

**The 'Prevent' Strategy in
Bedfordshire.**

'Has the Government Prevent Strategy been implemented effectively for the Muslim communities in Bedfordshire? Do members of that community and practitioners view it as a positive or negative contribution to community cohesion, engagement and protection from vulnerability to radical extremism?'

Martyn Ouston BSc. (Hons)

**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of MA in Islamic Studies**

**Lampter University
Trinity St. Davids, Wales
School of Theology, Religious Studies & Islamic Studies**



Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

Nationally, there appear to be clear arguments for and against Prevent, the government strategy to support the Muslim community in tackling violent extremism. It is a strategy that requires local partnership delivery in the same way that community cohesion policy and strategy does. However, it has been viewed as a police led agenda, which some feel has actually damaged the cohesion that existed between communities and local authority partners. The legacy is that the criminal justice, education and health service are all now participating in the strategy to varying degrees, against considerable scepticism and mistrust from the community that the strategy seeks to support. Community cohesion remains core to the local authority focus and it is closely aligned to a variety of strategies Prevent being one amongst them.

National analysis has developed some useful commentary considering the strategy's effectiveness, but locally, empirical research remains limited. An understanding of a local Muslim community view is fundamental in establishing effectiveness of policy, feelings of alienation, or acceptance of Prevent. Likewise, the views of those engaged in its delivery are vitally important. Once documented, these views may provide some useful checks and measures. They may provide parties with an additional dialogue assisting in increasing community resilience and cohesion. It is hoped that this paper may be used as a reference document for all engaged in community cohesion and Prevent and as a platform whereby local Muslim views can be used to redirect local policy where necessary

The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to examine what community cohesion is in the context of national and local delivery to Muslim communities; examine what effect the former and current Prevent strategies had and are having; and with empirical evidence question what effect Prevent has had on local community cohesion for the Muslim communities of Bedford's two towns.

The paper will conclude that Prevent has been and remains a mistrusted policy. A policy, that has gone some way to increasing Muslim community engagement; but one that is also shunned and sometimes seen as misguided. It will be seen that Muslim community cohesion policies can work in conjunction with Prevent, but that Prevent remains controversial, whilst cohesion policies retain greater respect and acceptance.

It will also show that in general the Prevent strategy has positively guided police and partnership work and that it has taken on a new momentum in the form of 'safeguarding', with the revised strategy becoming far more community owned.

It also shows that there is little evidence to show that Prevent itself has damaged local community cohesion. Other political influences have, however, caused considerable damage in Bedfordshire. It is seen that through Prevent, a mechanism exists to monitor and address community tensions; formalise engagement, empower local Muslim community groups and inform partner agencies where vulnerabilities may exist thereby protecting communities and in the long term community cohesion.

Acknowledgement

Completing this MA has allowed me an excellent opportunity to examine the intellectual, compassionate and creative side of Islam. This balances against what seemed to be an on-going rhetoric of negativity based upon the fight against violent extremism. It has provided a knowledge base by which those negative views can be appropriately challenged.

I thank Dr Gary Bunt and Vicky for their Support, guidance and patience through difficult times. To Becky and James my heartfelt thanks for the space and to Clare and Mum thank you for the motivation.

Dedicated to J.W.V. Cudd.

M.P.G Ouston

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the dissertation and how Prevent and community cohesion are linked.

This is perhaps an unusual dissertation for an MA in Islamic Studies - not drawing from the many cultural, religious or historical aspects of Islam. Rather, it looks at where the Bedfordshire Muslim community finds itself today; with specific reference to community cohesion and how the Government Counter Terrorism Strategy- (CONTEST) and in particular the Government Prevent Strategy¹ may have impacted upon it. It considers the Muslim community in Bedford and Luton, contextualising Prevent against the effects of racial, media and terrorist associated themes. Using available national research and local personal perspectives of those engaged in or receiving community cohesion and Prevent delivery, it provides critical empirical analysis of both the original strategy and its replacement – (Prevent 2).

Whether one considers community safety partnerships, race relations or Prevent, there is an ultimate societal requirement to create a community that is fully cohesive; benefiting the wider society with cultural diversity, tolerance and understanding. Yet Prevent is viewed by some with antipathy and has been accused of and continues creating division within and towards Muslim communities. In order to establish if Prevent has affected Muslim community cohesion, we have to establish what cohesion policies and strategies already existed prior to Prevent, or which ones have been developed concurrently.

¹ 'CONTEST' is a European and UK adopted counter terrorism strategy established in 2003. Prevent is one of its four strands. The other three are Pursue, Protect and Prepare. Prevent 2 is the term provided for this revised strategy set out in a government white paper in 2011. See Appendix 3 for in depth explanation see Home Office (N.D) *The counter-terrorism strategy*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/uk-counter-terrorism-strat> [Accessed November 2012]

Examining how the revised strategy sits with community cohesion is still a relatively new concept and whether there is a contemporary symbiosis is difficult to judge and although initial analysis suggests that it is more favourable than the original, it attracts animosity by association and its etymology seems to be its undoing. National studies provide academic commentary, against which local comparisons can be made. Even though Luton is placed as the sixth highest Muslim population in any local authority area in the United Kingdom, local analysis of Prevent is limited. It is reasonable, therefore, to comment that such analysis is useful in the development of future Muslim community strategy. Bedfordshire has experienced several severe community impact events and headlines such as, ‘All roads in terrorism investigations seem to lead to Luton,’² and these have added to fear and mistrust. That fear and mistrust is difficult to remove.

In 2007, a Hertfordshire University study looking at community cohesion issues, established that, ‘At both a local and national level the media was identified by the majority of respondents, as presenting a significant barrier to community cohesion as they focused upon negative portrayals of Luton.’³ Muslim communities suffer when the media associates Islam with terrorism and conflict. Although Islam has been usurped by radical and often violent extremists it must be understood that they are a fraction of the whole Muslim community. As the National Association of Muslim Police state in their 2009 Annual Report:

One of the challenges facing Muslims is ensuring that the police service, media and wider public understand that there is a clear and unequivocal difference between the Muslim communities and the tiny minority that claim to be committing crimes in the name of Islam. This applies to other communities: it would be indefensible to hold the Irish community responsible for the actions of a minority.⁴

² Gardham, D. (2007), Town at the end of the terrorist trails. *The Telegraph*. 02/05/2007. [online]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1550335/Town-at-the-end-of-the-terrorist-trails.html> [Accessed August 2012].

³ Greene, R., Broome, K., Curran, B., Diosi, M. (2007), *Mapping Community Cohesion Across Luton*. Luton Borough Council/Government Office East of England.

⁴ National Association of Muslim Police (2009) *Annual Report*. p.6

From the first attacks in 9/11 on the New York Twin Towers, young Muslims have reported the feeling that they have collectively been labelled as “terrorists”, blaming misinterpretation of events and inappropriate use of language.⁵ This of course is not specific to Luton or Bedford. It is widely commented upon by academics and specific Muslim associations that the media in fact, create controversy where it need not exist. The media has associated Jihad with Islamic fundamentalism, fuelling Islamophobia⁶, which has divided opinions from within and without the Muslim communities. Without better community cohesion, limited integration may, create the danger of media speculation becoming accepted as the truth. In reality, there are huge inroads into many community cohesion programmes. Therefore, efforts from within and without the Muslim community to establish safe and productive environs need greater exposure if we are to encourage healthy positive debate and change.

The media and academia is also critical of the Prevent strategy. As stated in the National Prevent Annual Report 2010/11. ‘During the year we have seen much public and media debate and criticism about Prevent. We have also seen media claims that Prevent is nothing more than a spying tool.’⁷ Prevent is certainly guilty of originally being wrapped in government security marking, making it at times difficult to explain fully outside of police circles. But we have to balance its positive aspects and understand that former barriers are being removed. The Home Office and the police have listened to criticism and are addressing Muslim community grievances. Innes et al comment, ‘...new methods for doing counter-terrorism policing have been emerging and are being implemented. Central to this

⁵ Waterhouse Consulting Group. This group delivers training on Islamic awareness to local authorities and partners to assist in their understanding of cultural grievances and the Prevent Strategy. Waterhouse Consulting Group (2010), Lecture Notes. [Notes from Equipping To Prevent lecture citing Young Muslims Speak; Peace Direct (2006), March, 2010].

⁶ The Open Society was quoted in the stating that since the 2011 attacks 80% of Muslims said that they had been subjected to some form of Islamophobia and two thirds of Britain said that they felt they were perceived and treated differently from other groups. Frith, M. (2004), Islamophobia makes British Muslims feel increasingly 'isolated' in their own country. *The Independent*. 22/11/2004. [online]. Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/islamophobia-makes-british-muslims-feel-increasingly-isolated-in-their-own-country-534164.html> [Accessed September 2011].

⁷ Murray, D., (2010), The Prevent strategy: a textbook example of how to alienate just about everybody. *The Daily Telegraph*. 31/3/ 2010. [online]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7540456/The-Prevent-strategy-a-textbook-example-of-how-to-alienate-just-about-everybody.html> [Accessed 15th January 2012]

shift. has been a far more open, visible and overt way of conducting Prevent policing, compared with previous incarnations.’⁸

This paper considers the changes that are being pursued through Prevent 2. It may, however, be too early to see the benefits of this change, and it is recommended that further on going empirical research is considered. Prevent 2 looks at the wider community, trying to understand all cultures. Continuing diversity and cultural influence force communities ever closer together and unless we continue to strive to understand each other we may face further future conflict.

The Muslim Diaspora is intrinsically linked by one faith, which may provide the perception of an altruistic if only theoretical cohesion. Islam is a faith which contains enormous religious divisions amongst its followers. With cultural and historical differences based on the fact that Islam is represented in all parts of the world, its followers are certainly multi-cultural. It is a religion of people who still have strong links and interdependency to family abroad; Muslim networks are vast and therefore, susceptible to world events and politics. Across the globe, international aspects of Islam have regularly had a direct impact upon the United Kingdom. Muslim men women and children were subject to genocide in the Balkans. American foreign policy supported the Israeli conflict against Palestine and the Gulf created tensions which culminated in later war. The ‘war on terror’ proposed by President George. W. Bush maintained the theory of a western hegemony so often quoted by Islamist extremists and there are many Muslims who have stated that they believe that their faith is under attack. That is not the case, but the perception exists and in a battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ it is a massive stumbling block to repairing relations and trust.

The United Kingdom became what has been termed a hotbed and breeding ground for ‘Home Grown’ terrorists.’ Lack of suitable legislation or willingness allowed for the open preaching of violent propaganda on British streets. It was here that the early recruitment was allowed to flourish. Perhaps the government were too

⁸ Innes, M., Roberts, C., Innes, H., Lowe, T., Lakhani, S. (2011), *Assessing the effects of Prevent policing: a report to the Association of Chief Police Officers*. p.89. London: The Association of Chief Police Officers. [online]. Available from <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/23060/> [Accessed September 2012].

worried about damaging community relations; perhaps the police were too fearful of being accused of heavy handed tactics. But legislation at the time when clerics such as Abu al-Masri Hamza and Abu Qatada al-Fastini openly preached hate and violent Jihad was clearly inadequate. It was confusing for Muslims and non-Muslims to see news reporting of clerics, encouraging hatred and violence to groups of masked Asian men, with police officers seemingly helpless to intervene. This was set against a drive for human rights legislation and an acceptance that the United Kingdom would always allow the exercise of a democratic right to freedom of speech. Right wing groups argued that their voice was not heard, whilst anti-war, anti-government pro-caliphate and intifada Muslim rhetoric was allowed to go unchecked.

These were troubled times, when international condemnation of Al Qaeda inspired or controlled terrorist activity was at the forefront of the public's psyche. A perception that was fuelled by constant reminders of the war on terror and the emergence of right wing groups, such as the United People of Luton standing in opposition to Al Ghuraba or Ahlus SunnaWal Jamaah (a group associated with Al-Muhajiroun) and then subsequently Muslims Against Crusades (MAC). The rise from the United Peoples of Luton into what became the English Defence League (EDL), is an indication of how politically motivated and angered many sections of the community were in the five years following the London bombing campaign. Residents in Luton were incensed that a homecoming parade for The East-Anglian regiment was apparently allowed to be hijacked by a small but vociferous group, protesting against the United Kingdom's involvement in the Iraq war. Inayat Bungawala – media secretary for the Muslim Council of Britain, is a former resident of Luton. He warned at the time that such activity was not representative of Mass Muslim feeling and would only stand to provide ammunition for the Extreme right wing. Muslims Against Crusades (MAC). This small, but vociferous and openly extreme group of Muslim men, has been blamed for the rapid rise of the English Defence League in Luton. Of course Muslims Against Crusades and is now proscribed. But banning the name does not change the member's politics. Such groups reform or morph in to other entities. Importantly for this study, these two groups have been blamed by a local respondent in this study as the main factor in damaging community cohesion.

The same respondent stated that Prevent was far less important and in fact almost invisible to the majority of the Muslim community. But the on-going issues between the radical Muslims and the right wing are experiences that are very real to the residents of Luton. When communities witness rioting in their town, with Muslim youth embattled against apparently non-Muslim and the local police sit in the middle attempting to maintain order, the success of community cohesion to a degree seems somewhat incredulous. But these are events that are monitored closely and interventions put in place to mitigate them. However tension can reach a point where intervention is not successful and a situation remains to be managed.

Open condemnation of terrorist atrocities and the radicalisation of the Muslim youth is necessarily made. The Muslim Council of Britain as a recognised voice of leadership for Muslims in the United Kingdom has a duty to promote peace and harmony and to allay fears and potential repercussions within or towards a wide Muslim community. But they do not and cannot speak for all Muslims. Sections of Muslim community, whilst not sympathising may empathise with the ideology that is seen to stand up against a multitude of worldwide atrocities and grievances that affect the Muslim Diaspora. There is a strong misconception that Islam is under attack. Also that there is a view of a ‘mythical past which plays a “large part in the hearts and minds” and that The glorification of the Umma, “is based on falsehood and a lack of academic understanding Sometimes that support is open and obvious and at other times it may take the form of passive acceptance.’⁹ The more open support from some elements of the Muslim community is what Mascini proposes to be a part of the motivation in violent Jihad.¹⁰ Highly influential Islamic faith leaders and politicians quickly condemned terrorist atrocities and countered the media perception that Islam was a violent religion.

⁹ (Name withheld) East of England Mental Health and Learning Disability Academic Programme. Cambridge. Newmarket, 05.03.2013.

¹⁰ Mascini, P. (2006), Can Violent Jihad do without Sympathisers? *Studies in conflict and Terrorism*, 29: 2, 342-357.[Online]. Available from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/app/publications/Abstract.aspx?id=236417>. [Accessed May 2011]

The majority of Muslim men and women did not and still do not support violence as a way to promote their faith. However, Prevent was failing in stopping further recruitment. Seen as too little and too late, it had lost the trust of UK Muslims.¹¹

Islam touches a multitude of political and cultural spheres, often placing it in the forefront of conflict, whilst Islamic cultural heritage seems left out of the general narrative. This lack of positive reporting on Islamic culture; achievements in art, architecture, science, medicine and jurisprudence creates an entirely unbalanced set of perceptions. Unfortunately, for many Muslims in the United Kingdom, certainly in the period immediately after July 7th 2005, Frith's statement is perhaps correct, when he wrote, 'To be a British Muslim is defined solely in terms of negativity, deprivation, disadvantage and alienation.'¹² We all need to ask ourselves how we would feel if subjected to such a diatribe.

With emphasis placed on the religious aspects of their day to day living, Muslim communities may at times appear to conflict with a modern United Kingdom secular society. Whether that transposes itself to the wearing of conservative dress; the use of religion in open debate, or an adherence to Shia conservatism, such values do not always sit comfortably with other Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Stereotyping of Muslims often appears to create the appearance of one society under Islam, with one collective view. This is, of course, far from the truth with Islamic communities representing the many countries, regions and political or religious bias of the world. Just as those communities are diversely represented, their perception and interaction with the Prevent strategy will vary. Personal experience will have enormous impact on individuals and community groups, which is why empirical evidence is so valuable. National comparisons can be useful, but many Muslim communities face specific issues and need to be examined locally.¹³

¹¹ Bunglawalla, I. (2009) *On the Verge of Losing the Plot: UK government rethinks its approach to Extremism*. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/satellite?c=Article_C&cid=248187985394 &pagename=Zone- English-Euro_Muslims%2FEMELayout [accessed online December 2011]

¹² Frith, M. (2004), Islamophobia makes British Muslims feel increasingly 'isolated' in their own country. *The Independent*. 22/11/2004. [online]. Available from:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/islamophobia-makes-british-muslims-feel-increasingly-isolated-in-their-own-country-534164.html> [Accessed September 2011].

¹³ Roberts, C. (2010), conversation to Ouston, M. (May 2010)

The data return for this study is relatively low and may not be seen academically to stand up to scientific scrutiny. However it is an honest response to some of the contemporary attitudes in Bedfordshire. It is perhaps too easy, when one is engaged in Prevent delivery, to believe that others share the same level of interest and understanding. As stated, this is subject to variance. To state that Luton and Bedford Muslims are overly concerned with the Prevent agenda or even community cohesion is far too simplistic. Barltrop, writes that the issues that affect Muslims across Europe are varied. With some:

..having a main interest in Turkey, whilst others Kashmir or Iraq; for many it is Palestine. Moreover, if the non-Muslim environment in Europe focuses only on an extremist segment of Muslim activity and opinion, it risks failing to recognise the great amount of thinking being done in Islamic intellectual circles.¹⁴

For many, Prevent will have had no direct impact at all. A respondent to the Muslim community questionnaire stated that he believed that most Muslims in Luton and Bedford had not heard of Prevent or if they had heard of it, it meant very little to them or their families. He went on to say that it was generally only those engaging with the police or local authorities on a variety of issues already that would have been exposed to how the strategy works.

The concerns of many within the Muslim community in Bedfordshire will be as elsewhere, concentrated on domestic and employment issues, education, crime reduction, welfare and finance. The antithesis of this is that Prevent has been a constant in the minds of many within Muslim communities across the United Kingdom Muslim networks, creating a deep knowledge of its complexities and impact locally.¹⁵ There are many Muslims in Luton and Bedford who have had to work with Prevent for some years and have developed a deep understanding of its negative and positive impacts. They face obvious and reported associations with extremists, some of whom have been actively linked to terrorist activities and as

¹⁴ Barltrop, R. (2003), *Muslims in Europe, post 9/11: Understanding and Responding to the Islamic World*, p.24., St. Anthony's College and Princeton University. [online]. Available from <http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/ext/princeton/Report.pdf> [Accessed June 2011].

¹⁵ Innes, M. *et al* (2011). *op cit*. p.7. 'The evidence suggests that many Muslims hold quite complex and sophisticated views about the Prevent programme. Frequently, across the course of a single interview, community representatives talked both positively and negatively about their encounters with Prevent.'

such, the community continues to experience negativity by that association. The changes in Prevent will hopefully be more acceptable to all Muslim groups and extensive inroads into strengthening the Muslim community have developed relationships between local authority partners and the community. As elsewhere in the United Kingdom as Prevent moves forward in a revised form, the Government hopes for a delivery within the community that fits in with the 'big society' vision.¹⁶

Considering how Prevent is viewed by Muslim communities Innes et al¹⁷ comment that there are three defined groups for consideration around the Prevent strategy. At one end of the spectrum, there are the opponents who consider it a failure and remain suspicious of it. At the other end is a group that is engaged within its delivery and therefore, promote it. Then the middle ground, are a, 'large group of 'non-aligned' Muslims, whose views shift according to the unfolding events.'¹⁸ The empirical evidence for this paper is drawn from across all three such groups. It has proven though that this middle group is extremely difficult to access for research. Where do they sit on interaction with the authorities? Do they want association with either the pro or anti-Prevent lobby or are they like most other people just getting on with their daily lives? Engaging with the whole community is sustainable, but roles and profiles are key. Relationships can be damaged and researching as a police officer has proven to be difficult and certainly challenging.

The National Prevent Annual Report 09/10 states that, 'Prevent will only have an effect if, together, we continue to build trust and confidence through renewed and consistent engagement.'¹⁹ Regaining that trust within the Muslim community is difficult. Prevent has been reported to create alienation within Muslim communities and threatens to, 'undo a number of good initiatives that contribute to community cohesion because of the link to counter terrorism.'²⁰ In 2008,

¹⁶ Bartlett, J., Birdwell J. (2010), *From suspects to citizens: Preventing violent extremism in a big society*. London: Demos.

¹⁷ Innes M., et al. (2011) *op cit.*, p.7.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁹ Association of Chief Police Officers (2009/2010). *Prevent Annual Report.*, London: Home Office. p.6

²⁰ Bartlett J., Birdwell J. (2010) *op cit.*, p.3.

Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke stated that community engagement can only be achieved by working with and for the community and not directing it. This is absolutely correct and is the bedrock of Prevent 2. But, at the time, Clarke was the head of the National Counter Terrorism Command. The question has been asked, why him and not a senior police officer who leads on community cohesion? Such association caused, as it does now suspicion of alternative agendas.

It is a widely held belief, that the police should not have had such strong ownership of Prevent. It must be a facilitated process, with the Muslim community having the greatest say in protecting themselves. If the simple consideration of seeking clarity from the local Muslim community as to how they want Prevent to work within their community is not addressed, then the entire strategy is likely to be unsuccessful. It may always be viewed by some as an imposition of the government or police and partner agencies views on a community, with limited consultation. This consultation does however exist with engagement officers from the police and local authority and that consultation has extended to the research for this paper.

The methodology behind this paper rightly highlights both rationale and caution. It necessarily defines the transparency of the process and relevance to on-going complexities surrounding Luton in particular. Ethical issues demanded by The University of Wales Trinity St. David's and Bedfordshire Police have been fully addressed and great care has been taken to provide anonymity to participants who have agreed to be interviewed or answer questionnaires. Engagement with those involved in the delivery of Prevent, as well as those whose role it is to develop cohesion policy has been crucial; as has been the assessment of local community tensions.²¹ To in any way jeopardise existing progress would be disastrous and so the greatest care has been taken to ensure checks, measures and constant approval.

²¹ Luton experiences many peaks in community tension because of the presence of groups at opposing ends of the political spectrum. The English Defence League and ultra conservative Islamic groups continue to voice their concerns and opinions in public. It should be remembered however that neither necessarily perhaps express the opinions of most of the residents of Bedfordshire. But they are able to shout the loudest!

Prevent engagement and community cohesion; continue to be extremely important and often critical in a county, where the Muslim population is so high. The Bangladeshi and Pakistani population are far in excess of the national average. Although demographic data is not analysed in depth within this paper, it is detailed within appendix 4 as useful reference for subsequent analysis. Data from the 2001 census has been enhanced with Mayhew and Waples' 2011 study of Luton.²² Importantly, their data shows a dramatic increase in the Asian population, which far exceeds the expectations of earlier census analysis. Unfortunately this data does not provide analysis of faith orientation.

If one takes into account that Bangladesh²³ and Pakistan²⁴ predominate the country of origin for Bedfordshire Asians and that 92% – 98 % of religious adherence from those countries is known to be Islamic, then we may assimilate an extremely high Muslim adherence in Bedford and Luton. Demographics have had a direct influence upon what government funding was initially awarded to the borough councils for cohesion work under what is termed 'Pathfinder.'

Directly assessed on Muslim populations, it subsequently allocated available funding for Prevent intervention policies.²⁵ Critically, funding for Prevent is one of the issues of contention raised by members of the Muslim community as well as those outside of it.

Nationally, that criticism has been large enough to warrant freedom of information requests by the Taxpayers Alliance, who have summarised that, 'it is

²² Mayhew, L., Waples, S. (2011), *The Growth and Changing Complexion of Luton's Population*. Luton: Mayhew Harper Associates Ltd.

²³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) *The Bangladeshi Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities*. London: Change Institute, p.7. [online]. Available from: http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/document/Bangladeshi_Muslim.pdf [Accessed December 2011].

²⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2009) *The Pakistani Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities*. London: Change Institute, p.7. [online]. Available from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf> [Accessed December 2011].

²⁵ 'The PVE Pathfinder Fund, launched in February 2007, represented the first stream of funding under the Prevent Strategy. In 2007/08 the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund allocated £6m across 70 local authorities¹⁷ with Muslim populations of 5% or more.'

Youth Justice Board. (2012). *Process Evaluation of Preventing Violent Extremism Programmes for Young People*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/yjb/preventing-violent-extremism-process-evaluation.pdf> [Accessed May 2012].

unrealistic to expect councils to know which groups are ‘moderate’ and therefore suitable for funding.²⁶ A criticism has existed for some time that some of the funding has been inadvertently delivered to groups which support extremism because of a lack of understanding of the networks that exist. Also groups that are not representative of any specific religion have complained that Muslims have received too much funding while they receive nothing.

Successful community cohesion needs to be inclusive of all groups within a geographical area. It is wider than Prevent, which is just one part of that much larger holistic approach to ensuring that all community needs are met. Cohesion strategies were in place within local authority and government in advance of Prevent and although its impact should not be underestimated, Prevent is only one aspect of governance. Nevertheless it receives the greatest scrutiny and certainly considerable funding streams.

Amongst the high levels of criticism of Prevent, under closer scrutiny it has brought clear benefits for the local Muslim communities. Those communities are empowered, politically represented, better funded and have a considerably higher profile than they have achieved before in the United Kingdom. Islamic awareness has achieved considerable academic as well as vocational relevance especially across the public sector sphere.

A critical analysis of the effect Prevent has had on Muslim communities is examined within this paper and as one would expect for such recent strategy, contemporary analysis provides excellent commentary from primary sources experiencing any impact first hand. As the Prevent strategy evolves, we are in a strong position to analyse impact and as can be seen already, positively influence future development. A lack of consultation and engagement has been seen to be critically damaging. Prior to the Prevent 1 issues, consultation has been criticised. Spalek et al., comment from the reports around the social unrest in Bolton and Bradford in 2001, where policing was forced upon communities with little

²⁶ The TaxPayers’ Alliance (2009), *Council Spending Uncovered II: No.5: THE PREVENT STRATEGY*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/prevent.pdf> [Accessed December 2011].

consultation.²⁷ Prevent 1 was championed by the Government and the Home Office as an effective method of preventing the radicalisation of British Muslim's by Islamist extremist elements. In general terms though, it required extensive amendments which have come about through criticism such as: 'In the past few years, it has spent millions of pounds trying to prevent Muslim radicalisation....was flawed from the outset and as the Communities and Local Government Select Committee warned yesterday, the efforts made could be backfiring.'²⁸

It is not just the Muslim community members that criticise Prevent 1. Officers and staff engaged in delivery of cohesion or Prevent have stated that role profiles and titles have changed in accordance with the funding, that is directly attributed to their given work-streams. Hate Crime officers and those with cohesion portfolios have become Prevent Engagement Officers, which they have felt has been to the detriment of previous good work. This has been seen to be especially so with the title of 'Prevent Officers', where existing cohesion trust and progress, has been stated as hampered with a suspicion because of the whole Prevent agenda and in particular the 'Prevent' word. Consequently their views have been placed within this research and show many doubts about the way in which Prevent 1 has performed.

From the research for this paper though, it is clear that the officers and staff engaged with community cohesion and Prevent in Bedfordshire are professional and committed to ensuring success. There is a positivity that is tangible and with excellent established relationships in the local community the development of Prevent 2 and community cohesion may be seen to grow together.

²⁷ Spalek, B., El-Awa, S., McDonald, L Z., Lambert, R. (2009), Summary and Full Report: *Policy-Muslim Engagement and Partnerships for the Purposes of Counter-Terrorism: an examination.* doi:10.1017/S147474640999025X. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. p.7.

²⁸ Murray, D. (2010), *op cit.*

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Biography of the student in the context of established Prevent Delivery.

Consultation exercises to consider the scope of this research began in March 2011 and prior to the nationally commissioned paper being published. In considering whether this seemed too close to that study, its author was spoken to at a Prevent Conference in Reading and the lack of localised data created an important motivation to continue with the Bedfordshire study. It has been agreed through Prevent leads; ensuring that the participants fully understand that this is open and honest academic research for the improvement of future cohesion work, which compliments established work-streams and avoids creating additional tension. This dissertation will be available for reference by officers or staff engaged with community cohesion and Prevent.

As a serving police officer the author has worked within a variety of communities and from 2005 onwards, this policing concentrated in the two areas of the Hertfordshire and then Bedfordshire that received Pathfinder funding. He has been responsible for the delivery of Islamic Awareness to police and prison officers and staff, as part of the role of Prevent engagement. Such close association with the community and the relevant policing strategies has allowed him to participate in the initial Prevent launch in 2007 and its development, through the 2009 review and the revised programme in 2011.

Working within a Counter Terrorism environment brings with it considerable difficulties in gaining trust from communities which, as stated may already feel the subject of targeting and being spied upon. It is hoped; therefore, with the assurance of anonymity and using the network of Prevent engagement officers as a secure and safe conduit for the passage of the questionnaires, participants will have provided answers that really express what issues they feel need addressing and not ones that they feel are safe to make.

There is a considerable degree of effort from many people to ‘mend bridges’ and build trust. Therefore the author has been particularly careful that this research does not undo that good work. Openness and honesty as well as carefully sought guidance, has been at the heart of this paper, such is the fragility of relationships. As well as ethically necessary under the terms of the University, anonymity afforded to participants is critical to its success and ensuring on-going trust. The security of the questionnaires and the format of response analysis are all aspects which had to be placed before the prevent leads in Bedfordshire Police as well as The University of Wales Trinity St. David’s’ Ethics committee. Criticism of Prevent is nationally reported, but individuals have expressed a fear that to openly criticise Prevent to the police may be perceived as an acceptance of extremist views. That is not appropriate or true within a democratic society, but it is still a fear that has to be considered.

2.2 Problem Considerations

The threat to the security of the United Kingdom in part has been seen to have come from, as well as being directed towards, the Muslim community. That has created and continues to cause tensions and fear across, not only Muslim communities, but also a variety of other community groups. Prevent can be interpreted in various ways and whether one is involved in its delivery or a recipient of its programmes the underlying message appears to be that it is a police agenda and more specifically a counter terrorism tool.

The early tasking through Prevent work required a community mapping exercise, which established Mosques, madrasas, meeting places, travel facilitation and other aspects of Muslim community life. This created immediate suspicion and accusations of intelligence gathering across much of the Muslim community and within the media, which has remained to the present. Originally called the Richer Picture, this strand of information gathering lead into what is known as the

counter terrorism local profiles.²⁹ To fulfil the strategy, one must consider, that without knowing what was already in existence, the police would not have been able to establish where the threats and vulnerabilities lay. It is easy to see how the Muslim community felt that they were being spied upon.

If one engages with Prevent, there may be assumptions by others within the wider Muslim community that an issue with violent extremism exists and cannot be controlled by the community elders, creating shame. Innes et al have confirmed this, ‘A key consideration here is negotiating with the community about how they want the problem to be solved. In some of the scenarios they might accept overt law enforcement interventions, but on many occasions they appear to prefer alternative, less visible, ways of dealing with the issue.’³⁰

The use of questionnaires brings with it a degree of error and in this research it must be borne in mind that the study has only been able to reach a small representative group who are concerned with the provision of both Prevent and community cohesion. The question as to how representative they are of local Muslim communities can only come from local knowledge and experience. They are, however, a clear voice with considerable understanding of local feelings and tensions, possessing a good knowledge of the Prevent programme and its impact. A difficulty faced for the data gathering, is that those who wish to engage in Prevent are likely to be the same who frequently engage already with Police and local authority. They are more likely to be the ones with a motivation to address issues through committees and are already connected. The question may remain about the views of those less connected.

²⁹ Her Majesties Inspector of Constabulary (2009), *Prevent, Progress and Prospects*. p.p.8–9.[online]. Available from: <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/prevent-progress-and-prospects-report-20090622.pdf> [Accessed May 2012].

³⁰ Innes, M., *et al.*(2011) *op cit.*, p.39

2.3 Considerations for the letter of introduction

The letter³¹ was peer reviewed by the engagement officers and the final generic version was sent to both community members and engagement officers and staff. The office from which the author works was stated to maintain the level of honesty and openness. Explaining that the author is engaged within the Counter Terrorism Unit from the outset set a term of engagement. If recipients felt strongly about that particular fact they could either challenge the methodology, approach the author direct or refuse to participate.

The worst scenario would be to fail to disclose the study was not being conducted by anyone with a police or counter terrorism connection and then subsequently that became knowledge. Again, this could open a suggestion of an intelligence gathering exercise which would be critically damaging to local police and Muslim community relationships. It was also appreciated that the responses received may be from the most vociferous opponents of Prevent. Yet again it is difficult to establish if these voices are widely representative.

2.4 Questionnaire of those engaged in the delivery of the Prevent strategy and engagement with local Muslim communities

The questionnaire for staff and officers³² within the police and partner agencies provided examples of how Prevent 1 had made their engagement far more difficult and it was important that this evidence was captured. These professionals validated many responses from the Muslim community members. There are three questions concerning issues that caused problems from Prevent and one which looks at any the positive aspects in relation to enhancing community cohesion. This is based on previous conversations which showed a clear level of disquiet from these officers around the strategy.

³¹ Appears as Appendix 1.1 It is generic being appropriate for both police and prevent delivery staff and officers as well as members of the Muslim community.

³² Appendix 1.2

2.5 Questionnaire for Members of the Muslim community

This set of questions³³ has been distributed through already existing engagement networks as a bundle which included the ethics rationale and the letter of introduction. Respondents were asked to provide details of the town in which they live and work and how long in residence. They are also asked about experiences of growing up as a check and measure to perhaps later consider if grievances and experiences produce any commonality in the response provided.

It is an interesting concept, to raise the question of community. Whether the recipients see themselves as part of a wider community with multi-faith and multi-ethnicity or only see themselves within the Muslim group, may indicate further cohesion work streams. Clearly some people will have more experience of the strategy than others. It was expected that for several responders the Strategy will have had little obvious effect on them or their families in both the positive or negative. Many may not have analysed its impact. But assuming that those who wish to engage with this study will have discussed the questions amongst their peers, the responses were hoped to be at least representative. The responsibility for improvements must come from within the Muslim community as well as support being provided from without. Drilling into specifics of the strategy as it stands the questionnaire asks what positive points come from either the first or second strategy and what the respondents would like to see removed from either.

2.6 Analysing the responses to the questionnaires

The analysis forms part of a chapter later in this paper. It is purposefully presented post the chapters on Prevent engagement and community cohesion to allow the reader to understand some of the terminology and strategy that those areas concern themselves with. Using available literature these chapters provide a commentary on national implementation, difficulties and successes. Moving on to the questionnaire review chapter allows the reader to consider the national issues in comparison with the Bedfordshire local context.

³³ Appendix 1.3

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY COHESION AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Community Cohesion

In a 2008 study concerning community cohesion undertaken at the Centre of Migration, Policy and Society we are advised that:

The government definition of cohesion acknowledges the importance of equal life chances. This Research reinforces the importance to a sense of belonging of addressing experiences of discrimination; and the constraints that unemployment and low income on capacity to participate in organisations and other places of social interaction.³⁴

In 2001 the United Kingdom faced a situation where community cohesion was seen as being ineffective or non-existent amongst Muslim communities in serious public disorder that has become termed as the “Mill Town Riots.”³⁵ Although there had been reports considering the race equality issues across the United Kingdom including those from Lord Scarman and the Runnymede Trust, Amin writes of the, ‘alarm at the scale of ethnic deprivation and segregation in poor urban areas, growing Islamophobia and unashamed questioning of the cultural and national allegiances of British Muslims.’³⁶

In 2001, The Denham Report³⁷ announced the intention of making community cohesion a Government agenda matter. Of particular note, one finding within the report was that there was ignorance about each other’s communities and that

³⁴ Jayaweera, H., Choudhury, T., (2008), *Immigration, Faith and Cohesion*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. p.5.[online]. Available from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/immigration-faith-and-cohesion> [Accessed March 2012].

³⁵ In 2001 Oldham, Bradford and Burnley (Mill-Towns) experienced considerable public disorder by Muslim youth that was disaffected by poor social and economic conditions.

³⁶ Amin, A. (2002), *Ethnicity and the multicultural city: Living with diversity*. p.2. Durham: Durham University. [online]. Available from: [http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=Amin,+A+\(2002\)+Ethnicity+And+The+Multicultural+City:+Living+with+Diversity&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart&sa=X&ei=5fOHT8fsB8-p0AXq45HjCQ&ved=0CBkQgQMwAA](http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=Amin,+A+(2002)+Ethnicity+And+The+Multicultural+City:+Living+with+Diversity&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart&sa=X&ei=5fOHT8fsB8-p0AXq45HjCQ&ved=0CBkQgQMwAA) [Accessed March 2012].

³⁷ BBC News (2001), *Race Reports at a Glance*. [online]. Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1703432.stm> [Accessed December 2012].

ignorance can easily develop into mistrust and fear through a lack of understanding.³⁸ This was not aimed purely at what was later to be termed Islamophobia. But certainly it has been seen, that a lack of understanding and knowledge of Islamic community and culture, has added to community fears and concern, over what many perceive to be extremist views, but which may, in fact, be normal and innocuous political or religious opinion.

There was also concern that ethnic groups could or would not enter into dialogue. In her evidence to the Committee, the Home Office Minister Fiona MacTaggart set out the potential role that her department wanted the police to play in working with communities to tackle social cohesion. To succeed in citizen-focused policing and better citizen participation in policing, you have actually got to engage with communities intelligently and sensitively – not kind of police “at” them but police “with” them - and respond to them.”³⁹ As stated before, similar prose would be later used by Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke in his Prevent briefing material.⁴⁰ As community cohesion includes all groups, cohesion building, ‘is focused upon increasing the resilience of communities so that they are less likely to be influenced by extremist views.’⁴¹

The committee considered all aspects of society in the way they should be integrated including housing, education, employment, and social/recreation spheres. This committee’s recommendation included to consider social cohesion across all sections of society and not just one particular group or ethnicity. In Luton there had been criticism that the cohesion policy was too focussed on Asian groups rather than considering all sections of the society. Yet the local strategy makes it quite clear that it is extremely diverse.

³⁸ Home Office (2001), *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*. (Chairperson: Ted Cante.) p.10. [online]. Available from:

<http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/DownloadDocuments/File.aspx?recordId=96&file=PDFversion> [Accessed June 2012].

³⁹ Government Cabinet Office. Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2004), *Committee findings: Social Cohesion*. Sixth report of session 2003-2004. House of Commons 45-I. Volume I, The House of Commons, London: Stationary Office Committee findings.

⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the London bombings the drive for police across community policing as well as counter terrorism was to ensure appropriate engagement and the message was very clear in that police had to work with the Muslim community not police at it. This was included in all Prevent briefing material that came from Counter Terrorism Command and was for wide dissemination to neighbourhood policing teams including Police Community Support Officers.

⁴¹ Innes, M., *et al.* (2011), *op cit.*, p.12.

In 2004, The House of Commons published the findings of an all-party committee on community cohesion. In its summary, the committee stated that they were concerned that social cohesion should not be seen as a matter for the police but rather an issue that should be addressed through integration of local and national strategy.⁴² This was a particularly important point in that the police should not retain primacy; cohesion is a societal problem, where the resolution needs to be addressed and formulated within the community and all agencies that are engaged with those communities – certainly not just the police.

The commitment to community cohesion cited by the Minister in the 2003-2006 National Policing Plan states that: ‘The promotion of community cohesion should be central to the work of the police..... Forces should look to embed good practice for promoting community cohesion into all aspects of their work.’⁴³ Quantitative data from the British Crime Survey 2004-2008 show according to Innes et al. that, ‘.....Muslim communities are more likely to see their quality of life and perceptions of neighbourhood being negatively influenced by crime and fear of crime⁴⁴ and therefore directly linked to the preventative or responsive aspects of policing.’

It is possible that the violence seen in the ‘Mill Town’ riots was an indication of the level of discontent amongst young Muslim men within certain areas of the United Kingdom. But it should also be noted, that where discontent amongst young Asian men, who were also predominantly Muslim, developed into civil unrest; the same demographic group represented in towns and cities across the United Kingdom did not replicate.

Clearly there were additional factors present within the ‘Mill Towns’ which aggrieved the Muslim youth that were not present in Bedfordshire at that time. Perhaps the cohesion programme was already at a sustainable level in Bedfordshire and the community was strong enough to address issues

⁴² Government Cabinet Office. .Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2004), *Committee findings: Social Cohesion*. Sixth report of session 2003-2004. House of Commons 45-I. Volume I, The House of Commons, London: Stationary Office Committee findings.

⁴³ *Ibid*,

⁴⁴ Innes, M.*et al.* (2011), *op cit.*, p.70.

immediately to calm community tension and fear. It has been reported that the threatened arrival of far right-wing antagonist forced racial tension to peek in the northern counties.

This paper does not examine in depth the causes of the ‘Mill Town’ disturbances. Its focus is on Luton and Bedford and in considering the Bedfordshire community engagement, it is clear that much success has been achieved. That is why it is so important to also examine what, if anything, Prevent has done to damage its fragile status. The presence, over many years of officers in Bedfordshire who have specifically concentrated on community cohesion issues long before Prevent was a locally embedded strategy should indicate a recognised desire to establish strong resilient community trust and dialogue without the presence necessarily of counter terrorism rhetoric.

Community cohesion programmes were in existence before any consideration of preventing violent extremism from the perspective of international terrorism was concerned. They formed a major consideration across all local authority policies. Community safety policies were provided with substantial funding streams as outlined in a report by Stokes and Mather for Crime Concern for the period 2000-2002.⁴⁵ The funding was specifically aimed at all communities to tackle issues including ‘Keeping young people safe and out of trouble’; ‘The Implications of the Lawrence enquiry’ and ‘Working together better.’ Clearly therefore, these social issues existed and were being addressed prior to the development of acknowledged ‘home grown terrorists’⁴⁶

With the rise of violent extremism in the period 2004 onwards, it is difficult to tell whether community cohesion policies were simply not working nationally, or whether the activities of the authorities created a feeling of tension fear and mistrust amongst the Muslim community, which then created further anger and fuelled extremist rhetoric and action. Cohesion policies alone may not always

⁴⁵ Stokes, M., Mather A. (2002), *Crime Concern*. London: National Crime Reduction Office

⁴⁶ Home grown terrorism is a euphemism for extremism that developed into criminal activity and ultimately the terrorist attacks on London in July 2012. Prior to this watershed Islamist al Qaeda inspired terrorism had been confined to countries outside of the United Kingdom terrorism had been confined to Europe.

work and no matter how effective a dialogue is between community members and the authorities, people remain individuals and may become politicised whatever their experiences. Also racism, Islamophobia and social disadvantage do exist and work as a force against cohesion.

It is clear that a series of United Kingdom terrorist incidents associated Islamist extremist networks and high profile arrests in Muslim communities created fear and a reluctance to engage. However, engagement did continue and the criticality of a two way dialogue cannot be underestimated. Without this intercourse the Muslim community may find itself, as the Muslim Association of Britain state:

...becoming increasingly isolated within Britain, which goes completely against the idea of trying to create a more cohesive society... it has to be a two way deal. British Muslims have got to build bridges and be proactive in terms of integrating with the rest of society.⁴⁷

Efforts to provide solutions will always have opponents. On the same theme, Dr Kiran Sarma addressing the Jill Dando lecture at the University College of London in 2006 spoke of the process of how people become terrorists and therefore, mitigation factors to prevent it:

This complexity means that it is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately identify the "causes" of support for terrorism, and potentially fruitful initiatives that may mitigate against support rationales. He pointed out that in many cases the determinants of support are beyond our control and in others addressing grievances may result in the alienation of some sections of mainstream society.⁴⁸

From 2000 onwards community impact assessment and tension monitoring was being conducted through local police and regional offices. The impact upon the Muslim community by national as well as international events was understood.

Racially motivated crime reporting exponentially increased with each Islamist reported terrorist incident and those fears and predicted tensions were placed in

⁴⁷ Frith, M. (2004), *op cit*.

⁴⁸ Sarma, K., (2006), *Terrorism*. London, UCL: Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science. [online] Available from <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/jdi/research/crime-science-network/network-reports/terrorism> [Accessed September 2011].

community action plans as well as policing strategies to protect and reassure the local Muslim community in the face of considerable hostility.

3.2 Community Cohesion for Luton and Bedford

Luton's Community Plan,⁴⁹ is regularly reviewed and was first published in 2002. The issues that are central to the strategy are improving local economic, environmental and social well-being. The document is a consultation paper and the strategy maintains its consultative process through a body called the Luton Forum. This strategic partnership group consist of key public, business, voluntary and community organisations. There are six key themes ranging from safety and security to dynamic and creative opportunities for the residents, but all six are associated with a cross cutting theme of community cohesion. In the review section of the plan there are published findings, which comment on all aspects of crime and anti-social behaviour but the document clearly states, 'That hate crime is a problem in Luton (racist, homophobic and diabolist)',⁵⁰

By way of increasing the contribution to community cohesion, all key stakeholders have representation on a sub group of the forum called the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The pertinent areas for community cohesion are the six within the strategy, as they are there for the betterment of the lives of all communities across Luton. Quite rightly they do not discriminate positively or negatively and no particular religious, racial, gender or nationality is mentioned. Having examined the strategy, it is clearly not the place to mention one particular ethnic or religious group and therefore, it is not surprising to see no mention of the Prevent strategy. Under the 2011 changes, sub-groups for community cohesion forms part of a more specific direction.

⁴⁹ Luton Borough Council *The Luton Community Plan 2002-2012.*, p.8-9., Luton: Luton Forum 2012

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10.

The Luton Borough Council web page covering cohesion, makes an important point about the matter, of total community inclusion:

Much of the discussion about community cohesion has concentrated on ethnic and faith issues, but we believe that community cohesion is about everyone. We need to tackle divisions within society so that no groups or individuals remain disaffected and separate from mainstream life.⁵¹

The present Government stance on what will or will not be tolerated in respect of views that are extreme has been clearly outlined by the Prime Minister of this current administration. The emphasis on the Prevent strategy as it now develops is that it does not focus on the Muslim community as it has in the past, but considers all extremism including far-right-wing rhetoric, extremism and vulnerability to radicalisation from those groups.

Luton has experienced large scale social unrest between members of both the Muslim community and right wing groups, but all sections of society suffer when their town centre becomes a battle ground. There has been criticism of social cohesion policies being too focused on particular ethnic or religious groups at the expense of other minority groups. Issues associated with that particular community have to be addressed of course, but not at the risk of further marginalising others. The Luton Borough Council response to this from the 2006 community cohesion strategy states that to focus on race and faith leads to the neglect of other important issues or factors that affect the potential for community cohesion and this is clear in their mission statement.⁵² The key priorities for the strategy were to:

Understand and promote respect for different ways of life; recognise and challenged prejudice and discrimination; promote local pride and an inclusive sense of belonging along with leadership and commitment; encourage participation and engagement; engage with

⁵¹ Luton Borough Council. (N.D.) *Community Cohesion*. [online]. Available from http://www.luton.gov.uk/Council_government_and_democracy/Councils/Council_policies_and_plans/pages/Community%20cohesion.aspx [Accessed May 2012].

⁵² 'Much of the discussion about community cohesion has concentrated on ethnic and faith issues but we believe that community cohesion is about everyone. We need to tackle divisions within society so that no groups or individuals remain disaffected and separate from mainstream life.' Luton Borough Council's '*Community Cohesion Strategy*.' *Ibid*.

young people; tackle exclusion and deprivation and mainstream community cohesion.

Faith and religion are not mentioned, however tackling racism runs through all policies. There is a wider understanding of what makes a community function effectively.

The 2007 study by Greene, Broome et al, questioned the participants involved with community cohesion programmes across Luton. The response to an awareness around the subject featured over 70% having an understanding whilst over 85% identified that building community cohesions was either important or a very important part of their organisations work.⁵³

Of note, however, is the finding that many felt it was far too focussed on the Asian community. In summary the report stated that local residents believed that the white working class were disadvantaged by the emphasis and preoccupation with other ethnic and faith groups. Despite Luton Borough Council's broad definition of community cohesion a significant number of respondents including employees from Luton Borough Council, believed that community cohesion was still too concerned with the Islamic community and preventing extremist activities. One respondent from a voluntary organisation observed, "Community cohesion is predominantly about south Asians, you will hear that a lot but people will only tell you about that in a bar."⁵⁴

Community cohesion issues surrounding the Prevent Strategy have driven through funding streams and subsequent project work towards that focus. In effect we see consecutive strategies with similar objectives, but where the 2002 National Community Cohesion Plan looked across all sections of society; the Prevent strategy was specifically aimed towards Muslim communities.

Although necessary to address the urgent issues of Islamist extremism, it now seems counter intuitive to the whole ethos of the cohesion strategy.

⁵³ Greene, R., *et al.* (2007) *op cit.*, p.77.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.p..77-78

One of the key criticisms of the Prevent funding was that alienation was created by focusing on one community and providing sections of that community with counter terrorism funding. One Muslim group questioning why they were not receiving funds when others were. Subsequent allegations that some of the Prevent funding had been used to promote extremism, was of course later picked up in the national media. This was also mentioned in the Rowntree Foundation study where the research team conducting the study,

..found concerns among policy makers and practitioners about the linking of ‘cohesion and ‘counter-terrorism’ agendas – in particular, that this risks stigmatising and alienating Muslim communities; and detracts from funding initiatives that might not fit in within a counter-terrorism agenda, but which would build local cohesion (for instance bringing people together around shared local concerns.⁵⁵

With reference to far right political groups (particularly the British National Party), extremist political groups from across the political spectrum were identified as a major barrier to community cohesion by a number of respondents in the Luton survey. That has, of course, developed further and although not associated to the British National Party the rise of the English Defence League as a right wing organisation in Luton, has had an equally strong effect on the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim.

The Greene, Broome et al study, showed that the police in Luton were positively identified by a number of organisations who considered them significant partners, working together to forge community cohesion programmes. The police organisation allows them to operate through regional teams with the aim of engaging with citizens and organisations through substantial partnership working.

A community cohesion team exists and works closely with Prevent engagement officers who have established processes that allow for the delivery and reporting on community cohesion. There is regular consultation with a large network of local community contacts. Hate crime reporting is monitored and officers support

⁵⁵ Jayaweera, H., Choudhury, T. (2008), *op cit.*, p.128

multi-cultural events and feed back community tensions.⁵⁶ Community cohesion officers operate in both Bedford and Luton and have done so for many years. Their focus remains broad.

Prevent is not considered as any more important than other aspects of the total cohesion programme. Particularly now with much of the original Prevent funding being withdrawn, there is a clear and obvious reigning in of Prevent programmes and it now sits more aligned with the other policies rather than appearing to predominate.

Prevent still sits as an important subject especially when seen as a driver for interventions and safeguarding, but it appears to have 'relaxed'. It is as though as in Innes et al comments the same as for other areas in the United Kingdom, 'Levels of community cohesion within the Muslim Community have subsequently recovered, intimating that Prevent is not having a uniformly negative impact upon community attitudes and perceptions.'⁵⁷ That clearly depends on who is consulted as the levels of mistrust of Prevent remain, but there appears to be a more positive dialogue existing which concerns itself with the safeguarding of vulnerable individuals.

⁵⁶ Greene, R., *et al.* (2007), *op cit.* p.79.

⁵⁷ Innes M., *et al.* (2011) *op cit.* p.72.

CHAPTER 4: THE PREVENT STRATEGY

4.1 Prevent as a national strategy Criticisms and benefits.

There are five main drivers to the strategy and two supporting factors, as outlined in the Governments Prevent 2009 Document and discussed during the Welcome to PREVENT '09 conference in 2009.⁵⁸ They are, to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices; disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate; support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment or who have already been recruited by violent extremists. It maintains delivery to, 'increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting, to develop supporting intelligence, analysis and information; and improve strategic communications.'

The strategy made clear recommendations that partnership work was paramount and that it was not a police only strategy, but rather an inclusive community safety one. The Association of Chief Police Officers stated that the main themes of Prevent are to:

Mainstream Prevent into day-to-day policing, through neighbourhood policing, community engagement and related activity; to work in partnership to support individuals and institutions; ensure a joined-up approach to all police counter-terrorism activity; to develop Prevent capability at local, regional and national level.⁵⁹

The drive from the Association of Police Chiefs (ACPO) was to ensure that Prevent was mainstreamed in to what is termed, 'community policing'. There were specific teams, such as the ACPO Delivery Unit Teams; including the

⁵⁸ Publication details for this document are un-cited but it is believed it is from HMSO via the Home Office in 2009.

⁵⁹ ACPO (2009), *Prevent The Policing Approach*. Birmingham Prevent Conference 2009.

National Community Tension Team and some police force areas separated the delivery away from counter terrorism units, whilst others did not.

In many force areas there was and remains a cross over between the two. Prevent was designed to be delivered by front line community officers, working within the Muslim communities. In this way Prevent would become established within the wider community safety portfolio – delivered and supported by those officers who already had working relationships with the community, thereby building on the trust that may have already existed. Unfortunately, this has not been the case and many perceive Prevent to have failed.

The Muslim communities which are at the heart of Prevent interventions are complex, with often opposing sentiments. There have been suggestions that the extremists amidst those local communities could not operate without what is termed an open support for violent Jihad. Mascini advises that there are other academics that emphasise the importance of sympathisers for Jihad.⁶⁰ Support may be in the form of the immediate peer group or as we have seen through web based networks.

The four Luton men who pleaded guilty of terrorism at Southwark crown court on 1st March, were known to their community and one was said to have been extreme even for the extremist and yet, as reported in ‘The Telegraph’, the community did not give him up to the authorities.⁶¹ Majority feeling may empathise with the political rationale behind the rhetoric, but rarely will members from any community agree with criminal acts in order to promote political or religious ideology. However the strength in influencing particularly young minds which are seeking identity and purpose can be enormous. Post tells us that, ‘Terrorism is not a consequence of individual psychological abnormality. Rather it is a consequence of group or organisational pathology that provides a sense-making explanation to the youth drawn to these groups.’⁶²

⁶⁰ Mascini, P. (2006), *op cit.* 29:2, p.342.

⁶¹ Whitehead, T. (2013) The ‘Just do It’ Bomb plotters. *The Daily Telegraph*, (22.02.2013).

⁶² Post, J. M. (2001), *The Mind of the Terrorist: Individual and Group Psychology of Terrorist Behaviour*. Prepared for Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Senate Armed

We have seen though, that impact of a few can be enormously detrimental to the majority and it is incumbent on the majority to ensure that they self-regulate their communities where possible. Because one person can hold strong political or ideological beliefs may be a cause for concern within a community. This is especially so when one considers that as Esposito writes on the ‘...distinctive differences of interpretation’ of the ‘Ideological Worldview of Revivalism.’⁶³ the framework that Esposito sets out are extremely important in attempting to understand the rhetoric behind some of the views of some Muslims in stating the justification for their actions and activities and should be the basis of any reading into what the general framework is as well as the framework used by the more ‘radical activists’

Gaffney in a preparation lecture concerning the psychology of terrorism states that, ‘ideology, however ill-defined or misguided, provides the individual with their moral and political compass that inspires their actions, informs the way they interpret the world, and defines how they judge the actions of others.’⁶⁴ It is absolutely vital therefore, that an early intervention is made to moderate the ideology and reduce the risk of it becoming unlawful. The importance of the community standing strong in the face of violent jihadist extremist views is of course one of the key drivers of Prevent, empowering those very same communities to stand firm against radicalising elements. This assumes that the communities are at one with each other, joined and strong, but that is not a regular feature of any community dynamic. Particularly with, as previously stated when Muslim communities are so diverse in their cultural, political, geographical and historical contexts. This is a difficulty that is perhaps promulgated, by the fact that Muslim community members often find themselves at variance with some aspects of modern western secular culture. They may be as Leiken, suggests

Services Committee, November 15, 2001 <http://www.theapm.org/cont/Posttext.html> accessed 09 January 2010.

⁶³ Esposito, J. (2005), *Islam the Straight path*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.p.165-166.

⁶⁴ Gaffney, F. (2011), *A critical analysis to provide insight on how ‘political extremist violence’ should not be designated ‘religious extremist violence*. UK MCC Joiners Primer Document. Personal Copy.

totally independent, exceptionally retentive of their ways, producing a variant of 'globalised Islam'.⁶⁵

Muslim leadership in the United Kingdom has shown its determination to distance itself from outspoken extreme clerics such as Abu Hamza al-Masri and Abu Qatada al-Filistini, but the immense damage done to the majority of Muslim communities because of this rhetoric is certainly felt. A failure by the authorities, to intervene properly, because of a lack of appropriate legislation, damaged trust within Muslim communities and within the wider community in which they sit. Bungawala⁶⁶ commenting on the former Labour Government, states that their liberalist policies allowed political refuge and freedom of speech. Where these occurred, extreme clerics spread their propaganda and this is one of the factors that have caused Muslims in the United Kingdom to lose trust in the Prevent strategy.

In 2007 The United Kingdom Government published a document called, 'Preventing violent extremism: winning hearts and minds.'⁶⁷ This was created in response to the London bombings of July 2005, when it became painfully clear that the terror threat to the United Kingdom was not from international terrorists. Essentially local men raised and schooled within English communities had shown that they were susceptible to radical extremist views and had been radicalised both within the United Kingdom and further on visits to foreign countries.

To prevent such radicalisation called for rapid interventions within the Muslim community. Hewitt,⁶⁸ comments that Prevent builds on community cohesion work in order to establish coherent and resilient communities that are able to withstand

⁶⁵ Leiken, R. (2005), *Europe's Angry Muslims*. Council for Foreign Relations. [online] Available from <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8218> [accessed online December 2011].

⁶⁶ Bungawala, I. (2009), *op cit*.

⁶⁷ Communities and Local Government. (2007) *Prevent. Winning Hearts and Minds.*, London: Department of communities and government. [online] Available from: <http://resources.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/Publications/Documents/Document/Default.aspx?recordId=67>. [Accessed September 2012]

⁶⁸ Hewitt, S. (2008), *The British war on terror: Terrorism and counter-Terrorism on the home front since 9/11*. London: Continuum Books.

such extremism. However Khan⁶⁹ in his criticism of the strategy calls for community cohesion issues to be reviewed and not linked via a counter terrorism narrative. It seems though, that as long radicalisation and violent extremism retains its focus with Islam, counter terrorism will maintain its focus on Muslim communities.

The 2010 Muslim Council of Scotland report stated that it is inappropriate to link the Prevent strategy with tackling terrorism, arguing as others have, that cohesion is surely about wider community cohesion issues. Its concentration on the Muslim community created a perception that it was a 'problem community' creating cohesion issues and divisions. This argument is supported by Kundani⁷⁰ and Milne⁷¹ who state that established community cohesion links may be jeopardised by funding which can be an extremely divisive element as various groups vie for resources. Not only does it create division within the Muslim community, it creates resentment from those who are in the wider community and who receive no funding at all, for their projects and enhancement of social standards. In a report published by the Institute of Race Relations in 2009 and cited in Kundnani's, paper, it was stated, 'that Prevent has created the presentation of the Muslim community as a suspect one, fostering social divisions, encouraging tokenism; discourages local democracy and has done little to reduce the risk of violent radical extremism.'⁷² We have to remember that the Prevent strategy did not target Islam, it targeted the vulnerabilities exposed within Muslim communities and it targeted those extremists who usurped Islam for their own ideological purposes.

The wording around much within the Prevent strategy and the pathfinder funding⁷³ is considered derogatory. However, if an open and honest debate is to be

⁶⁹ Khan, K.. (2009), *Preventing Violent extremism (PVE) & PREVENT: A response from the Muslim Community*. The An-Nisa Society

⁷⁰ Kundnani, A. (2009), *Spooked!: How not to Prevent Violent Extremism*. [online] Available from: <http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/spooked.pdf> [Accessed. November 2010] p.6.

⁷¹ Milne, S. (2007), Poisonous and dangerous: The constant regurgitation by the media of Muslim –bating 'research' by right-wing think tank misleads the public and is driven by a neo-con political agenda. *The Guardian*. [online] Available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/15/poisonousanddangerou>. (Accessed march 2012).

⁷² Kundani, A. (2011) *op cit*. p.6.

⁷³ Pathfinder funding was issued by the Government under Prevent. Its aim as quoted was Luton and Bedford's Muslim population far exceeded this figure. The Community Cohesion

considered the etymology may cause concern. The Department for Communities and Local Government stated that Pathfinder funding would assist in, ‘Preventing violent extremism and...Creating a situation where Muslim communities reject and actively condemn violent extremism and seek to undermine and isolate violent extremists.’⁷⁴ That is appropriate and reasonable but sections of the strategy go on to state, ‘The key measure of success will be demonstrable changes in attitudes among Muslims, and wider communities they are part of, locally and nationally’.

This will be done by ‘Understanding and mapping current local attitudes will thus be important and local partners will be invited to take part in developing, piloting and rolling out surveys that provide baselines for future progress.’ It created some clarity around what we, as a nation, were attempting to challenge. The Muslim Peer - Baroness Warsi, perhaps spoke for the majority of Muslim community members in the United Kingdom when she as a Muslim stated, ‘we must accept that we’re all in this together, but Muslims have an added responsibility to defeat extremism, because extremism is claimed in the name of Islam.’⁷⁵

That honest statement has allowed for a clear and open dialogue and places huge responsibility on Muslim community leaders to look inwards and address issues that they some may have previously denied existed. This point was also made by one of the most senior Muslim police officers. Assistant Commissioner Tariq Ghaffur, had criticised the National Association of Muslim Police and the Muslim community as a whole for failing to face up to the realities of real and stark problems within certain sections of the wider Muslim community in the United Kingdom.⁷⁶ The Muslim Police Association as an advisory voice had quite rightly commented on the dangers they felt the strategy was likely to create. They had

Pathfinder Programme was launched jointly by the Home Office and the ODPM with funding of about £6m to run between February 2003 and October 2004. 14 pathfinder local authorities are developing best practice which is to be disseminated across all local government.

⁷⁴ Its aim was, ‘to develop resilient British Muslim communities as part of our response to this threat. The fund will therefore be focused on local authorities with sizeable Muslim communities. As a starting point, authorities with populations of 5% or more should be considered for funding.

⁷⁵ BBC (2007), Peer Criticises Muslim ‘hotheads’. BBC News. 11.12.2007 [online] Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7138641.stm. [Accessed December 2011]

⁷⁶ Ghaffur, T. (2009), Reported by Winnet, R. (2009), *The Telegraph*. 22/01/2010 [online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/7046863/Britains-most-successful-Asian-policeman-hits-out-at-criticism-of-anti-terrorism-strategy.html> [Accessed December 2011]

warned that, ‘It was triggering an upsurge in Islamophobia and deepening divisions in communities.’ Clearly it is not sufficient for matters relating to the safety of any community to be denied or ignored for the fear of causing controversy. Extremist Islamist rhetoric is controversial and the methods to prevent it have also proved to be so.⁷⁷

Although Kundnani’s report ‘Spooked’ has been questioned in terms of whether its research is too heavily dependent on existing policy and academic reports, it is also held as useful by Githens-Mazer and Lambert.⁷⁸ They highlight that Kundnani’s report shows how Prevent has in fact changed its emphasis from community engagement and cohesion support to one of thought policing and control. In the reports key findings, Kundnani writes, ‘The current emphasis of Prevent on de-politicising young people and restricting dissent is actually counterproductive because it strengthens the hands of those who say democracy is pointless.’

Maude makes a valid point reporting on the majority feeling of Muslim community that they feel the counter terror agenda is so strong that some Muslims feels that they are being spied on. Indeed in Lord Carlisle’s review of the Prevent strategy prior to the implementation of Prevent 2 he makes the statement that:

Although Prevent has included some quite broad and occasionally unfocused community cohesion activities in the past, generally it has been productive. It is realistic to accept that some problems have arisen, notably from the feeling of some parts of the community that they have been victims of state ‘snooping’.⁷⁹

The fear that the strategy was an intelligence gathering process aimed solely at the Muslim communities proposed by Maude is confirmed by Zaman. Who states, ‘that the Prevent programme has been used to establish one of the most elaborate systems of surveillance ever seen.’ Zaman⁸⁰ argued that the Prevent Strategy was

⁷⁷ Muslim Police Association. Personal document.

⁷⁸ Githens-Mazer, J., Lambert, R. (2009), Quilliam on Prevent: the wrong diagnosis. *Guardian* 09/12/2009., [online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/19prevent-quilliam-foundation-extremism> [Accessed December 2010].

⁷⁹ Carlisle, A. (2011), *Prevent Strategy 2011*. London: HMSO., p.4.

⁸⁰ Zaman, K. (2009), How to alienate Muslims even more. *Guardian Newspaper*. (30.5.2009) [online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2009/may/30/mi5-blackmail-muslims> [Accessed January 2012].

baseless and criminalised activities and attitudes that were legitimate and which were within the law. He stated that there is unequivocal condemnation from the Muslim community, political and religious leaders from most sections of Muslim society.

There is confirmation that partner agencies as quite rightly the Muslim community has at times, felt that the supportive mechanisms within Prevent, such as empowering local communities to be resilient to radical extremist views and influences are somewhat blurred in the police need to naturally gather intelligence. That blurring of roles has also been felt and commented on by those responsible for the delivery. The only way to approach this controversial point is to be honest and state that there may be a commonality within the officer's roles. To deny it merely adds to suspicion when the facts are plain to see.

There are clearly defined roles in the police service, where Pursue and Prevent are not and never have been considered by the same officers, but there are also examples where this is not the case. Dodd⁸¹ in October 2009 wrote an article for the Guardian Newspaper. Its headline, '*Government anti-terrorism strategy 'spies' on innocent,*' caused considerable anguish amongst local Muslim communities and also anecdotally amongst public sector professionals who felt that they were intelligence gathering. One example cited in the article was that of the programme manager for Prevent in Birmingham – Paul Marriot being a senior counter-terrorism police officer seconded to work in the council equalities division.

Shami Chakrabarti who was the head of the group Liberty is reported as stating, 'It is the biggest domestic spying programme, targeting the thoughts and beliefs of the innocent in Britain in modern times.'⁸² Dodd went on to print the Home Office response as, "Any suggestion that Prevent is about spying is simply wrong. Prevent is about working with communities to protect vulnerable individuals and address

⁸¹ Dodd, V. (2009), Anti- Terrorism Spies on the Innocent. *The Guardian Newspaper*. (16/11/2009). [online] Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/oct/16/anti-terrorism-strategy-spies-innocents>. [Accessed March 2011].

⁸² Chakrabati, S. (2009) *Liberty: Protecting civil liberties, promoting human rights*. Autumn 2009 issues. [online] Available from: <http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/publications/2-newsletter/liberty-newsletter-autumn09-v3.pdf> [Accessed December 2011]

the root causes of radicalisation."⁸³ Much of the Muslim community was far from convinced. This has been echoed locally where one respondent has stated that they are convinced that prevent is an intelligence gathering tool. That particular person is neither a Muslim or from the Muslim community but has been engaged in Prevent.

Kundnani has argued that Prevent has been the very antithesis of protecting vulnerable Muslim communities from violent extremism, stating that it has created an atmosphere of mistrust and contempt. He writes 'Prevent-funded voluntary sector organisations and workers in local authorities are becoming increasingly wary of the expectations on them to provide the police with information on young Muslims and their religious and political opinions.'⁸⁴ Local authorities and partner agencies have a duty to protect the vulnerable and they have to act appropriately if they receive a complaint about extreme behaviour in their environments. Whether that complaint reaches the police would normally depend on relationships between the organisations and the level of perceived criminality of the act. Clearly it would be entirely appropriate for reporting to exist on a person who states he wants to kill others for whatever reason that person has. Conversely, because an individual expresses a political view does not make them an intelligence target. That is a factor that has created fear and mistrust.

The strategy was designed for the right reasons and that was to protect the vulnerable members of the Muslim community from radicalisation. However, the wording of the strategy did little more than perhaps confirm many of the fears contained within Dodd's revelations.

The key elements within the strategy sometimes referred to as the 'five plus two' (post - Chapter 4) are supportive and created to empower local Muslim communities. They also provided doubts and suspicion in that they contained the sentence, 'Develop supporting intelligence, analysis and information.' It is this blurring of function and delivery that has caused the strategy to be perceived in such a negative way by many within the Muslim community. The local authority and partner agencies endeavoured to understand the 'make-up' of the local

⁸³ Dodd, V. (2009), *op cit.*

⁸⁴ Kundnani, A. (2009), *op cit.* p.6

Muslim community, but in doing so placed them under a spotlight. Although Government guidance was created within consultation with many eminent Muslim academics and bodies, the end users of such guidance were to a large degree, unaware of some of the sensitivities that needed to be appreciated prior to formal engagement.

It is unlikely that the majority of the British public has an understanding of Islam and Muslim culture and they may, therefore, perceive certain elements of it as a threat. Whilst other religions may be seen to be diminishing, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United Kingdom and Europe.⁸⁵ Muslim communities are still a minority ethnic group at approximately three per cent of the overall population based on the 2001 census⁸⁶ and that creates additional vulnerabilities of tolerance and understanding. There are however pockets of community where the representation of Muslims far exceeds the national average. Luton is certainly representative of this demographic anomaly with a Muslim population exceed in 12%.

The United Kingdom is largely considered to have a secular society, which is a societal change over two generations at most. It may be unfair to state, but a large number of the British public may not understand much of their stated religion (Church of England). Even though 72 per cent have recorded it as so in the 2001 census.⁸⁷ They are even less likely to understand the complexities and requirements of another one.

Where the Islamic religion places such considerable emphasis on cultural experiences and day to day living, an issue of comprehension by non-Muslims may become apparent. Clearly there was and remains a need to understand all cultures within our society and more particularly perhaps the Muslim one. This is where Islamic awareness training through Prevent has proffered upon many partner agencies an appreciation and understanding of the differences between what is normal political and religious discussion and what is worrying rhetoric. It

⁸⁵ BBC News (2005) *Muslims in Europe: Country Guide*. [online]. Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4385768.stm>. [Accessed December 2011]

⁸⁶ Bosveld, K., Connelly, H., (2006) *Population: Focus on Ethnicity & Religion*. [online] Available from: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ethnicity/focus-on-ethnicity-and-religion/2006-edition/index.html> . [Accessed January 2012].

⁸⁷ Office for National Statistics (2003), *2001 Census*. London: HMSO.

has also allowed for a more intellectual debate between parties who may wish to take a more fundamental view as opposed to those who favour a 'mainstream' argument. Understanding what those views mean is difficult and reporting all such rhetoric was encouraged with police leading on interpretation and assessment.

Engagement with Muslim men and women who express what may be perceived as extreme views is important. It is inappropriate and dangerous to merely condemn or suppress views that seem dangerous. Hundal⁸⁸ advised that those people supporting the Prevent policy and strategy had recommended that dialogue range had to be greater and also had to include those whose views it was opposed to, in order to actively reach the radicals through the very people that those radical thinkers were themselves engaging with. In 2009, Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon condoned this course of action.⁸⁹

As an outspoken and active member of the British Muslim community, he agreed with a stronger stance suggested by senior police officers in establishing dialogue between radical individuals as they were the very people that younger more vulnerable Muslim men were likely to have credibility with.

In 2006 Bright⁹⁰ had warned that the Prevent strategy would be erroneous, empowering those who were politicised within the Muslim community and neglecting to address the needs of the majority 'moderate' members. From the 'Pathfinder' funding onwards, there has been resentment that huge amounts of money have been provided through the Prevent strategy at both national and local funding level. The subsequent appropriate use of this money has been critically divisive. Gardham⁹¹ reported that some of the Prevent money was being directed towards the very people that were likely to be responsible for radicalisation of the Muslim youth.

⁸⁸ Hundal, S. (2009), Is Contest 2 talking to the right people? *Guardian*, [online]. Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/mar/23/counterterrorism-contest-2-muslim> [Accessed March 2012].

⁸⁹ BBC (2009), *UK to shift anti-terror strategy*. [online] Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7889631.stm>, [Accessed December 2011]

⁹⁰ Bright, M. (2009), *When progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State's flirtation with radical Islamism*. [online] Available from www.policyexchange.org.uk [Accessed march 2012].

⁹¹ Gardham, D. ((2009), *op cit*.

The converse argument however is one that Kundnani makes, in suggesting that it is the groups that support the government that are rewarded and that criticise the government is to, 'risk losing funding and facing isolation as an ' extremist' organisation. Schwartz and Alk-Alawi⁹² have commented that the Prevent funding streams had placed £1.5 million at the disposal of the Muslim council of Britain and £80,000 to a British branch of the Muslim brotherhood and other extremist organisations.

Prevent funding provided considerable sums of money to a variety of Muslim groups and local authorities to enhance and improve Muslim communities in the United Kingdom, but that in itself may appear to undermine the overall effort relating to community cohesion as one respondent in survey by Greene et al stated, 'Community cohesion is predominantly about South Asians, you will hear that a lot but people will only tell you about that in a bar and will not say it publicly. A lot feel it is about promoting Islam, definitely fosters more resentment.'⁹³

Prevent is not a police strategy. It is a national Government strategy designed for delivery across all public sectors in an effort to combat the very real risk of a continual rise in Islamist extremism; itself based upon Al Qaeda inspired rhetoric. Therefore, local authority and more recently, education and health, have a role to play and find themselves with Prevent strategies at the heart of some of their organisational strategy documents. Unfortunately, the Police service of the United Kingdom, because of its clear primacy with the Pursue, Protect and Prepare elements of CONTEST, naturally took the lead with Prevent. Had the strategy implementation been delivered by local authorities and separated from the counter terrorism agenda of the Police service it may well have received more acceptances from the Muslim community that it was aimed at protecting. That is not a criticism on the police, but an obvious observation based upon responses

⁹² Schwartz, S., Al-Alawi I, (2009), I identifying Muslim Radicals (Inc Richard Antoun) A British Lesson for Americans. *The weekly Standard* (09.12.09) [online] Available from: <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/8839> [Accessed December 2010].

⁹³ Greene, R., et al. (2007), *op cit*.

from the Muslim community and many Prevent delivery staff and officers with whom the author has spoken.

There does seem to be considerable criticism of Prevent. However if one examines the extent of local Prevent delivery and its subsequent Muslim community engagement, there is an extremely strong argument in its favour. . The Prevent strategy for all of its criticisms has focussed local authority and partner agencies to consider the local Muslim communities at much greater depth. It has, through the implementation of national indicators such as NI 35,⁹⁴ focused strategy and spending streams towards greater Muslim awareness and cohesion. But even with this check and measure criticism from local analysis has resulted in a respondent stating,

In order to meet the needs of the original strategy and the NI35 requirement and their complexities in respect of outcomes an operational framework was developed to help us understand key aims and values that we could share with local communities. The difficulty was that at Home Office level; the messages were different to those being spoken at a local level which led to a miss-trust with delivering organisations.⁹⁵

All community based strategies aim at short term delivery for the betterment of the community long term and Prevent is no different. It is complicated and relies on involvement by many to achieve its aims.⁹⁶ The 2005 Luton community plan,⁹⁷ states that, ‘Luton has achieved a great deal in recent years. However, much remains to be done.’ United Kingdom police forces and their local authority partners have worked with the delivery of the Prevent strategy since its inception in 2007. It has had measurable success in channelling resources towards project based Muslim community cohesion programmes and has been instrumental in

⁹⁴ NI35 is a list of measures by which local authority together with their partner agencies especially the police are able to gauge activity directed at the Muslim community, to increase their resilience and interconnectivity within the wider Muslim community and the community as a whole

⁹⁵ Local Bedfordshire respondent from officers and staff delivering Prevent

⁹⁶ ACPO *National Coordinator Prevent Annual Report 2009/2010*. London: Association Chief Police Officers. ‘Preventing violent extremism is not a short term priority, it is a long term, community based initiative which will only succeed if prevent remains a priority for partners, police and communities themselves.’

⁹⁷ House of Commons Office of Deputy prime Minister. Sixth Report of Session 2003-2004. *Social Cohesion* [online] Available from: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/.../45.pdf. [Accessed January 2012].

delivering a raft of Muslim awareness courses and literature across the public sector. Yet it remains for some a mistrusted and misguided strategy which creates division and which has prevented dialogue rather than created the opportunities from it. As Bungawala⁹⁸ has stated in his analysis of the Prevent strategy, what the Government considers enhancement and positivity has, in fact, brought the relationship between Muslims and the government to its lowest.

Zaman, in the damning series of Guardian newspaper headlines and articles takes this a stage lower, controversially and perhaps dogmatically stating, 'The rules now appear to be: if you are a Muslim, accept that you are a terror suspect, accept infringement of your liberties, accept being treated differently.'⁹⁹

The entire strategy was recommended for review in 2009 and as such the 2011 revised strategy, which the Home Office¹⁰⁰ state concentrates on addressing all forms of terrorism, not on one community. It clarifies that Prevent work must target terrorism that is the greatest threat to the national security of the United Kingdom. This is a comprehensive and important change in language and methodology and one which rightly has considered that the original strategy has been damaging to Muslim communities. Innes et al, make the comment in the most recent and comprehensive review of the effects of prevent nationally that, 'there is a better understanding of the make-up of communities, and evidence of a better comprehension of where key risks and threats are located.'¹⁰¹ A change in terminology to 'Safeguarding' has allowed for a more intuitive approach which is inclusive and more meaningful in the terms of partner agency working. There is a growing willingness to engage with local police and local authority in the delivery of a strategy that will allow for community resilience and empowerment against extremist groups.

⁹⁸ Bunglawalla, I. ((2009), *op cit*.

⁹⁹ Zaman, A. (2009), *op cit*.

¹⁰⁰ Home Office. *The Prevent Strategy 2011*. [online] Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/prevent/prevent-strategy/> [

Accessed January 2012]. A key change to the 2011 strategy is the realisation that the original strategy had faults and the statements contained within it indicate where those key problem areas have been identified. The home Office state that Prevent will make a clearer distinction between counter-terrorist work and the integration strategy.

¹⁰¹ Innes, M.. et al. (2011), *op cit*. p70.

There are within this chapter many criticisms of prevent from a national perspective. It is possible and necessary within the dissertation, to consider the positive aspects of the strategy. As a direct result of training, funding and policy, Prevent has allowed personal access to and a better understanding of the cultural, political and religious differences within local Muslim communities.

There are changes within the Prevent 2 strategy which recognise the demands of social and political commentators and more importantly the Muslim communities who have criticised the original strategy delivery. Doubts about its purpose have been raised from professional bodies and the Muslim community.

In 2010 the Government stated that Prevent needed to be reviewed and the Guardian Newspaper has long been one of its chief critics, stating it is nothing more than a government agenda allowing for information gathering on Muslim communities hidden behind the spin of community safety and cohesion strategy and policy. Apart from some referral programmes and anecdotal evidence it is difficult to assess what success prevent has had in stopping further radicalisation and possible involvement in what has become termed 'violent jihad'. There is clearly no algorithm for what has not yet happened. There are many Muslim academics that have assisted with the Prevent strategy, but the often heard argument is that these people are not representatives of Muslim society as a whole. But then who is? Local Mosque committees, councillors, Imams all may represent certain groups, but they may also only represent voices at either end of a political spectrum.

As well as critics, 'there are many who see that the strategy aims to build on good work that already existed to make cohesive and strong communities'¹⁰². It was not designed to replace community cohesion, which had been developed diverse and inclusive of all creeds, races and nationalities. It is fair to state that within Bedford and Luton with the constant friction between some Muslim groups and an emerging English Defence League the concentration was certainly within the Muslim community.

¹⁰² Hewitt, S. (2008), *The British war on terror: Terrorism and counter- Terrorism on the home front since 9/11*. London: Continuum Books.

The Prevent strategy does explain that other communities affected by violent extremist groups would also fall under the protection of Prevent. However, the criticality for public protection created considerable activity within Muslim communities with publicised high profile terrorist suspect arrests. The strategy, highlights that partnership-working, will support communities and institutions, to challenge and reject the message of extremism and to support individuals in diverting them away from violent extremism. It is therefore with considerable interest that the arrest of Zahid Iqbal, Mohamed Sharfaraz Ahmed, Umar Arshad and Syed Frahan Hussain for facilitating, planning and encouraging acts of terrorism, and their guilty pleas in March 2013, have not caused more consternation. Whilst appropriate monitoring of community tension, following this event has been conducted, there is no apparent concern. The community represented by a local mosque representative stated that these men do not represent the views of the wider Muslim community and that community cohesion policy was working well in Luton.

This last strand was and still remains the function of ‘Channel’, where anyone who is caught up in the radicalisation process are provided with alternative views and religious teaching which provides them with answers to their questions which are informed and ‘mainstream’.¹⁰³

When a community is divided in fear and subject to damaged race relations, actions by those delivering cohesion strategy and policy will become influenced by other agendas. It is also difficult to separate Muslim communities, community cohesion, community grievances and racial tensions from each other when the only community that seems to be receiving any widespread interests, is a Muslim community linked by associations or media speculation to negative imagery and terrorism.

¹⁰³ ‘Mainstream’ is the terminology that suggests a more generalised view of Islam it neither ultra conservative or liberal. One of the criticisms of Prevent is that it is an imposition of other peoples views about what is acceptable in Islam. Of course the issue there is that Islam is multi-faceted. Ultra conservatism does not mean violent extremism and that is where criticism lies.

There is a large amount of criticism that community cohesion programmes within Muslim communities should not be promulgated through what, is in effect, a counter terrorist narrative.¹⁰⁴ Yet so much of Prevent did exactly that. Prevent funding provided local authorities with an ability to create projects for immediate engagement with Muslim communities, but it was directly associated with Prevent which in turn remained under the control of the Police and regional government.

There was a continual police input with several cohesion officers being engaged and employed through Prevent funding. Engagement with the community occasionally proposed for example methods of reducing Muslim community fears. Police lead initiatives such as “Operation Nicole” and “Archer”, “Victoria” and “Watch Over Me” were delivered locally. These are table-top exercises designed to engage with Muslim communities and ‘encourage two-way debate about counter terrorism operations and to help police and partners understand the impact of these operations on community cohesion in areas.’¹⁰⁵

These are useful exercises in trying to explain police methods and processes, especially around counter terrorism operations and the community impact that such events create. They serve a useful function, but with the exception of “Watch Over Me”¹⁰⁶ they certainly concentrate on a counter terrorism agenda. It appears extremely difficult to separate Prevent from that counter terrorism narrative. In fact, the question has to be asked, ‘why does it need to be separated?’ It is there for a specific purpose and that is to prevent violent extremism – regardless of which community that presents an issue for. That work may give the perception of negative issues existing, but on the positive side the examples cited in national good work also include excellent examples of engagement through the Prevent agenda. Examples include Muslim women groups being formed to advise and support their specific and important role within their communities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Khan, K. (2009), *op cit*.

¹⁰⁵ “Operation Archer” & “Operation Nicole”. Prevent delivery guidance for police and Partners. ACPO: 2009

¹⁰⁶ “Watch Over Me” is a multi media Schools programme designed to protect vulnerable young persons from any form of violent rhetoric. It does not use Prevent issues alone, but concentrates on bullying, homophobia, race relations and crime.

¹⁰⁷ ACPO (2010), National Coordinator Prevent. *op cit*.

There are other examples however of a more positive approach by prevent engagement that moved towards creating safer environments for Muslims. Exercise 'VICTORIA' encourages partnerships to, 'develop a shared understanding of the threat communities' face from all forms of violent extremism.' Engagement within schools to prevent bullying through 'Act Now' and 'Watch Over Me', produced a wealth of material for use in PSHE curriculum that did not just concentrate of radical extremism, but addressed all forms of coercion and bullying.

Cleveland Police ran conferences designed to allow young people to explore politics and religion by examining terrorism and extremism in a safe, controlled and informed environment, where the views of the young people attending were seen to have changed and where they were also shown to have realised that they had empowerment and could affect positively their own communities in a way they had not previously considered.

Both Bedford and Luton have seen considerable advance in the engagement with Muslim women's groups allowing for cultural understanding and much closer engagement with multi-faith groups, Mosque committees and learning and cultural establishments.

4.2 The 2011 Prevent Strategy

Prevent 2 was hailed by the Government as a new crack down on terror, and an 'end to 'passive tolerance' of extremist Islamic organisations who foster hatred for the West and radicalise young Muslims. The Forward to the Prevent White Paper presented to Parliament in 2011 perhaps, as could be expected, begins by outlining the failing of the last government in its delivery.

The old strategy was flawed in that it confused the delivery of Government policy to promote integration with Government policy to prevent terrorism. It failed to confront the extremist ideology at the

heart of the threat we face; and in trying to reach those at the heart of radicalisation, funding sometimes even reached the very extremist organisations that Prevent should have been confronting.’¹⁰⁸

The revised Prevent strategy takes into account the commentary from academics and community members, as well as those responsible for the delivery of the strategy through a variety of programmes and spending streams. The criticism that appears fundamental to their argument for change, is that the last strategy failed to separate the integration policy from the counter terrorism agenda. As stated though, that is a difficult divide to create.

The changes to the new Prevent programme appear to address the grievances outlined by all previous studies and commentary and in particular, the former acceptance of provision of a platform for extremist rhetoric which opposes the United Kingdom ‘values of human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society.’¹⁰⁹ Prime Minister David Cameron made it quite clear in his Munich speech, that The Government would oppose the ideology of extremism and terrorism, refusing to work with organisations that promulgated those ideologies.

The Government also made it quite clear that they maintained a divide between such views and legitimate religious belief. They have also stated that funding would not be provided to any group which failed to accept the United Kingdom’s fundamental policies and values. This is a change that will be acceptable to many outside of the Muslim community and to some within it who see Muslim conservatism as damaging to the Muslim community as a whole.

It is difficult from this study to ascertain what real impact such a hard line approach will have, but the Government cannot be accused of failing to clarify their position. Funding has been drastically reduced in line with many other

¹⁰⁸ May, T. (2011), Home Secretary., Home Office *Prevent Strategy* . ISBN 978 0 10 180922 1, CM,8092, London: HMSO, p.8.

¹⁰⁹ Cameron, D. Prime Minister (2011), *Radicalisation and Islamic Extremism* (5/2/2011) Speech in Munich. Cited in The Staggers, *New Statesman* [online]. Available from: <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>. [Accessed November 2012].

austerity cuts and although Prevent 2 states that it will not support any group that does not agree with its democratic and lawful policies, it maintains full support for a wider community cohesion and the protection of all persons who could be influenced or targeted by extremism whether from religious or political motives.

Community based decisions will always influence communities but should never be allowed to undermine basic tenants of existing legislation. As in many communities covering many religions, local decisions based upon cultural norms are regularly imposed. One of the key findings of the report by Innes et al when establishing localised resolution within Muslim communities was, ‘from a man who was a self-defined moderate Muslim stated that they would look to the family, then the community then the Imam to resolve an extremism problem.’¹¹⁰

There has been criticism that under Prevent 1. Some minority voices within Muslim communities had been allowed too great a voice, demanding changes which were unrepresentative of the Muslim community as a whole. As the Guardian reported, ‘To safeguard our rights there must be one law for all and no religious courts.’¹¹¹

4.3 An Examination of the Local implementation and its impact on Bedfordshire communities

Practitioners in the posts of community engagement officers and local authority Prevent partner agencies have all worked towards the implementation of the strategy across Bedfordshire. They follow national guidance and best practice. There are projects for the delivery of Islamic awareness, community engagement support group and community events. Luton borough council and its partners are acutely aware of the difficulties that the town face. It has had no choice but to stand strong on its policy implementation and an enormous amount of positive

¹¹⁰ Innes, M. *et al.* (2011), *op cit.* p.33.

¹¹¹ Namazie, M.. (2010), What isn't wrong with Sharia law. *The Guardian* 5/7/2010 [Online]. Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2010/jul/05/sharia-law-religious-courts>. [Accessed March 2012].

work carried out by cohesion and Prevent managers in Bedford and Luton along with their partner agency officers and staff, enthusiastically drive the council strategies forward. The council strategic aims are:

To develop a detailed, sophisticated and measured understanding of the local drivers of extremism; to establish a clear position on how extremism is being and should be tackled in Luton and; to identify practical steps and clear delivery mechanisms, which ensure measures are in place to tackle extremism in all its forms. These may include existing interventions such as Prevent, Luton in Harmony.¹¹²

Further to this its objectives are clearly set and state that the Extremism Working Party objectives are, ‘To take the findings of the Luton Commission on Community Cohesionto: consider and commission locally relevant research; take evidence from external extremism’

This is particularly useful as far as this dissertation research is concerned, because it clearly sits within the scope of being able to provide primary empirical research in advance of any future commissioned assessment. It has been stated within the empirical research that the original strategy guidelines although comprehensive, required substantial work to be carried out, in order to identify the needs of the local Muslim community, specifically in relation to the Prevent agenda.

Local authority partners were, “convinced and signed up” to delivering this within the community cohesion agenda. However the suspicion from the Muslim community was such that the Muslim community became, “increasingly difficult to engage with.”¹¹³

There is now a clear statement of purpose which specifically relates to Prevent and more importantly for the community as a whole all matters that are considered extremist and potentially damaging to what a majority view considers to be mainstream attitude and behaviour which takes into account the views and wishes of the majority of members of those communities. ‘Alongside its many

¹¹² Pinnick, S. (2011), *Tackling Extremism*. Working Party Document. Luton: Luton Borough Council.

¹¹³ Response from local Prevent officer

successes, there are areas which still suffer from high levels of multiple deprivations. Factors such as social class, income, ethnic origin and disability create unacceptable inequalities between Lutonians in terms of opportunities and quality of life.’¹¹⁴

As mentioned, Luton is seen as the birth place of the English Defence League and has also documented and published links with Islamist extremists who have perpetrated terror attacks. Media comments in both the Mail and Telegraph have stated that, ‘All roads in terror investigations seem to lead to Luton.’¹¹⁵ Such commentary has created an unsavoury image of a town overtaken with extremism and recent television documentaries (March 2012), may have compounded that view. Recent admissions in Southwark Crown Court (March 1st 2013) - to the extent of terrorism activity by four Luton men will hardly diminish the negative association. But it is the way that the community impact and tensions are assessed and addressed that will make the difference between anxiety or retribution and maintenance of the status quo.

Although ‘Prevent’ has a specific purpose in reducing the risk from extremism, community cohesion policy and strategy also makes a clear purpose in that specific direction, ‘The Government is clear that communities must be at the centre of the response to community conflict, extremism, deprivation and disadvantage.’¹¹⁶ Clearly there are extreme elements within Bedfordshire, but the majority of Muslim men and women seek to live their lives in peaceful harmony.

As two of the originally recognised ‘Pathfinder’¹¹⁷ funded towns in the United Kingdom, Luton and Bedford have been the recipients of ‘Prevent’ engagement from the strategy’s implementation. However, it is not a strategy that is trusted or liked by all who have to work with or face the consequences of it. Bedford has

¹¹⁴ Luton Borough Council. *Luton Community Plan 2002-2010*. Luton: Luton Forum. (2005 Revision).

¹¹⁵ Gardham, D. (2007), *op cit*.

¹¹⁶ Home Office. (2007) *Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*. ISBN: 978-1-84775-014-3.

¹¹⁷ The Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme was launched jointly by the Home Office and the ODPM with funding of about £6m to run between February 2003 and October 2004. 14 pathfinder local authorities are developing best practice which is to be disseminated across all local government..

now lost the Prevent funding where Luton has retained it. However both towns continue to experience situations where the Prevent intervention is important and suitable.

With the establishment of a community working party, which was set up to fill what was perceived to be a gap in the sharing of community issues, a forum exists to openly discuss fears, needs and expectations from the Muslim community members that attend as well as local authority partners. Good dialogue existed before this group was formed, but it now has a more formal platform.

The delivery teams are acutely aware of the sensitivities around Prevent references and have advised, that in general terms, "Prevent" as a term is not used in introduction or conversations with the Muslim community members.

Safeguarding is acceptable and understood and seeks to achieve the same goals of protecting the community's vulnerable members.

CHAPTER 5. QUESTIONNAIRE EVALUATIONS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Methodology

It seems that community members who are already engaged strongly with partners in community cohesion and therefore, Prevent are the ones most likely to respond to the questionnaire. Some members have and some have not. The research for this paper has received responses from over eighty per cent of the Prevent engagement staff. Therefore we may take the comments provided as representative for the purposes of future local developmental work. There was far less response from the Muslim community, which is not a reflection on it, but rather an indication of how difficult it is sometimes to reach. Therefore it must be stated that although there are views expressed from Muslim community members they are not in enough number to be considered quantitative or qualitative, from a research perspective. This section summarises the answers to the questions highlighting the key themes under discussion.

What can be seen from the current Prevent teams is that they are in many cases the same officers and staff who have been involved with community engagement and cohesion programmes and have inherited Prevent work streams. They are clearly the most expert in commenting on the changes Prevent has brought about. Muslim community members who are engaging with Prevent quite rightly hold strong views of the strategy and have a very, ‘in depth’, understanding of its purpose and difficulties. The assessments of the responses from all participants have been recorded here some as quotes and much as summaries. The question sets are included with the explanatory notes and ethical requirement papers in an annexe post. This section summarises the answers to the questions highlighting the key themes under discussion.

Prevent delivery has necessarily relied on establishing what the community looked like and where there are potential threats to it. Whilst allowing for a, ‘targeted and proportionate use of shared resources.’ It has and continues to create a feeling of concentration amongst the Muslim community which continues to the

feeling of being targeted as a “Problem” community – a label that is unwanted for obvious reasons.

Local response to the wording has returned a poor verdict on the closeness of the counter terrorism strategy to the Muslim community. The fact that “violent extremism,” seems so closely associated with Prevent and then by association the Muslim community has effectively labelled the Muslim community with derogative and negative terminology, which has angered the Muslim collective and done little to prevent the Islamophobia seen to be so vehemently expressed within popular British media,

5.2 Not Just a Local Issue

A member of the Muslim community responded that in order to move forward we all needed to, “recognise that the UK’s foreign policy had fuelled violent extremism.” The Government’s words around “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs rang hollow.” This was set against the issues that the foreign policy supported, concerning Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. The world is clearly a smaller space when politics and religion is considered. The impact is felt acutely by members of the Ummah and sometimes these issues are concentrators of anger suspicion and fear. There were several responses that stated that the community did not believe the government. Especially following the apparent cover up of the death of Dr Kelly and the weapons of mass-destruction issues. Local community feeling was that there were agendas behind Prevent that were not properly explained or discussed and therefore trust in Prevent itself was very limited.

Muslim or not, many members of the public are suspicious of the police which is a barrier to effective engagement. This has been reported acutely so amongst first and second generation Muslims. Whether Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Somali, their own life experiences often bring them into negative forms of engagement with the police in their birth countries as well as presently or perhaps when they were growing up.

The perceptions they may have, fuelled by negative media reporting will and has been reported as profoundly influencing their feelings of doubt and mistrust. The police are seen as one collective, rather than individual self-autonomous organisations with local interest. As such reporting on police activity in one area creates a perception on likely local delivery. Unfortunately media reporting rarely relays positive aspects but frequently negative ones.

5.3 Community Cohesion

Prevent engagement officers employed through the local authority have the task of assisting in the delivery of community cohesion through events and work which promote the inter-faith community cohesion agenda. This has been a multi-faith as well as Muslim inclusive agenda, whereas Prevent was and is seen to concentrate on Muslim community issues alone. The wider community cohesion programme is all important and the drive has been to build on previous partnerships and relationships established through that programme as well as encouraging new relationships. Therefore, community cohesion is still considered as the most important aspect in making the Luton and Bedford multi-faith groups come together and work as well as live in more harmony. That is a collective issue for local authority, partner agencies and most importantly the community members.

Several respondents stated, “Defeating terrorism must be seen as a responsibility of all and not blaming one part (Muslim) of the community. Everyone must see the benefits of a cohesive society and buy into that concept.” Some respondents from both delivery and community feel that Prevent has damaged community cohesion. However, there is a strong feeling locally that cohesion has not been damaged by Prevent. The base line work that the local authority and the Muslim community were engaged in prior to prevent has continued successfully.

There appears to have been some confusion around the delivery objectives of Prevent one. Was it ‘wider community cohesion or focused involvement?’ One

of the reported positives is now that a far more structured approach has allowed funding to be focused in the area of personnel, who can focus on delivery of an agreed agenda. This has allowed for better partnership working and an address of the Prevent agenda. Crucial to this is the safeguarding process and Channel Project¹¹⁸ which sits more comfortably with other partner agencies. Channel has been examined as part of an Ofsted inspection in March 2012 and praised as good practice. However, a member of the Muslim community has responded that Prevent 2 is worse than Prevent One, making matters worse and that they felt the Government did not seem to listen or appropriately communicate with groups such as the Muslim Council of Britain. One respondent called Prevent, “a right wing initiative aimed at preventing legitimate dissent.”

They went on to state that, “Prevent ignored the roots of radicalisation, failing to differentiate between violent extremism and alternative “un-British” viewpoint.” “That to hold views and beliefs in Sharia law being superior to democracy and in the Khilafah.’ They also felt that it would further marginalise the Muslim community and will do nothing to prevent violent extremism.

The comment made by this community member that Prevent claims to support, “mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” but then insists on adoption of western liberal values being a contradiction. There was severe criticism of the Government use of organisations such as Quilliam, The Centre for Social Cohesion and other “highly divisive anti-extremist think tanks”. It was felt that these in the main should be ignored as unrepresentative of the Muslim community and yet the ones who had played such an important role in the development of the Prevent programme. Early Prevent criticism was that it was made up of presumptions about what motivated Muslim agenda’s.

Comments from some Muslim community members highlighted that the original strategy relied heavily on certain Muslim academics and scholars who were unrepresentative of the Muslim community as a whole. The antithesis of this is of

¹¹⁸ Channel uses existing collaboration between local authorities, the police, statutory partners (such as the education sector, social services, children’s and youth services and offender management services) and the local community to: identify individuals at risk of being drawn in to violent extremism; assess the nature and extent of that risk; develop the most appropriate support..

course, that with the Muslim Diaspora creating such diverse communities under one religion, unified representation would be an almost impossible outcome. Likewise it was felt that some Muslim groups who condemned Prevent were putting themselves as representative of a wide group of individuals under “umbrella” organisations. In reality it was thought that Prevent actually impacted very few Muslims within the overall community and the only ones who made most vocal representation were the ones already politicised.

Anecdotally, Prevent is not held up by Muslim community members as a praiseworthy concept but it is rather seen as ‘grudgingly accepted as needed.’ There is still an image problem, the original branding and close counter terrorist association continues to create a suspicion. Several respondents commented that, ‘Prevent is only one part of a much larger issue concerning Muslims and other ethnic groups and that is one of world inequality, poverty and alienation amongst some groups/ethnicities in the UK. Cohesion will not come from community engagement alone, but from a narrowing of inequalities.’

5.4 The concept that prevent is a “Spying tool” for the Counter Terrorism Agenda

One theme is that Prevent has been and still remains an area within the CT Strategy and environment and that has caused some issues. Prevent 2 makes a very clear point about it not spying on communities and yet where there is a need to establish vulnerabilities within the communities and produce any form of gap analysis it can easily be interpreted as spying. One respondent highlighted the fact that suspicion around Prevent can be measured in degrees by the person one questions about it. That response is always likely to arise from environmental as well as personal experiences and former interaction between members of the Muslim community and the police.

There has been considerable anecdotal evidence of professional colleagues in probation, education and health who have felt unease about former referral processes. To some of them Prevent 1 seemed to be asking them to spy on behalf

of the police. 'Channel' is well communicated and the Luton model has been set up for a community response via the "community channel panel". This Panel is chaired by the Director of Children services and it is not a police lead process. Whilst there is a strong counter terrorism interest in the Prevent agenda it is felt by members of the Muslim community that the suspicion over motives will always remain. Several engagement officers and staff felt that as long as the counter terrorism agenda held control of the Prevent strategy they would have difficulties in assuaging such fears and their role in creating a strong safe community through a cohesion programme would remain hampered by Prevent.

5.5 Phraseology and Funding Issues Causing Concerns

The wording of the old Prevent strategy has been seen as derogatory and divisive and to a degree patronising. The messages that Prevent delivered initially were confusing. The phraseology and branding statements such as "communities defeat terrorism", which appeared on most of the posters and paperwork have been criticised as creating a problem in Luton. It was felt that the "wider community" was pointing its finger at the Muslim community and saying, "You are the problem," rather than a collective response or solution.

One officer who has become involved with Prevent through the new strategy felt that they were required to work harder to explain the purposes of the whole strategy and regularly felt that they had to remove old perceptions and suspicions before finding a common ground. In essence Prevent 1 had created hurdles and barriers although that officer felt that the whole Prevent strategy from its inception had been positive and had always good intention. Interestingly that officer felt that if mistakes had been made they were mistakes that could and have been worked on. There has been a substantial drive to resolve issues and make Prevent work. Taking note of critics of the Prevent delivery, officers have been able to see where previous mistakes were made. It seems that Prevent 1 was what it was - a quickly implemented strategy, untried and untested in its day, but nevertheless a solution to a critical set of issues that required urgent attention.

In the early stages of Prevent 1, Pathfinder funding was allocated by assessing per capita head of Muslim members within a town or cities overall population. This was seen as arbitrary, with little or no analysis of whether there were any risks present at all in those towns. It has been seen as an affront by the Muslim community that the government bodies involved have said there are lots of Muslims in that town. Therefore they must have the funding because there must be issues within the towns Muslim community. Funding has divided the Muslim community with finances being given to groups which may have opposing views, but the silent majority are not being represented. Funding has allowed a greater voice and engagement.

This has been extremely damaging by labelling whole sections of a community as dangerous or at risk, when in fact it has little or no substance. That legacy remains albeit funding has been reduced considerably overall. Prevent funding has also been criticised as creating an industry. The funding is available, therefore staff and officers need to be employed through the funding and National Indicators have to be met and satisfied to justify the expenditure. The funding for Prevent which developed into funding under Preventing Violent Extremism was seen as even more offensive terminology. This funding which was aimed specifically towards Muslim communities made the assumption that the Muslim community's issues were measured by how much of a problem it is perceived to have and that is reflected in the amount of funding provided. Towns such as Luton were allocated such funds creating resentment from those local communities that were in need of finances to increase their community cohesion, but who were disqualified because they were not Muslim groups. Unfair allocation was one complaint and both Luton and Bedford responders who stated that their funding damaged the cohesion programme that was in place. This is a response that has been echoed in Choudhury and Fenwick's 2011 report.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Choudhury T., Fenwick H. (2011), *The impact of counter-terrorism measures on Muslim Communities*. ECHR report 72. Durham University.[online] Available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-71-80/index.html> [Accessed December 2012]. p.85.

In Luton this funding has been called “Dirty” money because of its Prevent association. It is seen as divisive within as well as without Muslim community groups.

Funding money was vehemently criticised but a small group in Luton called Hizbut Tahreer¹²⁰ who openly said that anyone who accepted funding was aligning themselves with the Home Office and the Police. A comment that should be taken seriously and is a worry was that some felt that the communities saw funding as payment and the ‘quid pro quo’ was information from the Muslim community about the Muslim community. National reporting through newspapers and high profile television documentaries has stained the town with an image of extremism and on-going terrorist associations. Groups such as Hizbut Tahreer and formerly named Muslims Against Crusades may be vociferous in the ideology but they have also been reported as condemning terrorist atrocities.¹²¹ This is hardly a dynamic that creates a feeling that Prevent is not targeting closely on the Muslim communities within its wards. A respondent talking about funding stated that it did cause some division within the Muslim community, but that division already existed.

There is some acceptance of the funding streams which has provided an excellent opportunity for some mosques to employ intellectuals who have been able to provide a more informed and academic viewpoint of Islam leading the youth away from negative but exciting rhetoric. The same respondent did state that to a degree there was an element of hypocrisy involved, where the funding became the central issue and different communities vied for that funding.

Muslim communities report that they still feel they are the subject of Prevent targeting. One officer engaged in the delivery of Prevent felt that the intensive

¹²⁰ Hizb ut-Tahrir says it opposes terrorism and condemned the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks. However, it regards integration as “dangerous,” orders all Muslims to keep apart from non-believers and says that “those [Muslims] who believe in democracy are Kafir”, or apostates. A British would-be suicide bomber, Omar Sharif, was radicalised partly by Hizb activists at his London university.

¹²¹ Gilligan, A. (2010), Hizb ut-Tahrir is not a gateway to terrorism, claims Whitehall report. *The Telegraph*. 25.07 2010. [online] Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/7908262/Hizb-ut-Tahrir-is-not-a-gateway-to-terrorism-claims-Whitehall-report>. [Accessed December 2012].

roll-out in some areas of Prevent had added to this feeling of concentrated targeting.

The other adverse outcome was that there had, 'been a lack of transparency where lines between Prevent and community cohesion have been blurred and that any lack of transparency has had the potential to lead to distrust.' It is felt that Prevent and Safeguarding go hand in hand and transparency is hugely important.

The national and local message cannot be clearer, that Prevent is there to target Al Qaeda and those organisations inspired by its rhetoric. However local feedback in this reporting process is that there is a fear of a growing far right wing movement and growth of Islamophobia across Europe which continues to create fear and unease amongst the Muslim communities. One respondent stated, 'Whilst we may be trying to convey a particular message to counteract extremist rhetoric, we can only do this by understanding the motivations of those who are attracted to such rhetoric - and engagement is key to this.' Luton in particular has seen incredibly strong rhetoric and often violent confrontations between Muslims with hard line views and agendas and those diametrically opposed to those views.

These extremes of the political divide continue to create collateral damage, division and fear amongst the Muslim and non-Muslim communities that inhabit the area in between. Luton saw the birth of the English Defence League as it morphed from The United People of Luton following the backlash of the Anglian Regimental homecoming parade protests in 2009. Although this seems to be fragmenting it is still a force that exists.

Local feedback from Luton residents is that the English Defence League is not just a Luton issue anymore and this is certainly clear from their activities country wide. As such it should be addressed within the overall national strategy. This echoes the findings of Choudhury and Fenwick's 2011 report,¹²² where they state, '.. it should be recognised that the English Defence League (EDL) are, for many Muslims in this research, a visible and real manifestation of violent extremism

¹²² Choudhury. T., Fenwick H. (2011), *op cit*.

and one that many are more likely to encounter than an Al Qaida extremist.’ Lambert and Githens make the statement that terminology has to be guarded. Not only in the general public but within official statements from the Government.¹²³

5.6 The positives around the Prevent strategy moving forward with “Safeguarding.”

Some Prevent engagement officers felt that Prevent has begun to lead to better relationships between the police and Muslim members of the community. Projects that have managed to be self-sustaining such as the women’s Massti, youth sports, singing and Mosque visits in Queens Park. The work of Police Prevent Engagement Officers delivering a wide range of preventative, educational and community engagement work has been stated as being consistent, focussed and lasting.

There is a more pertinent dialogue with mosques, individuals and even members of proscribed organisations. There is what has been termed a “more adult” dialogue which has been seen to improve relationships. Those relationships are developing and there seems to be a common purpose in the safeguarding of the community as a whole and the Muslim members of it. Empowerment for the local community has allowed for a robust rebuttal of extremist viewpoints and where there was once a drive to push such sentiment, the local community collectively have been allowed to state that they are not interested and rejection has been successful.

¹²³ Lambert, R., Githens-Mazer, J. (2011), *The fiery birth of the Prevent counter-terrorism strategy: England's Summer of Discontent, ten years on.* [online] Available from: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/robert-lambert-jonathan-githens-mazer/fiery-birth-of-prevent-counter-terrorism-strategy> [Accessed March 2012].

‘The fiery birth of the Prevent counter-terrorism strategy: England's Summer of Discontent, ten years on. The commentary relates to Michael Gove’s insistence in labelling of Islamic terrorism as being inherently related to ‘Islamism’ indicates the problem in official thinking on these issues. By saying that terrorism is the result of Islamism, he betrays a lazy indifference to the theological, geographic, political and contextual differences that mark a hugely diverse range of groups and movements, from the millenarian to the worldly political, the non-violent to the extremely violent.’

Prevent 2 and especially Safeguarding, is not police specific and this has been seen as a really positive move forward. Through a more positive intercourse, the Muslim community are actively invited to influence the Prevent agenda.

It is for them and from them, not at them. This specific point was felt by a Prevent Engagement Officer as needing much greater media attention. The very fact that this Safeguarding is a partnership between the Prevent delivery teams and the Muslim community has to be emphasised through the media to reach all sections of the community.

The revision of the Prevent strategy has been seen to have addressed the earlier criticisms; it is viewed as a changing strategy which is entirely appropriate with a changing community dynamic.

Prevent sits within the control of the Home Office, which a respondent has stated makes certain aspects of it more deliverable and systematic, whilst at the same time losing some of its flexibility. All of these points highlight the importance of local delivery and understanding Luton and Bedford Prevent delivery has required some change to the strategy in order to ‘accommodate our own specific issues.’

¹²⁴

Addressing such issues with a local perspective has allowed the opportunity for better relationship building between the Muslim community and the Prevent delivery teams. Anecdotally Prevent is not held up by Muslim community members as a praiseworthy concept but it is rather seen as ‘grudgingly accepted as needed.’ That is, in itself, a positive sign or at least a sign of it moving in the right direction.

There is still an image problem. The original branding and close counter terrorism association continues to create a suspicion. Several respondents commented that, ‘Prevent is only one part of a much larger issue concerning Muslims and other ethnic groups and that is one of world inequality, poverty and

¹²⁴ Local respondent.

alienation amongst some groups/ethnicities in the UK. Cohesion will not come from community engagement alone, but from a narrowing of inequalities.’ Community cohesion sets out to reduce those inequalities and is still seen as more important than Prevent alone.

Prevent engagement has begun to lead to better relationships between the police and Muslim members of the community. One member of staff stated that they were consulted during the Prevent review and that a “lessons learned” approach was adopted, allowing for a clarity of purpose, which has been seen to work well. There is now a more pertinent dialogue with mosques, individuals and even members of proscribed organisations. The relationships are developing and there seems to be a common purpose in the safeguarding of the community as a whole and the Muslim members of it. Through a more positive intercourse, the Muslim community are actively invited to influence the Prevent agenda

One respondent stated, ‘Whilst we may be trying to convey a particular message to counteract extremist rhetoric, we can only do this by understanding the motivations of those who are attracted to such rhetoric - and engagement is key to this.’¹²⁵

Luton in particular has seen incredibly strong rhetoric and often violent confrontations between Muslims with hard line views and agendas and those diametrically opposed to those views on the far right. These extremes of the political divide continue to create collateral damage, division and fear amongst the communities - Muslim and non-Muslim that inhabit the area in between. Luton saw the birth of the English Defence League as it morphed from The United People of Luton following the backlash of the Anglian Regimental homecoming parade protests in 2009. Local feedback from Luton residents is that the EDL is not just a Luton issue anymore and this is certainly clear from their activities country wide.

¹²⁵ Local Respondent

As such it should be addressed within the overall national strategy. Channel has been broadened to include individuals from Far Right Wing groups and has been highlighted as an area which could be developed to cater for other areas where required.

This certainly echoes the findings of Choudhury and Fenwick's 2011 report, where they state, '... it should be recognised that the English Defence League (EDL) are, for many Muslims in this research, a visible and real manifestation of violent extremism and one that many are more likely to encounter than an Al Qaeda extremist.'

National reporting through newspapers and high profile television documentaries has stained Luton with an image of extremism and on-going terrorist associations. This compounds the feelings in the Muslim community of being under a spotlight for entirely the wrong reasons and is in fact being targeted by the Prevent strategy because of its reputation. One officer engaged in the delivery of Prevent felt that the intensive roll out in some areas of Prevent had added to this feeling of concentrated targeting. An officer reported that it was not just the Muslim community that felt they were subject to targeting by Prevent, but that it was seen as exactly that by other members of the wider community as well.

Prevent was seen as a Muslim thing because Muslims were portrayed as the source of the problem by the media. However a comment received, which is worth exploring further is that, 'the Muslim community know and accept that Prevent concentrates on extremism. This was not seen as a negative aspect as local Muslim communities openly disregarded much of the extremist and certainly the violent rhetoric anyway.'

The fact that little early guidance left the Prevent agenda delivery with the police allowed some forums to state that it was "anti-Muslim" and that the police and Government were victimising the Muslim community." This went mostly unchallenged as the counter terrorism community rarely, if ever opened their doors to media approach. The other adverse outcome was that there had, 'been a lack of transparency where lines between Prevent and community cohesion have

been blurred and that any lack of transparency has had the potential to lead to distrust.’ It is felt that Prevent and safeguarding go hand in hand and transparency is hugely important. The national and local message cannot be clearer however, and that it is that Prevent is there to target Al Qaeda and those organisations inspired by its rhetoric.

However, local feedback in this reporting process is that there is a fear of a growing far right wing movement and growth of Islamophobia across Europe which continues to create fear and unease amongst the Muslim communities. This has been reported as being specifically prevalent within higher education where Muslim students are, ‘being looked at in a negative way.’ The Universities also felt were being asked to report and inform on non-violent extremists who would alienate Muslims as it targets Muslims for holding alternative views.

The revision of the Prevent strategy has been seen by some Prevent deliverers to have addressed the earlier criticisms. It is viewed as a changing strategy which is entirely appropriate with a changing community dynamic. Prevent sits within the control of the Home Office, which a respondent has stated makes certain aspects of it more deliverable and systematic whilst at the same time losing some of its flexibility. All of these points highlight the importance of local delivery. Understanding Luton and Bedford Prevent delivery has required some change to the strategy in order to ‘accommodate our own specific issues.’ Addressing such issues with a local perspective has allowed the opportunity for better relationship building between the Muslim community and the Prevent delivery teams.

It is felt that Prevent delivery has positively evolved from early suspicions and talk of a spying programme to a point where now, because of the considerable work to build relationships, members of the Muslim community have, ‘an improved understanding of the prevent objective and their role within it.’ Safeguarding is seen to highlight the role of Prevent being there to protect and support individuals who are or seen to be vulnerable to violent rhetoric and ideology. There clearly remains a need to identify who those individuals are and in order to provide the appropriate protection a strong partnership approach has to be implied.

One respondent stated that after several years of national and then local Government control of the strategy, with a drive from the CT side of the police and criticism from the media communities now need a period of time where they can consolidate. They need to be given time to assess how their communities have developed and continue to change against social, political and economic difficulties without too much control from Government bodies and authorities.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Muslim communities remain vulnerable to radical extremist ideologues. Individuals or groups associating themselves with Al Qaeda inspired rhetoric use Islam to justify their actions against what they portray as a non-Muslim enemy, where a Christian/Jewish hegemony must be mistrusted and challenged. This vulnerability though is one that affects non-Muslim communities as well. Other threats to our society make us vulnerable to individuals who are on the far-right extreme. Where the first Prevent strategy appears to have been Muslim centric, Prevent 2 encompasses that wider issue. It is therefore more balanced and appropriate to the cohesion of all community groups.

There are many reports of extremist within the Muslim community who although known and of concern to the community are not brought to the attention of then authorities. But other community groups have an equal duty. Consideration needs to be given as to whether non-Muslim communities are networked well enough to be able to identify such men and women, whose views are just as damaging to community cohesion and on the extreme right-wing criminal violent activity. Muslim communities are very strong, in that they have tight community networks and affiliations and are often far more capable at dealing with community issues without the interference of local authority than non-Muslim communities. They may through fear and a lack of trust in the authorities, be less willing to report issues amongst their own. Clearly the ongoing interaction and open debate that exists must be at the forefront of all efforts to secure safety. Prevent 1 started the process by creating wider arenas for such debate, but failed in achieving its place as a policy perceived as a benefit across many Muslims. The Muslim community has to look at itself and join together to become resilient. It should be driving change and improvement.

The Luton four, reported on this month, has been an investigation that covers some years. There was little in the way of community tension being reported back around such revelations. The four men were known for the extremist views

but as reported not given up to the authorities by their community.¹²⁶ It is perhaps the case that at one time this news would have caused certain far right-wing activity and additional consternation amongst the local Muslim community. It is also the case that perhaps the interaction between the authorities and the local community has allowed for a good communication exchange and a natural reduction of such tensions. The Bedfordshire Muslim community at one point seemed constantly embattled through internal and external pressures, right and left wing dialogue and extremism in its most significant and perhaps ideologically violent form. It appears to be less so at present.

We can see that the Muslim community across the United Kingdom faces some challenges, where that community is so networked and feels the impact of national and international events; it is for other communities to empathise with the fears and concerns of their neighbours. Muslim communities, placing greater emphasis on religion and family hierarchical needs, amidst a wider secular society, have also to understand the impact that Islam may have on those who do not understand it or who see it as the media often portray.

It is not surprising that within modernity it is difficult for many people to understand and accept how religion can have such an impact on living and psyche. Islam for Muslim communities does exactly that. Where religion and culture can be so critical to the development of young minds it seems absolutely fundamental to ensure that the teachings given are correct and suitable for the development of a community that can thrive amidst western modernity. There is a space for orthodoxy and an appreciation of religious dogma and Islamic Jurisprudence, but it has to be understood by those wishing to practice such systems, that no community can stand alone. Therefore, there must be some formal exchange of ideas and values which meet within the 'mainstream'. The majority of communities whether Muslim or not, have other matters that impact on their daily lives. Social and economic factors are generally at the forefront of all minds with politics and religion less so. If cohesion is about equal values and opportunities across an entire community then there is enormous scope for both it and Prevent

¹²⁶ Whitehead, T. (2013), *op cit.*

to operate together. They both have a specific purpose and equal merit. Community cohesion needs to be all encompassing. It needs to be fully inclusive of all groups irrespective of race, religion or identity. The legacy of a concentration on the rights of a few who have the loudest voice is one of a risen right-wing profile, which has added to the breakdown in community cohesion related issues.

Amidst austerity measures, the funding allocated to Prevent from central and local Government has been dramatically reduced. But that funding was vital at the outset of Prevent to establish suitable networks and platforms for Muslim communities to be heard and engaged with. It has raised valuable questions about understanding Islamic culture and provided a vehicle on which Muslims and non-Muslims have been able to seek a common ground on which to build a caring and considerate community. Those communities are stronger, better linked to local authorities and have an ability to rebut any challenges to a peaceful way of life. Prevent can be seen to have created an almost industrial like machine with millions of pounds being made available for specific activity. Funding will always cause disquiet. Those who receive and those who do not are unlikely to have a meeting of minds because of the perceived unfairness. The divides and pressures created by that funding should ebb away with time. One respondent for this study has questioned the fact that when funding is available, there seems to be a drive to direct change and when there is no funding the community are left alone to deal with the issue on their own. Such spending required its own levels of maintenance and performance indicators. Local authorities were asked to bid for funding against Prevent activity and the complaint has been that the activity may not have been required in the first place – but the money had to be spent!

Although suspicion remains with the etymology, Prevent remains a brand – perhaps a toxic one, but it is unlikely to be changed. However what we have seen is that locally it is not a term that is now widely used. Officers do not introduce themselves as Prevent officers but rather officers and staff who work to safeguard the vulnerable in the community. Ongoing engagement between local authority partners and all sections of the Bedford and Luton communities is allowing for

appropriate dialogue. Where fears and concerns over the Muslims Against Crusades made, they are heard and the authorities can act appropriately.

Prevent appears to have reached a plateau. It is under constant review and should be regularly assessed against the needs and expectations of the Muslim community as well as the wider community as it seeks to challenge all forms of extremism. However, although this paper tries to provide a balanced argument for the strategy, it is clear from local research, that many Muslims and non-Muslims who have knowledge of Prevent remain highly critical of its standing as an intervention tool for the Muslim community of this country.

The early interventions and lack of clarity expressed in local responses matches almost exactly those of the national findings from Innes et al, where they state that, ‘..in the early years Prevent policing lacked definition, method and clarity of purpose. Although many acknowledged that the situation has improved, Prevent policing still has to confront its legacy problems.’¹²⁷

Certainly the criticisms far outweigh the positive aspects. It does not seem locally though to have affected cohesion to an extent where it is obviously damaging. Luton and Bedford have extremely strong cohesion partnerships and have been developing these for many years. In the face of widespread infamous association Luton, in particular has maintained a status quo of on-going engagement and management of community tension. This, in the face of groups such as Muslims Against Crusades and the English Defence League, seems an extraordinary achievement. Prevent effects some – not all. It is not a panacea for all community issues, but should be seen as one tool in a tool box. It has been given such a high profile though that it seems to be primary. What is clear in Luton and Bedford, is that whilst Prevent has annoyed and continues to cause some concerns for some Muslims, it is unimportant for the majority of Muslims. This also reflects the national findings given to us in the British Crime Survey, ‘... supports the contention that Prevent policing does not appear to be a trigger for widespread alienation and disenchantment....Of course, this does not mean that there are not

¹²⁷ Innes, M. (2011), *et al.* p.90.

individuals and groups who are more negatively disposed, only that we should not assume that such views are widely prevalent.’¹²⁸

The national policies for Prevent and community cohesion may demand similar outcomes within the United Kingdom. However, as already stated, not all Muslim communities are the same and they certainly do not face the same pressures. Media scrutiny, political activism and highly politicised individuals remain pre-disposed to negatively affect community relations. It will have to remain the responsibility of those communities to reject or accept such voices.

Specifically to the Muslim communities of Luton and Bedford, there is a strong foundation with full support for the community, which will allow for strong rejection and reduction in vulnerability. Both towns have Muslim communities that have been stigmatised by events locally and nationally and they will have to move on from those events. Prevent will remain part of the local authority strategy and remains a strong focus for the police, but it has matured and changed according to the needs of the local community. As one respondent from the Muslim community put it, ‘We need to address such issues and Prevent is the chosen tool to do this, it seems a necessary evil.’

In reflecting the methodology for this research it has been difficult to reach many of the Muslim community members. Consider the statement (Counter terrorism Officer, researching Prevent would like you to complete a Questionnaire). That possibly translates to (Intelligence officer, hated strategy, seeks information). It is hardly enticing even with the assurances of the ethical statements agreed by The University of Wales. This was expected, but there would have been no other appropriate way to reach out for answers to the subject matter without remaining open and honest. There is no regret in taking this stance even though it quite possibly reduced the opportunity for more Muslim community members to have been spoken to. Further local research would perhaps be better placed, coming from a Muslim community member. It is going to be important that the changes to Prevent through the 2011 Strategy are examined in the future to establish if there have been successes and more acceptance.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p.72.

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Appendices List

Appendix 1.

In support of CHAPTER 2. Methodology

- 1.1 Polite Request for Assistance: Masters Degree in Islamic Studies
 - 1.1.1 Consent Form for Questionnaire Research Participation in Compliance with Ethics Requirements of the University of Wales.
- 1.2 Prevent Officers / Staff Questionnaire
- 1.3 Muslim community member's questionnaire

Appendix 2.

Demographic Data for Luton and Bedford.

- 2.1 Demographic Explanation
- 2.2 Luton Demographic Data
- 2.3 Bedford Demographic Data

Appendix 1.1

Sir / Madam

Polite Request for Assistance: Masters Degree in Islamic Studies

I am writing to request your assistance in relation to my studies. I am reading for an MA at the University of Wales, Department of Theology and Islamic Studies. My dissertation examines if the Prevent strategy has impacted on the Muslim Communities of Bedford and Luton. I understand that some Muslim communities across the country have criticised the Strategy, whilst some have said that it does empower local communities to stand up against the more radical Islamist groups that may want to impose their own views on the rest of the Community.

I have been studying Islam for three years, looking at culture, politics, religion and law. I would welcome your expertise with my degree in this complex subject. In addition to studying, I currently work full time as a Police Officer working across the Counter Terrorism Units of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies providing protective security advice. Prior to this my role was to help develop the Prevent strategy in Hertfordshire.

In addition to seeking expertise from individuals within the local Muslim Community, I will also be seeking the views of local police officers and other staff who have been engaged with the Prevent programme (Insp. Alex House and his Team) and as such have produced questionnaires to collate information. In order to comply with the ethical rules set by the University, results of my findings have to be publishable, non-inflammatory and non-personal. In addition, I am not permitted to release the names of individuals who have provided me with their opinions, however if there is a specific point you are keen to raise and request to be identified, I would be happy to consider a way forward.

Attached is an ethics statement outlining the academic rationale behind the study and research aims. The statement also outlines the importance of anonymity for anyone taking part and explains the process.

My findings will be open to read at the University, and I intend these to be useful on a local level in relation to how the Prevent Strategy is delivered or altered in the future. As such your views are of the utmost importance.

Ultimately I am seeking an honest appraisal of the status quo along with recommendations from the people with the appropriate knowledge, and hope that you will be able to assist. I would also be grateful for any introductions that you feel may be appropriate in this piece of work.

Yours respectfully,

Martyn Ouston BSc.(Hons.).

Appendix 1.2

Consent Form for Questionnaire Research Participation in Compliance with Ethics Requirements of the University of Wales.

Dissertation Title:

‘Has the Government Prevent Strategy been implemented effectively for the Muslim communities in Bedfordshire? Do members of that community and practitioners view it as a positive or negative contribution to community cohesion, engagement and protection from vulnerability to radical extremism?’

Author: Martyn Ouston. Hertfordshire Constabulary
Student MA Islamic Studies. School of Theology and Islamic Studies, Trinity St. David’s, University of Wales.

Academic Rationale:

There appear to be clear arguments for and against Prevent, the government strategy to support the Muslim community in tackling violent extremism. It is a strategy that has fallen to local authority partners to deliver. However it has previously been predominantly seen as a police-led agenda. District and borough councils, the police and criminal justice, education and the health service are all participating in varying degrees against varying degrees of scepticism and mistrust from the community that the strategy seeks to support.

National analysis has developed some useful commentary considering the strategy's effectiveness, but locally, empirical research remains limited. An understanding of Muslim views from a local context, is absolutely fundamental in establishing effectiveness of policy; feelings of alienation, or acceptance of Prevent. Once documented, these views can provide some checks and measures. They may direct all parties in a more positive and productive dialogue, to increase community resilience and cohesion. It is hoped that this paper may be used as a reference document for all engaged in community cohesion and Prevent and as a platform whereby local Muslim views can be used to redirect local policy where necessary.

The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to examine the Prevent strategy and establish what community cohesion policies existed in Luton and Bedford for their Muslim communities and what if any impact Prevent has had on them. This will be done by providing empirical evidence in support of either side of those arguments.

Ethical Statement and Considerations

The University of Wales is specific in its ethical requirements for this type of research and the below explains the ethical considerations necessary to satisfy those requirements. The overall intention is to move forward effectively in developing a community that is cohesive, inclusive and safe and this research is hoped to be a positive part of that process.

If suspicion towards the strategy already exists, then it is accepted by the author that suspicion will also exist around the questionnaires that accompany and are necessary to the local research. The author is a police officer engaged within the counter terrorist sphere and with a specific responsibility for providing protective security advice. Prior to this he was involved in the delivery of the Prevent strategy in Hertfordshire and has a good working knowledge of its positive and negative points. Although this research will positively feed into any change programme, it is neither funded by nor sponsored through either Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire police and remains independent academic study.

In order to get to this stage of the research a considerable level of consultation has taken with the Prevent lead for Bedfordshire Police, Prevent engagement officers and those engaged with community cohesion. What is missing is that empirical local research from Muslim community members, who have to be seen as the experts in how any policy or strategy has affected their personal or community lives.

It is absolutely critical to the success of this research that participants feel that they can provide honest feedback without feeling that they are going to become part of some intelligence database. The author hereby provides an absolute assurance that will not occur.

Importantly all answers provided to the questionnaires will remain anonymous, be kept secure as paper only copies. No documents will be scanned or placed onto electronic databases and the papers will be sealed and locked. They will be destroyed after one year.

This ethics form has a space which if the participant so wishes he/she can place their name and sign. If they choose not to, then a simple 'refused' will suffice to indicate that the participant has read the form and understands the rationale, ethics and proposed outcomes. Conversely, if the participant, wishes to speak further with the author that would be actively encouraged. Either way the participants cannot be named or identified in any way within the research and the author will be responsible for ensuring the security of the forms. It is important academically that the author can satisfy himself that the responses are genuine; therefore the questionnaire and the ethics form have a specific number assigned to them, so that the author can reconcile one against the other.

It is for the responders to decide if they are happy for the forms to be sent back together directly to the author, or as separate documents. The forms may be handed in the addressed envelope (sealed) to any police station. The author and the participant will remain sole custodians of the information provided. The results of the questionnaires will be summarised and a percentage will be assigned to questionnaire responses and the results will appear as, *'Three per cent of the responders felt that.....'* etc.

There is no conflict of interest between the policing role of the author / researcher and the research and outcomes of this study. The questions are specific to what impact Prevent has had locally. The researcher does not want any information recorded that would place any individual or group into an area where the responses may be construed as intelligence.

If participants feel that they have matters that they wish to report to the police then they should do so through established channels such as Crime Stoppers, or speak to their local officers or community support staff. Clearly if someone states on questionnaire knowledge of a criminal act or intent then the author is duty bound to investigate the matter and that would jeopardise this research.

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish if the results from some of the national studies find comparison in Bedfordshire. It is expected that there may be criticism of Prevent, but that has been accepted in full by the government review process. No person can be deemed as suspicious just because they do not agree with how the strategy has been delivered or have an opinion about whether it has damaged cohesion or enhanced it.

The aims of this research are:

- To explain the importance of community cohesion and to establish by local research what cohesion strategies have already existed for communities across Bedfordshire specifically in Luton and Bedford; and to explain their importance for all communities especially the Muslim community which has a much higher than national average demographic.
- To explain the purpose of the government Prevent Strategy; which has had clear implications for the Muslim communities within the United Kingdom.
- To evaluate current or recent academic resources which have analysed the Prevent strategy in light of considerable criticism from within and without the Muslim community.

- Through empirical research, produce anonymous secure and honest feedback and commentary from the Bedford and Luton Muslim community members and those who have been engaged in the Prevent strategy delivery.
- To show whether the Prevent strategy has damaged community cohesion in Luton and Bedford amongst the Muslim community and compare this to other national studies
- To present key findings from the anonymous feedback to the local authority and Prevent partners to enhance the Bedfordshire Muslim community consultation process.

If you are willing to participate with this survey please could you read and endorse the below statements. If you prefer to remain anonymous then clearly your name and signature do not need to be included.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand this information and that on the introductory letter relating to this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

I agree to take part in the study

Name of Participant (if you wish to enter it) ----- Date-----

Signature:

Researcher / Author Martyn Ouston

You may decline to participate in this study. You may end your participation in this study at any time. If you decide to remain anonymous, maintaining your anonymity is a priority and every practical solution will be taken to disguise your identity. If you prefer anonymity, there will not be any identifying information on this or any interview. There are no audio interviews as part of this study. All materials generated from this or any interview will remain confidential.

When completed please return to the author- Martyn Ouston at Bedfordshire Police PO Box 4454, Dunstable LU6 9JH.

Appendix 1.3

Prevent Officers / Staff Questionnaire

PREVENT Questionnaire Martyn Ouston MA Islamic Studies proposed
Dissertation Title:

‘Has the Government Prevent Strategy been implemented effectively for the Muslim communities in Bedfordshire? Do members of that community and practitioners view it as a positive or negative contribution to community cohesion, engagement and protection from vulnerability to radical extremism?’

Hello

I spoke with some of you last year and this is a more formalised part. Could you consider the below questions and if you have time can I interview you please? There is a letter attached and the questionnaire that I would like to be handed to those people in the Muslim community that you feel may be willing to help me out. Inspector Alex has been asked to QA this, but any problems please don't hesitate to ring me. The results of this questionnaire have to remain anonymous and you will not be identified as a requirement of the ethics of the University.
Thanks

Martyn Ouston

Dc Martyn Ouston martyn.ouston@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk 07506745108

1. When did you first become engaged with PREVENT and what have been your responsibilities?
2. What is your current role and could you please summarise how you are involved with PREVENT?
3. What parts of the original Strategy caused you difficulties in engagement?
4. Was the wording of the strategy difficult to translate into community cohesion if so why?
5. What has been the best part of the strategy as far as enabling your work to continue?
6. What has been the worst part of the strategy as far as creating obstacles or difficulties for you?
7. What has been the most productive aspect of the Prevent strategy?
8. What do you see as the best way forward in community engagement and cohesion for the Muslim communities that you work with?

Any other comments

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The results will remain anonymous, but the general resulting themes will be made available within the dissertation and available as a non-restricted document.

Appendix 1.4

Community members' questionnaire

PREVENT Questionnaire for Martyn Ouston MA Islamic Studies proposed
Dissertation Title:

'Has the Government Prevent Strategy been implemented effectively for the Muslim communities in Bedfordshire? Do members of that community and practitioners view it as a positive or negative contribution to community cohesion, engagement and protection from vulnerability to radical extremism?'

'Prevent' has affected Muslim communities far more than any one other section of society. Your knowledge and understanding of it is therefore paramount. I would be most grateful if you could spare some time in answering the below questions. My address is printed in the introductory letter, but if you prefer to remain anonymous then please complete and return to your local police station for my attention.

If you would like to speak with me one to one then I would welcome the opportunity, but for the purposes of the research you have to remain anonymous. The results of this questionnaire will remain anonymous. It will be categorised by a number which only I will know who it relates to. If you are willing to answer the question but do not want to be identified I will understand and respect your desire for confidentiality.

1. Which town do you reside in?
2. How long have you lived there for?
1-5 yrs 6-10 11+
3. In your mind what do you think is the most appropriate platform where you can express your opinion, views and concerns within the local community?
4. Do you feel that your voice is heard within your community?
5. Do you play an active part in your community?
6. Were you born in the United Kingdom or another country, if so where?
7. Where did you grow up?
8. It would be helpful to me to understand what it was like for you growing up as a young Muslim in that town. Did you feel part of the community?
9. Have you experienced any difficulties because of the way that the media has reported on Islam and Muslims?
10. Did the events of 9/11 or 7/7 affect the way you were treated or any of your family? If so how?
11. If you have heard of the government Prevent strategy, what does 'Prevent' mean to you?

12. Which aspects of Prevent are most problematic and has it brought about negative attitudes?
13. Community cohesion is concerned with including all sections of the community across many areas including health, social services, education, leisure etc., whereby all communities feel integrated and part of a wider society. Do you feel that the Prevent strategy has added to community cohesion or taken away from it? If you can, please provide an example in favour and against.
14. Have you any other views on the way in which the PREVENT strategy should be improved if so how?

Appendix 2. Demographic Data for Luton and Bedford.

Demographic Explanation

This section provides a demographic picture of both towns; it recognises that there is a considerably higher Muslim population than in other towns across the south-east in regard to demographics. Because of factors such as social deprivation, unemployment and lower education standards including language barriers; the Muslim community have seen themselves subject of funding. Pathfinder and also activity through the Prevent strategy with regard to preventing violent radicalisation has meant that unlike other areas there has been concentrated efforts in providing support to what is considered a vulnerable community.

A 2011 study by Mayhew and Waples of demographic change in Luton provides the most recent structural analysis and decomposition of the demography.¹²⁹ It provides us, with updated statistics in advance of the 2011 census. The figures have shown a dramatic increase in the Asian population, which far exceeds the expectations of earlier analysis, based on 2001 figures and is explored in more detail in chapter two. Unfortunately this data does not provide analysis of faith orientation. However if we take census data from 2001 Community members from Pakistan is 98 % of Muslims and those from Bangladesh approximately 92%.¹³⁰ National statistics show that the United Kingdom Muslim population has grown from approximately 20,000 in 1950 to around 2 million today.

¹²⁹ Mayhew L. & Waples S. *The growth and Changing Complexion of Luton's Population*. Luton: (2011). Commissioned Report for Luton council by Migration Impact Fund

¹³⁰ *The Bangladeshi Muslim Community in England Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities.. The Pakistani Muslim Community in England. Understanding Muslim ethnic Communities.* London: Change Institute. (2009) p.7. [online] Available from: www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf. [accessed December 2011]

Luton Demographic Data

Luton is a large town situated approximately twenty miles north of London on the M1. It is one of the largest towns in the south-east of England and is also one of the most densely populated areas outside of London. Many residents have strong network links to other Muslim communities in London, Peterborough Birmingham and Leeds.

Although the population was seen in the 2001 census as being 184,000, that was expected to have risen to 186,500 by 2011, the recent Audit Commission report estimates a population of 186,200 living in 71,000 households. The Black and Asian population shown in 2001 at 28% far exceeds the national average and that has been amended recently to show approximately 38% compared with an average of 15 % across England. Within this ethnic grouping, Pakistani and Kashmiri residents are estimated at 10%, African Caribbean residents (7%) Indian (4%) and Bangladeshi (4%). These numbers have been bolstered with a significant eastern European and West African population... many of these are Muslim and the Town has a significant number of Mosques.¹³¹

Data showing the numbers of Muslims per capita head for Luton based on 2001 census data placed Luton as the sixth highest concentration of Muslim in the United Kingdom with 27,000 Muslims representing (15% of population.) The highest figure was Tower Hamlets - 71,000 (36% of population).¹³²

The most contemporary data collated by Mayhew and Waples,¹³³ show that Luton's total population is 202,748 (January 2011). There has been an increase in the diversity amongst the population and a growth in the Asian population from 33,600 to 50,200. The 2011 data shows that thin the Asian sub-groups, Pakistanis are the largest group with nearly 25,000 members.

¹³¹ Audit Commission (2004). *The Journey to race equality*. HMSO: ISBN:186240 477 1 GXB3160. London: HMSO The Journey to race equality Audit Commission.

¹³² Greene, R. *et al* (2011) *op cit*.

¹³³ Mayhew L.& Waples S., *op. cit*.

This is closely followed by the Bangladeshi community with over 13,000 members. Indian and other sub-continent categories make up the remainder, which are still more sizeable than many other non-Asian groups. There has also been a very high 'turnover'; in that population with an estimated 50% - 75% having not lived or been born in Luton at the time of the 2001 census.

That is in itself a critical factor when considering the impact community engagement policy has on the community. Members of the Muslim community who were considered for engagement or cohesion programmes from 2001 to 2005 clearly now cannot be considered as representative of the Muslim community as a whole. Ergo continuing and evolving engagement is going to be necessary to ensure that engagement and cohesion reaches the greatest numbers of community members.

Bedford Demographic Data

Bedford Borough has an ethnically diverse population. In 2001, 19.2% of the population was from minority ethnic groups (BME), compared to 13% nationally, and as with Luton, there has been an increase since 2001 due to significant international immigration. The BME population is largely concentrated in the urban area of Bedford and Kempston with particularly large BME communities in Queens Park (57.8% in 2001) and Cauldwell (43.6%) wards.¹³⁴ In 2001 there were seen to be up to 100 different ethnic groups living within its council boundary.

The Asian community in Bedford using 2001 data shows Asian or Asian British - Indian 6,335 which is 4.3% of the population compared to England 2.1%. Asian or Asian British - Pakistani 2,350 which is 1.6% compared to 1.4% as an average for England. Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi 2,023 1.4% 0.6% England¹³⁵

In relation to terms of inequality, Bedford falls in to line with national statistics in that the last thirty years study has shown three groups below retirement age

¹³⁴ Bedford Borough Council statistical data October 2011

¹³⁵ Bedford Borough Council statistical data October 2011

which' stand out as facing particularly large and persistent employment disadvantages or penalties. These are disabled people, mothers and Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. All three of these groups are significantly more likely to be out of work regardless of their qualifications or where they live.¹³⁶ It is estimated that there are currently around 4,780 adults with a learning disability in Central Bedfordshire. This is expected to increase to 6,050 by 2030, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in homes that fall below the Decent Homes Standard than white households.'¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Evidence Base for the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2031* cited statistics from Cabinet Office, Fairness and Freedom: the final report of the Equalities Review, (2007)

¹³⁷ Audit Commission (2004). *The Journey to race equality*. HMSO: ISBN:186240 477 1 GXB3160. London: HMSO The Journey to race equality Audit Commission (2004)

Appendix 3 The CONTEST Strategy

The Government's counter-terrorism strategy was launched in April 2003 and has recently been updated to reflect the changing terrorist threat and incorporate new Government policies on counter-terrorism.

The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

The scope of the revised CONTEST strategy has been broadened to cover all forms of terrorism. Therefore certainly for Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire as collaborated Police Services, CONTEST also incorporates Domestic Extremism and Irish Related terrorism within the strategy.

The strategic goal of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

The strategy continues to be organised around four work streams, each comprising a number of key objectives:

Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks

Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism

Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack

Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

For the updated CONTEST strategy please see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/counter-terrorism-strategy//>

End.