass refusal of ethnic minorities to integrate.

Furthermore, the Green Paper places particular emphasis on Muslim communities and, in so doing, also oversimplifies the challenges facing these communities. Indeed, the Paper states that “by faith community, the Muslim population has the highest proportion of people aged 16 and over who cannot speak English well or at all (16%)”, and subsequently argues that these language barriers limit their chances to access the labour market, which in turn would allow them to become better integrated in society.⁵³ However, this is an example of where critical analysis and a nuanced understanding is necessary to effectively approach the roots, causes and solutions to socio-economic and civic engagement.

For example, the Race Disparity Audit showed that the majority of Pakistani and Bangladeshi individuals who do not speak English are over the age of 65, therefore not of working age. Conversely, the vast majority of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi individuals who are of working age and who may be attempting to access the labour market do, in fact, speak English proficiently.⁵⁴ Indeed, while almost half of Bangladeshi women and a third of Pakistani women aged 65 and over – hence out of the job market regardless of their language skills – could not speak English, among those aged 16 to 24, only around 1% faced that problem.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ “David Cameron under fire over plans to deport Muslim women who can’t speak English”, *The Independent*, January 18, 2016, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/pm-under-fire-over-plans-to-deport-muslim-women-who-can-t-speak-english-a3159171.html>

⁵¹ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...”, p. 35.

⁵² “English language skills”, *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/community/english-language-skills/latest>

⁵³ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...”, p. 35.

⁵⁴ “English language skills”, *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/culture-and-community/community/english-language-skills/latest>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Therefore, both the Casey Review and the Green Paper are fundamentally flawed in their conclusions that language barriers are the ultimate hindrance to employment and ultimately to full socio-economic and civic participation. Furthermore, the strategy contained in both of these papers systematically fail to take into account other barriers confronting Muslims and minority communities in accessing the labour market; in particular, racial and religiously motivated discrimination that serve to exclude Muslims at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion.

However, while we disagree that language barriers are the primary concern with regards to accessing the labour market, we firmly agree that economic empowerment is an essential component in ensuring that Muslims and minority communities have all the opportunities necessary for them be fully engaged within social, economic, political and civic life.

As such, MEND argues that the barriers to Muslim economic empowerment is an area that needs to be tackled by both governmental and industry initiatives designed to address religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, including through the use of name-blind applications.

Particular attention needs to be given to Muslim women's experiences of the triple ethnic penalty and improving their access to employment. Furthermore, there need to be greater focus within the civil service and within industry to improve ethnic diversity in all sectors through schemes designed to encourage BAME recruitment, mentoring and promotion. Considering the disproportional representation of Muslims within the higher echelons of their professions, one area for potential development is schemes designed to promote and facilitate careers progression and advice services.

As well as the special attention that needs to be given to the barriers facing Muslim women, the young age demographics of Muslim communities singles out young people as also needing increased support in achieving their career aspirations. Therefore, programs are needed that aim to improve young people's access to the labour market, for example, through funding apprenticeships, internships and alternative routes into employment.

Finally, employers need to be supported in developing widely accessible inclusion strategies within the workplace, such as recognising and accommodating religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes a number of measures to improve the offer for people to learn English. Do you agree with this approach? And do you have any other suggestions on how we can improve the offer for people to learn English?

Research published in 2016 by the Runnymede Trust and Women's Budget Group (WBG) has shown that BAME groups have suffered the most from the policies of fiscal austerity pushed forward by the Government since 2010.⁵⁶ As Omar Khan, director of Runnymede Trust, pointed out, "Changes to tax credits and other welfare payments will hit minority ethnic Britons harder than their white compatriots".⁵⁷ While making BAME individuals poorer, the

⁵⁶ "New research shows that poverty, ethnicity and gender magnify the impact of austerity on BME women", *Women's Budget Group*, accessed 17.05.2018, <http://wbg.org.uk/news/new-research-shows-poverty-ethnicity-gender-magnify-impact-austerity-bme-women/>

⁵⁷ "Black & Asian Women Pay Highest Price for Austerity", *Runnymede Trust*, December 16, 2016, accessed 17.05.2018, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/black-asian-women-pay-highest-price-for-austerity>

cuts also severely reduce their chances to improve their language skills where this is required. In 2008, the government spent £230 million on the programme English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), a figure reduced to £130 million by 2013 and to less than £90 million in 2015. The wider cuts to the adult skills budget (down by 35% - or £400 million) mean that ESOL is simply at risk of disappearing.

If the Government is serious about its intention to promote English language learning as a mechanism for promoting socio-economic inclusion, the appropriate funding needs to be made available and individuals need to be supported in accessing the support that they require. Defunding programs such as ESOL is in direct opposition to what is required.

Chapter 5. Places and Community

Preliminary observations

The Green Paper points at “Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity communities and Muslim communities”⁵⁸ as examples of highly segregated communities with limited interactions with their white counterparts, yet makes no effort to research, understand and tackle the issue of bias and prejudice that leads these groups to be more careful about “coming into contact with people of another ethnicity”.⁵⁹ However, issues of segregated space cannot be separated from Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of hatred that influence the public exclusion of minorities and subsequent defensive or reactive responses.

MEND defines Islamophobia as *a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims which encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life*. In other words, Islamophobia encompasses far more than simply hostility and hate crime. Islamophobia infiltrates every aspect of public life and creates barriers to Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim) in overt ways, but also in ways that are more subtle and thus much harder to detect and demonstrate. For example, hatred and physical abuse on the streets is overt and impossible to ignore. However, the CV that is passed over because it boasts a Muslim sounding name; or the British-Pakistani man who is repeatedly assumed a threat at the airport on the basis of his beard; or the child who feels unable to ask questions in class because she is worried she may be swept up into the apparatus of PREVENT, these are examples that may be harder to detect, but which have dire repercussions on British Muslims’ daily enjoyment of freedoms and ultimately impact the ways in which Muslims perceive their place in society and the ways in which they relate to their non-Muslim neighbours.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?

MEND agrees that creating communities and spaces where people from different backgrounds can interact and mix together is a crucial step to undertake in order to improve cohesion and integration among communities. It also appreciates the Government’s focus on issues such as housing, community ownership of assets, and community spaces, which play an important part in in the social cohesion among people from different backgrounds.

However, as mentioned previously, the Green Paper fails to tackle the wider problems surrounding the climate of anti-Muslim racism and prejudice that results in the exclusion of Muslims in every sphere of public life, be it political, civic, social, or economic.

By excluding exploration of Islamophobia, hatred, and similar mechanisms of socio-economic and civic exclusion, the Green Paper does not provide any assessment as to what drives minorities to live in “segregated” areas. Therefore, while many of its proposals are welcome, such as “shared activities through culture and sport” or “shared community spaces”, there is

⁵⁸ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper..., p. 43

⁵⁹ Alita Nandi and Renee Luthra, “Who experiences ethnic and racial harassment?”, accessed 18.05.2018, <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/projects/health-and-harassment/Health%20and%20Harassment%20Briefing%20Note%20Oct2016.pdf>

a clear lack of a holistic understanding of the conditions surrounding the issues that motivate and drive segregation.

As such, efforts to ensure that communities have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds, while noble, will always be marred by wider processes and products of prejudice and social-exclusion. Therefore, such aims cannot be achieved without challenging anti-Muslim and anti-minority narratives that are prolific throughout public, political and media discourses.

Effective methods for tackling Islamophobia and hatred as barriers to integration will be elaborated upon under MEND's recommendations at the end of this submission.

Chapter 6. Increasing Economic Opportunity

Preliminary observations

MEND firmly agrees with the Green Paper's assertion that economic empowerment is an essential component in ensuring that Muslims and minority communities have all the opportunities necessary for them to be fully engaged within social, economic, political and civic life. Indeed, the 2003 Cabinet Office report alluded to a "double dividend", whereby advancing opportunities for minority and Muslim employment would unleash the potential for growth while tackling the deeper problems that arise from social exclusion.⁶⁰

While the Green Paper does suggest building capability in Jobcentres" to "understand, identify and overcome the particular barriers people from ethnic minorities may face to gaining work, including cultural barriers",⁶¹ it fails to provide in-depth guidance on how the strategy intends to tackle barriers to the labour market based on racially and religiously motivated discrimination.

The issue of employment discrimination against BAME individuals is well-documented, and the Government's recent Race Disparity Audit played an important role in drawing attention to staggering figures of and barriers to accessing the labour market for minority communities.

In many ways, Muslim communities face unique challenges regarding exclusions from the labour market. Indeed, Muslims suffer from the lowest employment rate for individuals aged 25-49 and the highest unemployment rate (11%, compared to just 4% of their White counterparts); they also are more likely than workers in other ethnic groups to be concentrated in the three lowest-skilled occupation groups, with more than 2 in 5 Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers in these lower-skilled occupations, as well as receiving the lowest hourly pay rate of any other group.⁶²

As such, the barriers to Muslim economic empowerment is an area that needs to be tackled by both governmental and industry initiatives designed to address religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion. However, the Green Paper fails to provide a comprehensive and informed framework to address these problems in a holistic manner.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes measures to provide tailored support to people, especially those who may not currently be active in the labour market, to build their confidence and skills to take up employment. Do you agree with this approach?

MEND welcomes the Government's emphasis on the role that economic opportunities play in strengthening integration and inclusion, as well as its efforts in supporting people who are not currently active in the labour market. The Government's focus on "building capability across Jobcentre Plus to understand the needs and challenges in local areas" and "Supporting people through Universal Credit" are important steps that can better assist people in finding jobs and opportunities.

However, this chapter of the Green Paper is somewhat narrow in scope. The Paper briefly mentions studies by Natcen and the Runnymede Trust on racial prejudice in Britain and its

⁶⁰ "MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017...", pp. 23, 24.

⁶¹ "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper..." p. 52.

⁶² "Work, pay and benefits", *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*, accessed 21.05.2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits>

impact on job discrimination,⁶³ but does not provide an in-depth analysis of the causes of the phenomenon.

Of particular surprise is the fact that, despite some attempts to discuss Muslim women throughout the Green Paper, it does not engage in discussion concerning the difficulties they experience when trying to access the labour market. Research has pointed to the fact that Muslim women suffer from “triple ethnic penalty” compounded by religion, gender, and ethnicity. One in eight have also been illegally asked about marriage and family aspirations during job interviews, and half of Muslim women who wear the hijab feel they have missed out on career progression opportunities.⁶⁴

While some emphasis is placed on the responsibility of employers in “in their attraction, recruitment and retention arrangements” for BAME individuals,⁶⁵ there is a significant dearth of systematic evidence of the multiple barriers that BAME individuals face in the labour market. Likewise, the Paper is lacking in any specific policy pledges to de-institutionalise discriminatory practices in employment settings. Furthermore, very little attention is devoted to the role of institutions in changing this trend, or to other measures that may be utilised to reduce bias and prejudice amongst employers.

MEND maintains that, in order to encourage economic integration, it is critical to tackle religious discrimination in the workplace and to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, including through the use of name-blind applications (indeed, studies have shown that CVs submitted under a non-Muslim name are three times more likely to be offered an interview than those with a Muslim name attached).⁶⁶

Particular attention needs to be given to Muslim women’s experiences of the triple ethnic penalty and improving their access to employment. Furthermore, there need to be greater focus within the civil service and within industry to improve ethnic diversity in all sectors through schemes designed to encourage BAME recruitment, mentoring and promotion. Considering the disproportional representation of Muslims within the higher echelons of their professions, one area for potential development is schemes designed to promote and facilitate careers progression and advice services.

As well as the special attention that needs to be given to the barriers facing Muslim women, the young age demographics of Muslim communities singles out young people as also needing increased support in achieving their career aspirations. Therefore, programs are needed that aim to improve young people’s access to the labour market, for example, through funding apprenticeships, internships and alternative routes into employment.

Finally, employers need to be supported in developing widely accessible inclusion strategies within the workplace, such as recognising and accommodating religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace.

⁶³ Ibid. 52.

⁶⁴ “Employment Discrimination against Muslims”, MEND, accessed 18.05.2018, <https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Employment-Discrimination-against-Muslims.pdf>

⁶⁵ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...”, p. 53.

⁶⁶ Zack Adesina and Oana Marocico, "Is it easier to get a job if you're Adam or Mohamed?," BBC News, February 06, 2017, accessed June 05, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307>.

Chapter 7. Rights and Freedoms

Preliminary observations

MEND welcomes the Government's effort in ensuring that rights and freedoms are protected, and that every individual has the right to "free speech, to hold traditional views and to practise their religion within the law".⁶⁷ In a time in which a great deal of debate exists surrounding Islam, immigration, ethnic minorities and multiculturalism, the Government's emphasis on safeguarding rights and freedom is certainly appreciated.

However, the overall approach of the Green Paper is highly problematic because, by unilaterally shifting the responsibility and blame for a lack of social inclusion almost entirely onto minority communities, it de-contextualises barriers to inclusion and examines them in a vacuum. While there is a very brief mention of hate crimes contributing to isolation, there is a concerning lack of analysis of how institutionalised and systematic racism is limiting individuals' abilities to make "the most" of life in Britain. Similarly, there is no mention of the way other and more recent developments, such as the Government's "hostile environment" policy and Brexit, have further contributed to creating a climate of fear, mistrust and disillusionment that prevents BAME individuals from fully and actively participating in British society.

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes measures to encourage integration and resist divisive views or actions. Do you agree with this approach?

Relying entirely on the Casey Review, the Green Paper seems to locate failures to integrate to be almost entirely associated with minorities' socio-cultural practices which, in their failure to conform to "British values", prevent vulnerable individuals from successfully integrating in British society. Of specific concern in this chapter of the Green Paper is its overly aggressive focus on Islamic beliefs and practices, seemingly identifying them as belonging to "cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals or restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain."⁶⁸ This is a reason for great concern, as it opens a number of related issues that distort the nature of the problem while generating alarmism about Islam, stigmatising the Muslim community, and overlooking other crucial problems that limit British Muslims' socio-economic and civic inclusion within society.

Furthermore, the underlying negative tone that the Green Paper assumes contributes to the conclusion that "the links many immigrant communities have to their countries of origin can present challenges to integration where social or cultural norms overseas differ from British values and influence the way people behave here".⁶⁹ In drawing upon its foundations in the Casey Review, the casual manner in which the Green Paper links these "external influences" to difficulties in integration reinforces a negative view of immigration that suggests "the arrival of a family member drags social progress back from the values of modern Britain to an overseas traditionalism."⁷⁰ In other words, the Green paper frames the issue of "rights and freedoms" within the Government's immigration agenda, whereby multiculturalism is not

⁶⁷ "Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper..." p. 56

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "'A First Generation In Every Generation'? Spousal Immigration In The Casey Review And Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper", *Discovery Society*, May 1, 2018, accessed 21.05.2018, <https://discoversociety.org/2018/05/01/a-first-generation-in-every-generation-spousal-immigration-in-the-casey-review-and-integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper/>

perceived to add value to British society, but rather is depicted as a potential challenge to British values.

Whilst paying lip service to “supporting faith communities”, the Green Paper fails to mention that the Government has systematically undermined its relationship with Muslim communities by an active policy of disengagement with faith based institutions it finds ‘undesirable’. As noted by Dominic Grieve in the *Citizens UK* report “The Missing Muslims”, “There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this.”⁷¹ On the Government’s side, this entails engaging – rather than boycotting – Muslim organisations that hold different views from theirs in order to enable it to “hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK’s Muslim communities.”

A good example of this policy of disengagement is the Government’s publicly stated refusal to engage with the Muslim Council of Britain, which has over 500 affiliates. Only last week, Home Secretary Sajid Javid openly stated regarding MCB that “I would be very suspicious of anything that they've got to say not least because, under the last Labour government - and a policy continued by us - we don't deal with the MCB. We don't deal with it because too many of their members have had favourable comments on extremists and that's not acceptable.”⁷² Failure to engage with a representative spectrum of British Muslims only serves to marginalise Muslim communities and alienate them from their political representatives.

Ending this divisive policy will assist in increasing the confidence of the Muslim community that it seeking integration of communities on an equal basis.

Finally, the call for a “clearer interpretation of Islam for life in the UK” is extremely worrying for the Muslim community and needs to be clarified. The concern is that a certain liberal interpretation of “acceptable Islam” will be championed by consultation with Government selected “Muslim clerics”, whilst mainstream conservative views will be marginalised as “extremist”. This is unacceptable and the Muslim community as a whole should be empowered to consider such matters. If the Government does not engage with certain Muslim organisations it is inevitable to sections of the community will be excluded from such a consultation process

We are also concerned that Islam has been singled out in this manner, without references to any other faith groups. We would thus infer that the Government is perfectly happy with orthodox Christian or Jewish practice, and if this is the case, the basis of this position should be explicitly stated.

The Green Paper proposes measures to address practices which can impact on the rights of women. Do you agree with this approach?

The Green Paper argues that “cultural attitudes and behaviours are holding women and girls back from fully participating in society”, adding that “this can be a particular problem for Muslim women”.⁷³

General observations:

MEND works ceaselessly to ensure that Muslim women are empowered to be actively engaged within all spheres of public, social, economic, civic, and political life. As with many

⁷¹ “The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All”, Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life, accessed 04.06.2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/newcitizens/pages/1261/attachments/original/1499106471/Missing_Muslims_Report_-_Electronic_copy.pdf?1499106471

⁷² <https://news.sky.com/story/sajid-javid-in-muslim-council-of-britain-spat-over-islamophobia-claims-11393750>

⁷³ “Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper...” p. 56.

British Muslim communities, our work in this area still has some way to go. However, there are two key considerations to be made when assessing the validity of the Green Paper's stance on Muslim women and practices which can impact their rights:

1. The experiences of Muslim women are diverse and heterogeneous, whilst frequently being discussed without reference to the experiences of Muslim women themselves.
2. The rights of women and the discrimination and abuses they face are of paramount concern across all levels of society and are in no way limited to Muslim communities.

The experiences of Muslim women are diverse and heterogeneous

Muslim men and women are diverse in their appearance, opinions, spectrums of faith, cultures, languages, occupations, heritages and virtually any social identity marker that one can think of. And yet, within public, media, political discourses, Muslim men and women are almost consistently presented as homogenous and unitary groups. Concerning Muslim women, representations overwhelmingly focus on issues of veiling and present women as passive, oppressed victims. At the same time, Muslim men are overwhelmingly represented as misogynistic, angry and violent extremists.

As Todd Green observes, "The stereotypical Muslim woman in the Western media is depicted as a victim of either violence or sexism (or both) at the hands of angry and misogynist Muslim men".⁷⁴ Particularly within media discourse and thus within public imaginations, Muslim women are consistently represented as voiceless, submissive, oppressed and passive victims and there is a serious lack of representation of Muslim women as creative, successful and powerful leaders. Meanwhile, Muslim women's achievements are frequently overlooked, particularly women who do not fit into the stereotype of the veiled and the victimised.

Furthermore, many scholars have observed that Muslim women are frequently considered to be victims of their religious and/or cultural heritage without having actually been consulted on the matter.⁷⁵ As has often been the case throughout the history of feminism, usually educated, Western, White men and women have spoken on behalf of their non-Western and non-White counterparts. This paints a generalised and incomplete picture, whilst simultaneously presenting solutions and approaches that do not resonate with the women that they are intended to help.

Furthermore, a focus on the apparent universal oppression of Muslim women distracts from the fact that there are many non-Muslim women who suffer from sexism, and there are many violent non-Muslim men who are guilty of oppressing women.

The rights of women and the discrimination and abuses they face are of paramount concern across all levels of society and are in no way limited to Muslim communities

Ultimately, the problems facing Muslim women are components of wider women's issues. It is very easy for society to focus on stereotypes of Muslim women as passive and oppressed victims and consequently distract from other deeply entrenched problems of sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, and sexual discrimination that are engrained within Western cultures and societies. One need not look far in society to find examples of sexism, gender-based employment discrimination, sexual objectification, and gender-based violence

As such, Muslim women, unfortunately, do suffer challenges and discrimination on multiple levels. Firstly, they are victimised as women by issues of discrimination, exploitation and

⁷⁴ Todd H. Green, *The fear of Islam: an introduction to Islamophobia in the West* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 240-241.

⁷⁵ See Moosavi, "Orientalism at home."

violence. Secondly, they are religiously discriminated against as Muslims, and thirdly, they may be further discriminated against in terms of their ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation.

While British Muslim women's lives are framed within their ethno-cultural and religious circumstances, the challenges they face cannot and should not be completely dislocated from structural disadvantages that all British women face more generally. Moreover, political and media discourses that serve only to perpetuate stereotypes of Muslim women can only ever be counterproductive for all women by misrepresenting the nature - or worse, completely distracting from - the issues that they actually face. Therefore, while cultural practices should be examined, women's issues do not exist in a vacuum and need to be confronted with appropriate honesty and nuance.

Proposals to reform religious marriage

There is an element of this Green Paper that is causing severe concern amongst Muslim communities and that is the proposal to implement reform to the requirements of religious marriages. At this juncture, it is important to clarify certain key points:

1. Any reform of marriage legislation must avoid any discriminatory focus on Muslim communities specifically.
2. Policy makers need to have essential clarity regarding the mechanisms and intricacies of religious marriages in Islam.
3. Supporting women to escape abusive and unwanted relationships should be given priority across society.

Any reform of marriage legislation must avoid any discriminatory focus on Muslim communities specifically

Investigating and enhancing women's protections and equalities is a noble cause that should be welcomed and celebrated. However, to focus exclusively on Muslim communities is discriminatory. As previously mentioned, challenges facing Muslim women must be viewed through the lens of women's issues more generally. In this case, attention should be given to the protections afforded to women who are not in legally recognised marriages or civil partnerships. However, this analysis must extend to all women and to all the British couples who choose not to marry or have a civil partnership, but who have children, shared assets, and/or cohabit. Indeed, all UK citizens have the right to enter into and end relationships without being placed under any legal obligation to register those relationships as a civil marriage. Therefore, the legal status of nikah marriages does not alter Muslim women's rights and protections any more than for women in the aforementioned circumstances.

Policy makers need to have essential clarity regarding the mechanisms and intricacies of religious marriages in Islam

The Islamic nikah ceremony is a private religious practice. It has no legal recognition, standing, nor status, and therefore, cannot possess any legal implications nor consequences. As such, it does not override any existing rights or protections afforded by British law.

However, while the Islamic nikah ceremony and subsequent relationship (and divorce, if it should occur) have no legal recognition or status in the UK, as for all religious marriages it still has immense meaning within an Islamic context for those involved.

Supporting women to escape abusive and unwanted relationships should be given priority across society.

An argument against nikah marriages devoid of the protective mechanisms of civil partnerships, is that cultural practices can trap women into unwanted and potentially abusive relationships. Once more, this is not a problem limited only to Muslim women. This is a society wide concern and much more needs to be done to support women and empower them to escape such relationships.

To give some perspective on the scale of this problem:

- At least 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their lifetime, and between 1 in 8 and 1 in 10 women experience it annually, while 42% of young people say they know girls whose boyfriends have pressured them into sex.
- Each year around 2.1m people suffer some form of domestic abuse - 1.4 million of which are women (8.5% of the population).
- Each year more than 100,000 people in the UK are at high and imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse.
- Women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse: 95% of those going to Marac⁷⁶ or accessing an Idva⁷⁷ service are women.
- In 2013-14 the police recorded 887,000 domestic abuse incidents in England and Wales.
- Seven women a month are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.
- On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years before getting help.
- 85% of victims sought help five times on average from professionals in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse.⁷⁸

As the figures show, gender-based violence is pervasive and is entrenched within all levels of society. A genuine concern for women's rights is an honorable endeavour and it is essential that crisis and support centres receive the funding that they desperately need. However, discourse that only serves to perpetuate stereotypes of Muslim women can only ever be counterproductive by misrepresenting the nature - or worse, completely distracting from - the issues that they and all women actually face.

Consequently, while strengthening protections and rights afforded to women to ensure their equality is a fundamental calling, it is imperative that any changes in this area remain non-discriminatory in focus. Furthermore, with regards to nikah, any proposals must be consulted upon with Muslim communities and a broad spectrum of Muslim women specifically, in order to ensure that their interests are being maintained and in order to avoid any unforeseen consequences and hardships.

⁷⁶ Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). See <http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20FAQs%20General%20FINAL.pdf>

⁷⁷ Independent domestic violence advocacy. See <http://www.refuge.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/independent-domestic-violence-advocacy/>

⁷⁸ "About domestic abuse," About domestic abuse | Safelives, accessed April 02, 2017, <http://safelives.org.uk/policy-evidence/about-domestic-abuse?gclid=C1bF1raT-dICFQE4GwodeUICRg>.

Shariah councils

A final note needs to be made regarding the Green Paper's stance on Sharia councils. The Paper states that "the application of sharia law in England and Wales... can be a particular problem for Muslim women", due to "some evidence" pointing to a discriminatory application of Sharia Law. However, as pointed out by Dr Russell Sandberg: "This question needs to be addressed in relation to religious tribunals. We need further research and information about the extent and nature of sex discrimination... concerns about gender equality are likely to apply not only to religious forms of mediation. The gender biases across different legal and quasi-legal systems needs attention. The issue is not confined to Sharia."⁷⁹ In short, while there is awareness that some Sharia Councils may be treating women in a unjust manner, the broader issue of gender discrimination requires attention across all segments of public life.

In this regard, it is also crucial to point out that *The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales*, which much of the Government's knowledge of Sharia Councils in Britain is based upon, was held "as a part of its counter-extremism strategy".⁸⁰ This poses significant problems in the way certain issues, such as misogyny and patriarchy, become simplistically associated with extremism. Furthermore, as pointed out in the review, "the current political climate... can fuel Islamophobia further; it is Muslim women who tend to be most at risk of racist and xenophobic attacks".⁸¹ Changing this type of narrative is the first step to undertake if the Government is serious about protecting Muslim women.

Finally, it is important that the issue of Shariah councils is addressed honestly and openly in full consultation with Muslim women. The Green Paper's approach ignores the protections that women are able to access through Sharia councils which they may not feel able to access without them. In November 2106, The Muslim Women's Network told the Home Affairs Select Committee that if Sharia Councils were to be banned, Muslim women would be left without protections against "abusive relationships", because they would not feel that they could leave the marriage in a way that is compliant with their Islamic values.⁸²

According to the Muslim Women's Network, 90% of the activities carried out by Sharia Councils concern marriages. They offer guidance, not formal judgements, and they operate on a voluntary basis, which means their decisions are non-binding on the parties. However, since 61% of Islamic marriages are not registered under English civil law, Sharia Councils remain of crucial importance.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that Sharia Councils systematically discriminate against women. While we appreciate the fact that there are instances in which certain behaviours need to be challenged, it remains important that generalisations of this kind are deconstructed. Sharia Councils offer an important service to hundreds of thousands of Muslim women, who would be otherwise left without any protection compliant to their faith.

⁷⁹ Russell Sandberg, "How do you solve a problem like Sharia? The real issues raised by the Sharia law debate", accessed 21.05.2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2016/08/how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-sharia-the-real-issues-raised-by-the-sharia-law-debate/>

⁸⁰ "The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales", Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, February 2018, p. 35, accessed 21.05.2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678473/6.4152_HO_C_PFG_Report_into_Sharia_Law_in_the_UK_PRINT.pdf

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "Sharia Councils", Home Affairs Committee, November 1, 2016, accessed 04.06.2018, <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/76b3f1e0-29be-498f-9325-62d15033c20f>

Chapter 8. Measuring Success

Question(s) posed by the Green Paper:

The Green Paper proposes core integration measures for national and local government to focus on. Do you agree these are the right measures?

Throughout this submission, we have highlighted some key areas of concern regarding the assumptions and recommendations proposed by the Green Paper. These concerns have been clarified in the executive summary or this report and have been discussed in-depth throughout the analysis sections. As such, there is little need to repeat them all here. However, it is important to highlight the need to contextualised the Government's proposed indicators within the framework of these concerns.

Of particular concern are the following three observations:

- The Green Paper is littered with references and allusions reminiscent of counter-terror strategies that have previously been condemned as hugely damaging to cohesion and inclusion of minorities. This fear has been heightened with the publication of the Home Office's updated counter-terror strategy "CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism", which explicitly mentions this Green Paper in outlining its strategy. It is imperative that strategies of community integration and of counter-terrorism do not overlap, as this can only result in the further securitisation of an already problematic tripartite relationship between government, society and minorities.
- In light of the current mistrust between the Government and the Muslim community, it is imperative that the relationship is recalibrated in an effort to extend the Government's dialogue and engagement to individuals and organisations that so far have been left out of the process. Whilst paying lip service to "supporting faith communities", the Green Paper fails to mention that the Government has systematically undermined its relationship with Muslim communities by an active policy of disengagement with faith based institutions it finds 'undesirable'. As noted by Dominic Grieve in the *Citizens UK* report "The Missing Muslims", "There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this."⁸³ On the Government's side, this entails engaging - rather than boycotting - Muslim organisations that hold different views from theirs in order to enable it to "hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK's Muslim communities."
- The call for a "clearer interpretation of Islam for life in the UK" is extremely worrying for the Muslim community and needs to be clarified. The concern is that a certain liberal interpretation of 'acceptable Islam' will be championed by consultation with Government selected 'Muslim clerics', whilst mainstream conservative views will be marginalised as 'extremist'. This is unacceptable and the Muslim community as a whole should be empowered to consider such matters. We are also concerned that Islam has been singled out in this manner, without references to any other faith groups. We would thus infer that the Government is perfectly happy with orthodox Christian or Jewish practice, and if this is the case, the basis of this position should be explicitly stated.

⁸³ "The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All", Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life, accessed 04.06.2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/newcitizens/pages/1261/attachments/original/1499106471/Missing_Muslims_Report_-_Electronic_copy.pdf?1499106471

MEND's recommendations to promote integrated communities

MEND is of the firm belief that the overall approach of the Green Paper is highly problematic because, by unilaterally shifting the responsibility and blame for a lack of social inclusion almost entirely onto minority communities, it de-contextualises barriers to inclusion and examines them in a vacuum. Without a stronger focus on the broader issues and mechanisms of socio-economic discrimination and exclusion, the Green Paper will be confined to be a collection of half measures that will be insufficient to bring about positive change.

Indeed, by excluding an exploration of Islamophobia, hatred, and similar mechanisms of socio-economic and civic exclusion, the Green Paper does not provide any assessment as to what drives minorities to live in “segregated” areas. As such, efforts to ensure that communities have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds, while noble, will always be marred by wider processes and products of prejudice and social-exclusion. Therefore, such aims cannot be achieved without challenging anti-Muslim and anti-minority narratives that are prolific throughout public, political and media discourses.

In overcoming the barriers to integration and inclusion facing Muslim communities, MEND is unequivocal in its belief that tackling Islamophobia and racial discrimination should be of the highest priority. In light of this aim, MEND proposes the following blueprint for tackling Islamophobia in all spheres of public life.

MEND's blueprint to tackling Islamophobia and encouraging social, economic, political, civic and public inclusion.

Understanding Islamophobia

MEND defines Islamophobia as *a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims which encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.* In other words, Islamophobia encompasses far more than simply hostility and hate crime. Islamophobia infiltrates every aspect of public life and creates barriers to Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim) in overt ways, but also in ways that are more subtle and thus much harder to detect and demonstrate.

For example, hatred and physical abuse on the streets is overt and impossible to ignore. However, the CV that is passed over because it boasts a Muslim sounding name; or the British-Pakistani man who is repeatedly assumed a threat at the airport on the basis of his beard; or the child who feels unable to ask questions in class because she is worried she may be swept up into the apparatus of PREVENT, these are examples that may be harder to detect, but which have dire repercussions on British Muslims' daily enjoyment of freedoms and ultimately impact the ways in which Muslims perceive their place in society and the ways in which they relate to their non-Muslim neighbours.

What processes are allowing Islamophobia to continue?

Media negativity

The media is a key driving force behind how minority groups, including Muslims, are received and understood within public perception. However, mainstream media in the UK is falling desperately short of its ethical responsibilities not to incite moral panic against vulnerable and innocent communities.

In fact, newspapers such as the Sun and the Daily Mail have repeatedly demonstrated discriminatory, misrepresentative, distorted, exaggerated and inaccurate reporting of Muslims. Indeed, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recently highlighted discriminatory reporting in both the Daily Mail and the Sun, claiming that they “are responsible for most of the offensive, discriminatory and provocative terminology”. The commission further concluded that “hate speech in some traditional media continues to be a serious problem”.⁸⁴

Considering the media promotion of stereotypical, stylised and distorted representations of Muslims, it cannot be surprising that sections of the public would hold negative and prejudicial understandings of British Muslim communities.

It is thus imperative that proper regulation of newspapers is enforced, in order to ensure that newspapers are held accountable for inaccurate, discriminatory and distortive reporting on vulnerable minorities.

Weakness of incitement to hatred legislation

The Racial and Religious Hate Crime Act, 2006 contains a disparity between the protections afforded on grounds of race vs the protections afforded to religious groups. In terms of racial hatred, a person is protected against abusive, insulting, or threatening words or behaviour. However, the protections afforded on the basis of religion only extends to threatening words or behaviour. This specifically excludes the protection from abusive or insulting words or behaviour that is included under racial hatred.

Furthermore, within the protections against religious hatred, there is an added condition that intent must be proven. In other words, it must be proven that the perpetrators intention was to stir up religious hatred. This differs from incitement to racial hatred, wherein the *likelihood* that the offence would have stirred up racial hatred is enough to prosecute; there is no need to prove that the perpetrator *intended* to stir up racial hatred.

The primary result of this disparity in legislation, is that Muslims are often not protected against comparable abuse against which groups such as Jews and Sikhs are protected on the grounds of race.

Secondly, the requirement of intent makes the burden of proof within this legislation almost unachievably heavy. Indeed, the intention of the perpetrator is virtually impossible to prove. The consequence is that, since the legislation was enacted in 2006, only a small handful of successful prosecutions have occurred under incitement to religious hatred legislation.

Social media legislation

Anonymity combined with a lack of protection from online abuse has resulted in an almost toxic atmosphere of anti-Muslim racism across a variety of social media platforms. Indeed, between March 2016-March 2017, almost 144,000 Tweets were sent from the UK that are considered to be derogatory and anti-Islamic – this amounts to roughly 400 a day.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Facebook and Twitter accounts of leading far-right and anti-Muslim groups can attract several thousands of followers.

⁸⁴ “ECRI Report On The United Kingdom”, *Council of Europe*, October 4, 2016, https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/united_kingdom/gbr-cbc-v-2016-038-eng.pdf

⁸⁵ Carl Miller and Josh Smith, *Anti-Islamic Content on Twitter - Demos*, accessed June 05, 2017, <https://www.demos.co.uk/project/anti-islamic-content-on-twitter/>.

As such, there is a clear need for changes to be made in order to regulate hate speech online whilst also protecting freedom of speech within a legal framework. As has often been argued, what is illegal offline should be illegal online as well.

Lack of Muslim political engagement

British Muslims remain woefully underrepresented within the political sphere. Considering the size of the British Muslim population relative to the general population, one would expect to find approximately 31 Muslim MPs in Parliament. In reality, the figure is 15.⁸⁶ Likewise, within the senior Civil Service, there is also a general under-representation of BAME communities, including Muslims. Encouraging British Muslim engagement in political and media institutions is MEND's raison d'être and we firmly believe that empowerment within politics is essential to ensure equality for all.

Furthermore, the Government's policy of disengagement is hugely damaging to its relationship with Muslim communities. It can only fix this currently "broken relationship" through honest and open engagement with a representative spectrum of British Muslims.⁸⁷

Lack of Muslim engagement within media and broadcasting

The underrepresentation of Muslims in politics is mirrored in mainstream media and broadcasting outlets. Media and broadcasting institutions have often been criticised for their embedded lack of representation in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and often gender as well. Within these institutions, there are still very few Muslim journalists, editors, producers and directors, meanwhile there is a crucial dearth of normalised and representative images of British Muslims and minorities more generally. Appropriate representation is essential for equality and creating a shared national identity. Therefore, it is imperative that British Muslim communities are actively engaged in the fields of politics and media in order to ensure that Muslims have the platforms necessary to present the reality behind their lived experiences.

Barriers to Muslim economic engagement

Muslims experience the highest levels of disadvantage in the labour market⁸⁸ and, according to the National Equality Panel, also suffer the greatest "ethnic penalty".⁸⁹ This ethnic penalty is especially felt by Muslim women, who often suffer multi-level discrimination that is compounded by religion, gender, skin colour, and ethnicity.⁹⁰ Studies have also shown that CVs submitted under a non-Muslim name are three times more likely to be offered an interview than those with a Muslim name attached.⁹¹ Meanwhile, Muslims are heavily concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled professions with limited career progression and

⁸⁶ "Record number of Muslim MPs elected", *Muslim News*, accessed 04.06.2018, <http://muslimnews.co.uk/newspaper/home-news/record-number-muslim-mps-elected/>

⁸⁷ "The Missing Muslim: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All", Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life, accessed 04.06.2018, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/newcitizens/pages/1261/attachments/original/1499106471/Missing_Muslims_Report_-_Electronic_copy.pdf?1499106471

⁸⁸ "Employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK", report, House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, August 11, 2016, 6, <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/89/89.pdf>.

⁸⁹ John Hills et al., An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel, report, Government Equalities Office, January 2010, <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28344/1/CASEReport60.pdf>

⁹⁰ "Women are the first to pay the price of Islamophobia in Europe", *European Network against Racism*, accessed 04.06.2018 <http://www.enar-eu.org/Women-are-the-first-to-pay-the-price-of-Islamophobia-in-Europe>

⁹¹ Zack Adesina and Oana Marocico, "Is it easier to get a job if you're Adam or Mohamed?," BBC News, February 06, 2017, accessed June 05, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307>.

are frequently victims of frustrated ambitions as they remain under-represented in the higher positions within their professions.⁹²

At the same time, Muslim communities are characterised by a younger age demographic than any other social group. With 48% of British Muslims aged 24 or under⁹³ this is a dynamic and innovative population whose potential should be encouraged. Considering the obvious frustrations hindering Muslims' success in the labour market and the huge potential for businesses to benefit from young Muslim talent, it is essential that barriers of discrimination are challenged through governmental and industry initiatives.

Wider community engagement

Debates on integration frequently and incorrectly portray demands for Muslims to assimilate as a lack of integration. Choosing to maintain ethno-cultural and religious identities, for example by wearing religious dress, is not an indication of a lack of integration or "Britishness".

Furthermore, integration is a two way process which also requires interaction from the dominant group. With the overwhelming negativity stemming from popular mainstream media representations, it cannot be surprising that large sections of the non-Muslim community may hold distorted impressions of their Muslim neighbours. Inter-community engagement is necessary to overcome these barriers to interaction and community cohesion. Meanwhile, there needs to be greater emphasis on promoting our nation's shared history and the role of minority communities in building this country.

Flawed counter-terror strategies

Ms Tendayi Achiume is the third UN special rapporteur to criticise the PREVENT strategy and its damaging and discriminatory impact on British Muslims. While security is a real and necessary concern, strategies must be evidence based and developed through cooperation and engagement with all stakeholders. Furthermore, security strategies must be carefully balanced with the rights, civil liberties, and values upon which Britain is founded.

The blueprint to tackle Islamophobia

To solve a society-wide problem, a combination of legislative change, Government and industry initiatives, Muslim community empowerment, and wider community engagement is required. As such, MEND humbly proposes the following initiatives and policy changes to tackle the causes, driving forces, and impacts of Islamophobia.

Legislative changes

- **Press regulation:** With the recent Government decision to cancel Leveson Part II, the current future of press regulation remains uncertain. However, it is imperative that the press is held accountable in order to protect minorities from the damaging impacts of sensationalist, distorted, and misrepresentative narratives. Therefore, we call on policy makers to ensure a full implementation of the Leveson system, including aspects such as the enforcement of an independent press regulator and ensuring the commencement of the second part of the

⁹² "Muslims in employment: prejudice and discrimination in wider society examined - News from Parliament," UK Parliament, April 12, 2016, , <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/news-parliament-2015/employment-opportunities-for-muslims-evidence-15-16/>.

⁹³ "British Muslims in Numbers A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health profile of Muslims in Britain drawing on the 2011 Census,"

Leveson inquiry. Furthermore, Leveson II should place explicit emphasis on including an investigation of Islamophobia in the press as a mandatory requirement.

- **Counter-Terror legislation:** In light of the PREVENT strategy's lack of empirical grounding and the disproportionate impact of Schedule 7 on Muslims, it is imperative that the Government commits to an independent review of PREVENT and all counter-terrorism legislation enacted since 2000 with a view to curbing the encroachment of counter-terrorism policies on civil liberties. Strategies must be developed that work to foster social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of violence and criminality through programmes in which all communities are active stakeholders.
- **Incitement to Religious Hatred legislation:** Considering the disparities between the protections afforded for racial and religious hatred, it is essential to review the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act with a view to strengthening legal protection afforded to religion and equalise it with those granted to race.
- **Primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech:** In order to deal with the large swathes of hate filled rhetoric that thrives online, the Government should consider primary legislation to deal with social media offences and work with social media companies to protect free speech while developing an efficient strategy to tackle online hate speech online.

Government and industry initiatives

Racial and religious equality: In addition to reviewing legislation and in the context of current Brexit negotiations, attention needs to be given to supporting the principles of the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection, within UK law post-Brexit.

Employment: The barriers to Muslim economic empowerment is an area that needs to be tackled by both governmental and industry initiatives designed to address religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, including through the use of name-blind applications.

Particular attention needs to be given to Muslim women's experiences of the triple ethnic penalty and improving their access to employment. Furthermore, there need to be greater focus within the civil service and within industry to improve ethnic diversity in all sectors through schemes designed to encourage BAME recruitment, mentoring and promotion. Considering the disproportional representation of Muslims within the higher echelons of their professions, one area for potential development is schemes designed to promote and facilitate careers progression and advice services.

As well as the special attention that needs to be given to the barriers facing Muslim women, the young age demographics of Muslim communities singles out young people as also needing increased support in achieving their career aspirations. Therefore, programs are needed that aim to improve young people's access to the labour market, for example, through funding apprenticeships, internships and alternative routes into employment.

Finally, employers need to be supported in developing widely accessible inclusion strategies within the workplace, such as recognising and accommodating religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace.

Media and broadcasting: The overwhelming negativity of mainstream media representations of Muslims is an area in need of immediate attention. This can only be countered by promoting positive (and perhaps more importantly) normalised images of Muslims within media and

broadcasting. Considering this need and the necessity of encouraging more sensitivity when it comes to stories and narratives affecting British Muslims, it is essential that support is given to educative and industry initiatives designed to attract Muslim and BAME individuals into the spheres of journalism and broadcasting.

Public exclusion: It is the responsibility of political figures to educate themselves and understand the meanings behind and inherent requirements of terminologies such as “integration”. The Green Paper rightly points out that integration is a two-way street. However, this is often a fact overlooked within political discourse. In understanding the requirements of integration, it is imperative that public figures show greater maturity and responsibility when discussing integration debates and take care not to cause hysteria for the sake of political popularity and agendas. Meanwhile, especially considering the unclear status of Human Rights commitments within Brexit negotiations, we must ensure that the tenants of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act are preserved within UK law post-Brexit.

Crime and policing: The relationship between Muslim communities and their local police and their experiences of the Criminal Justice System is key to the way in which British Muslims relate to and feel valued by the state. Considering the inequalities and issues discussed in the earlier chapter on Crime, Policing and the Criminal Justice System, changes need to be made to counter the impacts these inequalities have on Muslim communities. Areas in need of government support include:

- Tackling the high number of Muslim prisoners through schemes to facilitate rehabilitation, cut re-offending and develop pathways for social inclusion.
- Launching research into the underlying reasons for the disproportionately high numbers of Muslim prisoners, including issues of socio-economic deprivation and structural issues within the judicial system.
- Supporting educative and industry initiatives to attract BAME individuals into the police force.

Muslim community empowerment

The responsibility of tackling issues of socio-economic discrimination and exclusion is in no way limited to wider society. Muslims themselves have a responsibility to ensure that they are engaging with processes of democracy to overcome the challenges they face. After all, one cannot be helped if they refuse to help themselves. Moreover, as British citizens, everyone has a right, a responsibility, and a duty to work towards the betterment of our society as a whole.

As such, there are a number of ways in which British Muslim communities may be empowered to play their full role as civic actors. Strategies to achieve this include:

- Supporting educative and industry initiatives designed to attract Muslims and BAME individuals into the spheres of politics, the civil service, media, and broadcasting.
- Placing greater emphasis on educational programs aimed at empowering minority communities to be actively engaged within politics and media. This is one of the strategies that MEND has invested a great deal of attention. As but a few examples of our work, our politics and media training courses, our toolkits, factsheets, manifesto summaries, and our Get Out And Vote campaign have empowered and encouraged thousands of British Muslims to take a greater role in active civic engagement.
- Encouraging grassroots and community led movements to overcome barriers to reporting hate crime and encourage maximum reporting of Islamophobic incidents to the police.

- Requiring the Government to re-evaluate its disengagement policy and commit to proactively engaging with a broad and representative spectrum of grassroots organisations within British Muslim communities.

Wider community engagement

Struggles for equality are never limited to those directly experiencing discrimination. Anti-Semitism, sexism and homophobia are not issues that should be limited to Jews, women, or LGBTQ communities. They are problems for which the solutions are the responsibility of the whole of society. The same should be said of Islamophobia. Islamophobia, like all forms of hatred, is an issue of social justice, and therefore, it is inherent upon every member of society to contribute towards ending it. As such, there are certain areas than MEND feels should be addressed:

Promoting a greater awareness of Islam: The distorted images of Islam and Muslims needs to be countered through programs aimed at combatting stereotypes and raising greater awareness amongst the non-Muslim population. Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM) is a month long campaign that MEND and its local partners coordinate every November. The campaign is designed to highlight not only the challenges facing British Muslims, but also the contributions that Muslims make to British society.

Promoting greater inter-community engagement: Local communities need to play a proactive role in events, activities and programs designed to bring together diverse neighbours, friends and work colleagues. Relationship building is key to encouraging understanding of differing experiences and is thus integral to overcoming narratives of hate.

Placing greater emphasis on PSHE in schools: Schools play a vital role in educating children on how to be members of a diverse and pluralistic society. Therefore, schools need to be supported in this role by being given greater support in terms of curriculum and teacher training. Areas to address this include:

- Prioritising PSHE and PSRE in the national curriculum to prepare young people for life in a diverse and pluralistic society.
- Developing training programmes and resources for teachers focussed on tackling bullying based on race, religion, disability or sexuality.
- Developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other forms of hatred.
- Supporting community and school-led programmes that encourage cultural exchange between pupils of different racial, religious, ethnic and other backgrounds.
- Supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst giving greater emphasis within the national curriculum to shared histories and the contributions of minority communities in building our society.