

Pendle Muslim Youth Consultation;

How Have the London Bombings of 7th July 2005 and their aftermath affected the Muslim Community?

24th September 2005

A Report By

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On behalf of the Steering Committee

In Remembrance

This event is one consequence of the London bombings of 7th July 2005. The organisers of the consultation express their deep sorrow for the victims and their families. It is our collective hope that we will be able to work together against terrorism.

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Pendle Muslim Youth Consultation: A Report

1.1. Overview

The London bombings of the 7th July 2005 have raised serious issues for the Muslim community and wider society. One of the areas requiring attention is the way in which Muslim youth are engaged in and with society. This is a report on a consultation that took place on the 24th September 2005 in Pendle in which more than thirty-nine young Muslims were invited to share their concerns around various issues with public officials and community representatives. The findings are presented in the summary of the discussion and the report ends with the key recommendation that a Muslim youth forum be inaugurated which could help continue the process of engagement between Muslim youth and wider society.

1.2. Background

The London bombings of the 7th of July represent one of the biggest challenges to face the nascent British Muslim community. The relation between the British Muslim community and the wider society had been much discussed especially since the summer of 2001 in which several Northern towns experienced widespread disturbances. Several reports were commissioned¹ and the issue of community cohesion as a problem was highlighted as an outcome. The continuing ‘war on terror’ with its amalgam of pre-emptive attacks against nation-states and acts of terrorism had been enacted on foreign soils; but the bombings in July brought the war on terror to British soil, in fact, to the heart of London. In doing so, it also raised the issue of community cohesion and the question has been raised: to what extent did a suggested lack of integration contribute to the bombings? Thus, two important areas of policy, the war on terror and the community cohesion debate, became conjoined.

The effects of the bombings on the Muslim community remain a prime concern. The Muslim community fares poorly against indicators of employment and educational achievement², especially across the North. There is a feeling of alienation and isolation, a question to be asked is: how have the bombings and their aftermath (such as media coverage and political response) affected the Muslim community³? It is to answer this question with reference to the situation in Pendle that the ‘Muslim Youth Consultation’ event was organised.

The British government has initiated a series of consultations in which Ministers were sent to various cities with large Muslim populations (such as Birmingham, Manchester, London, Oldham and Bradford) to consult on how best to respond to the threat of terrorism after the bombings. A series of task force groups were also set up covering a wide variety of issues affecting the community from the role of mosques to the position of women. This event was

¹ Several reports were published in response to the disturbances of 2001. These include the Cantle report, the Ritchie report, the Clarke report and the Denham report.

² For example, see ‘Muslims in the UK: Policies for engaged citizens’ published by the Open Society Institute, 2005; or ‘Ethnic minorities in Britain: Diversity and disadvantage’ published by the Policy Studies Institute, 1998.

³ There are 89,248 people in Pendle and 11,988 (13.4%) of these are Muslim (ref: 2001 census).

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organised to listen to young Muslims on ways to move forward, to become inclusive and to share their experiences after the London bombings.

1.3. Event Structure

The event was organised for the 24th September 2005⁴ by a steering group of representatives of seven different organisations⁵. Six guests representing the variety of public life across Pendle were invited to form a panel to whom the issues would be addressed: Gordon Prentice (the local Member of Parliament), Alan Davies (the Leader of the Council), Imam Khalid Mehmood (of the Pendle Muslim Forum), Dr Ikram Malik (Community Leader), Richard Debicki (Chief Inspector, Pennine Division, Lancashire Constabulary), Afzal Khan (Lord Mayor of Manchester City Council) and Dr Shazia Malik.

Thirty-nine young people attended the programme and their names are recorded in appendix 4. The programme began with an introduction to the event followed by introductory comments by the six main guests. The discussants were then divided into five groups. Each group had a specific question to answer, a facilitator and a note-taker. The groups are described below:

Group name	Group facilitator	Question for group
Orange	Bushra Yaqoob	What do you as Muslims feel about the recent bombings in London?
Green	Maqsood Yaqub	What in your opinion is the root cause for an individual to behave in this manner?
Blue	Salim Jogi	How does it affect you in Pendle?
Lilac	Samina Kauser	What changes need to be made to mosques and madrassahs?
Red	Mussurut Zia	What can be done to prevent similar atrocities from happening again?

Each group was asked to return to the whole group with a summary of discussions. This was then followed by a question and answer session.

⁴ The agenda for the day is appendix 1.

⁵ The members of the steering committee are listed in appendix 2.

2.1. Summary of the Discussion

The event was opened by Anayat Mohammad, a member of the steering group for the event and a representative of East Lancashire Together. He welcomed everyone to the event and introduced the panel of distinguished guests. He began by describing the rationale behind the event: the consultation was a significant opportunity for young Muslims in Pendle to have their say after the London bombings and their aftermath. Pendle has the largest percentage of Muslim population in East Lancashire and a sizeable proportion of these are of Pakistani origin. Pendle was therefore seen as a prime location to hold the first consultation of its kind in Lancashire. He urged the young people attending to take this opportunity to relay their views and thoughts, and advised the audience that conclusions taken from the day would be communicated back to government and other public bodies.

He then asked Dr Shazia Malik, to provide some context to the event in relation to her work with the recent Home Office task group. Dr Shazia Malik stated that the Home Office had established several task groups as part of their consultation within the Muslim community after the bombings which would look at issues affecting Muslims and ways in which to move forward. She suggested that Muslims in general were not responsible for the actions of a few individuals. She also reflected on how such events have heralded an opportunity: firstly, for Muslim communities to raise issues of concern for government; and secondly, it has forced us to examine ourselves: 'How we got here? How can we move forward? How do we become active members of the community?' She highlighted the importance of the younger generation and its underachievement in our community. She emphasised the importance of challenging stereotypes and encouraged the involvement of young women.

Dr Ikram Malik chaired the panel. He is a local GP with a practice in Pendle. He stated that he felt a responsibility towards his community and heritage, especially in encouraging the potential of the young.

Councillor Afzal Khan is currently Lord Mayor of Manchester but has studied and worked in Pendle. He said that good things can come out of terrible events and gave the example of the resurgence of the Manchester City Centre after the 1996 IRA bombings. He suggested

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that it is the young that need listening to and congratulated the organisers for putting the event together. He said that the young have the energy, time and culture to make a difference and that though they may be faced with many challenges, they will have to see these challenges as opportunities. He also warned against a complaint culture and called for positive actions. He reflected upon his own experience of how he had worked hard as a bus driver, in the police force and as a councillor, and he also pointed to his achievement of becoming the first Muslim Mayor of Manchester.

Gordon Prentice MP spoke of his experiences of the day of the bombings itself and how the very next day he had participated in a procession from Ghosia Mosque to Christ Church in Nelson. He condemned the actions of the terrorists and recounted the story of a young lady who has both her legs amputated.

Imam Khalid Mehmood spoke of the responsibility of the mosque to counter the terrorist message and to work with the wider community. He also spoke of the march for peace and solidarity in which 1300-1400 people participated.

Chief Inspector Richard Debicki commented on the need for the police to engage with the younger community, he reminded the attendees that the police can make mistakes but nevertheless it remains their responsibility to treat everyone with dignity and respect. He called for a frank exchange of opinions and noted that community relations are strong. He accepted that there remained areas for improvement but multi-agency co-operation especially with the Community Beat Managers and the Pendle Mosques could help resolve any issues. There are areas where we can improve and hopefully the Police are strengthening with help from the Community Beat Managers and Pendle Mosques. This will help tackle challenges ahead. He said that he was encouraged by the attendance at the debate.

This session was ended by a presentation by Dr. Shazia Malik on the recommendations of the task groups to the Home Office. These included empowering young people towards active and engaged citizenship, countering extreme ideas, reducing alienation and marginalization, improving achievement amongst Pakistani boys, developing a Muslim education foundation, improving the quality of religious studies within schools, championing

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Muslim women and removing any barriers that they may face, improving the lack of trust amongst younger and older generation groups, examining the issue of the training of Imams and challenging Islamophobia.

2.2. Individual Group Feedback

The feedback from the various group discussions was presented to the group as a whole.

The ORANGE group was asked: 'What does the group as Muslims feel about the recent bombings in London?'

They answered that they felt that some were engaged in a finger-pointing exercise and that this was leading to further resentment. They also felt that it was irresponsible of politicians to blame certain sections of society and that they had been subjected to selective journalism which presented Muslims sharing collective responsibility. The group felt Muslims were undertaking a trial by media and consequently felt victimised and stifled.

The RED group provided feedback on the question 'How can we prevent this happening in the future?'

The group felt that a glass ceiling is placed on young people, preventing them from reaching high employment prospects and from taking part in decision making processes. Typical barriers identified were age, political allegiance and so on. This glass ceiling for employment prospects needs to be removed, government funding for mediation and consultations was helpful, suggestions towards inclusion had to be followed by actual instances of incorporation, accountability needs to be upgraded especially on matters of funding, it was important to focus on the relevant issues not on digressions such as English language capability of the Imams. Education is a two way process; Muslims need to take responsibility for themselves to educate non-muslims, integration needs to be understood in contrast to assimilation and the non-muslim community needs to be educated so that they do not move away once Muslims move into their neighbourhood.

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Councillor Davies responded to these comments. On the issue of education attainment, he stated that careful analysis was required as to the specific problems faced by certain communities. He accepted the need to improve the targeting of funding resources and in order to do so it was important to find ways to hear new voices. He noted that the Youth Council are meeting Councillors to help steer this discussion. He asked the young people to maintain dialogue as its helpful, though it may not always be possible to act upon, it does give direction for new funding initiatives.

Imam Khalid Mehmood called for better facilities in schools for religious education and practice such as a place for prayer and secondly he called for an improvement in the quality of mosque education. Gordon Prentice MP said that it was important to observe transparency in funding matters. On the media, he said that the media in Britain is diverse and reflects a wide range of opinions – some broadsheets have a more engaged attitude towards Muslims. Dr. Ikram Malik added that it is important to find articulate spokespersons and keep on providing positive news stories because Britain remains an open society and receptive to a wide variety of views.

Dr. Shazia Malik continued this theme by highlighting the importance of media training and called for a more serious approach to media monitoring by government and the Muslim community especially in relation to fanning the flames of prejudice. This point was emphasized by Dr. Ikram Malik who pointed out the unsuitability of some representatives who have been on the media, especially in terms of their English language competence.

The GREEN group responded to the question: ‘What in your opinion is the root cause for an individual (terrorist) to behave in this manner?’

The group suggested that anger caused by biased media representation contributes as does a lack of religious and spiritual education. They also suggested that war in Iraq was a major factor and that this had lead to a feeling of isolation which required an effort to reach out to some who felt rejected and who could be easily manipulated.

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Councillor Davies responded by saying that there are friendships between different communities but stereotypes and generalizations cause increasing frustrations and there are not enough efforts to make friendships across Muslim and English communities. He stated that friendships exist in schools but did not continue through to adulthood. Gordon Prentice MP accepted that the government needed to address feelings of alienation but warned against ghettoisation. However he also said that foreign policy could not be decided by 1.6 million Muslims. Chief Inspector Richard Debicki mentioned that a new race and hate crime diversity unit has been set up to monitor and record racist incidents. Dr. Shazia Malik noted however that no one aspect leads to someone becoming radicalised, but foreign policy is amongst those factors that don't help. She also problematised the notion of ghettoised communities.

The LILAC group considered the question: 'What changes need to be made to mosques and madressahs?'

The group suggested that mosques need to be more inclusive especially of women, children and the disabled; for example, programmes need to be organized for women and women role models should be promoted. Counselling services should also be provided for women. The Imam needs to act as a role model, be open minded, have some interfaith involvement, be familiar with conflict resolution, have undergone some form of accreditation, teacher training and a criminal record bureau check, and relate to issues that affect young people, for example, signposting services in relation to problems around drugs and alcohol. The mosques were also encouraged to work with the media to help counter negative representations and a general lack of information. The discussants also pointed to the distinction between cultures and Islam and felt that this needed to be emphasized.

The BLUE group responded to the question: 'How has 7/7 affected people in Pendle?'

They stated that fear and paranoia had increased, though they felt that they had not been affected on a personal level. There is a fear of being victimised and the media are blamed for building negativity in people's perceptions. For example, some said that they had received looks while boarding a bus with a rucksack. The group felt that the press should have been

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invited to this event as positive events needed to be celebrated. Some felt that there has been a noticeable shift in people's attitudes and behaviour e.g. Asian people were being asked more questions at work. The group felt it was a good idea to have the walk from the mosque to the church and more open debates and cross-cultural events were required especially in non-Muslim areas, they felt that people were unaware of different cultures and traditions. It was also stated that the police need to have a softer, more human approach. The mosques were encouraged to provide open days and perhaps develop some outreach work.

Dr. Shazia Malik said that the problem was one of perception and the Muslim community needed to educate itself more on religion from the mosque. Councillor Davies stated that this was the first time that he had noticed fear in the Asian community (after the bombings). Chief Inspector Richard Debicki noted that figures for racially motivated/aggravated crime have only marginally increased by 7 (last year 35 incidences were reported compared to 42 in this year). He accepted that the police needed to look at the human face of policing i.e. policing communities with dignity and respect and that included closely monitoring stop and search.

2.3. Question and Answer Session⁶

Question 1: What do the panellists believe can be done to improve the negative and stereotypical representation of Muslims in the mainstream UK media?

Answer 1: Dr Ikram Malik informed the group that East Lancashire Together have set up meetings with the media and community representatives to address these concerns. He raised concerns about the media always using unsuitable representatives, especially in terms of their English language competence

Question 2: How can the panel work with the national and local media to provide a platform for the positive contribution being made by the Muslim community?

⁶ The full list of questions are in appendix 3.

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Answer 2: Gordon Prentice MP stated that the media in Britain is diverse and reflects a range of views with the main interest of selling newspapers, but in saying that, we will continue to put forward positive stories for publication.

Question 3: Hazel Blears has openly declared that the police will adopt a policy of 'racial profiling'. What does the panel feel will be the result of such a policy? Will it not result in the alienation of those people whose help we need the most?

Answer 3: Gordon Prentice MP responded that he was unaware of any racial profiling being adopted by the police and he stated that he was against it. Chief Inspector Richard Debicki stated that some mosques were being monitored but that this was based on intelligence in which someone was known to be involved in planning an offence.

Question 4: Why has there been no public enquiry?

Answer 4: Gordon Prentice MP replied that though he wasn't against an enquiry, he was also not sure as to its usefulness.

Question 5: What will be the outcomes of an event like this?

Answer 5: Dr. Ikram Malik said that this required engagement by the youth in any future forum to develop the ideas and initiatives mentioned during the consultation.

3.1. Analysis

There were several key themes that emerged from this event:

The discussants were critical of media and government in the form of national institutions. They felt stereotyped and victimised, that is, they felt as **objects of representation** either through culture (the media) or law (government). They also felt that where government was well-intentioned, it was nevertheless misguided – In funding directives, for example.

Though there was clear evidence of a **politicised identity**, this did not however simultaneously deter an acceptance of some level of responsibility and co-operation. There was a willingness to engage directly with service providers as well as a **heightened sense of self-awareness** and self-criticism, for example in relation to the improvements that could be made to mosque-based activities.

There is clear concern about the lack of inter-cultural dialogue and a simultaneously a **willingness to engage** existed, in fact, their concerns were for long-term engagement which indicates that they **took the process seriously**. This was further evidenced by the honesty of some of the questions asked. However, many issues remain unresolved, and the continuation of such types of events could help service providers and others to discuss ways in which some of the issues raised **could actually be tackled**.

It is unfortunate that more time was not given to the discussants to engage with the public officials, this would have been **a useful opportunity for developing such dialogue**. It is also unfortunate that there are no means by which one could **assess their appreciation** or lack thereof of the event (i.e. through questionnaires).

The importance of **connecting key public officials and service providers with youth** was highlighted by this event and a means should be sought to continue to the process especially as both policy concerns of community cohesion and an international war remain at the forefront of the political agenda.

3.2. Recommendations

A Muslim youth forum should be established in which concerns can be raised honestly in order to connect service providers and public officials with Muslim youth. This is especially vital in light of the fact that the war on terror continues and shows no sign of abating, and that community cohesion ‘problem’ will take years to resolve. It may even be the case that a forum such as the one being suggested will be instrumental towards such a resolution. The forum should seek to build on the already existing youth groups in Pendle. It should seek to engage with youth issues by providing them with a voice on matters of concern and identifying solutions where possible. It should seek to build and consolidate relations with a wide variety of organisations ranging from the voluntary and community sector through religious institutions and public services to local and regional government. This forum would then act a useful conduit between the concerns of the youth and possible solutions.

Following on from the proposal by the ‘Engaging with Youth’ task force to the government, a campaign should be launched against the argument for taking innocent life. Scholars who are well-versed in Islamic law and familiar with youth culture should be invited to Pendle to speak on the issues around terrorism so that there cannot remain any confusion on the matter of taking innocent life.

A third recommendation involves the development of a local Muslim youth parliament that would allow some space for political discussion and argumentation. In light of the increased political consciousness of the present times amongst Muslim youth, it is important to establish a space for them to highlight their concerns and debate between themselves as to the various solutions that could be attempted.

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Appendix 1 – Agenda for Consultation Event

**Pendle Muslim Youth Consultation at
Northern Technologies (Spenbrook & Barley Suite)**

Saturday 24 September 2005
10.30 – 2.00pm

AGENDA

10.30 Registration

10.45 Welcome & Introductions

Anayat Mohammad (East Lancs Together)

Opening words - Dr Shazia Malik

11.05 Panel Members

Chair – Dr M. I. Malik (CSP Pendle)

Cllr Afzal Khan (Lord Mayor of Manchester)

Gordon Prentice MP (MP for Pendle)

Allan Davis (Leader Pendle BC)

Imam Khalid Mehmood (Ghosia Mosque)

Ch. Insp. Richard Debicki (Lancashire Police)

Dr. Shazia Malik (Home Office Task Group)

11.30 Group Discussions (45 minutes)

Orange Group – Bushra Yaqoob

Green Group – Maqsood Yaqub

Red Group – Mussurut Zia

Lilac Group – Samina Kauser

Blue Group – Salim Jogi

12.15 Lunch

1.00 Feedback & Panel Open debate (60 minutes)

2.00 Final remarks – Dr M. I. Malik

Mr Anayat Mohammad

2.10 Thanks & Close

Event Closed at 3:10pm

Appendix 2 – Steering Committee for Consultation Event

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Anayat Mohammad	East Lancs Together
Rauf Bashir	Building Bridges, Pendle
Samina Kauser	Walton High School, Pendle
Mussurut Zia	Lancashire Constabulary, Pennine Division
Bushra Yaqoob	Nelson Neighbourhood Management, Pendle Borough Council
Raza Yasin	Pendle Pakistan Welfare Association
Naeem ul Hassan	GMB Workers Union

Appendix 3 - Questions asked during Question and Answer session⁷

What do the panelists believe can be done to improve the negative and stereotypical representation of Muslims in the mainstream UK media?

Are the police monitoring the mosques?

And why point at mosques when the majority of Muslim youth are not even attending them?

How can the panel work with the national and local media to provide a platform for the positive contribution being made by the Muslim community?

Why is the media so biased?

What is the government's viewpoint on why these people acted the way they did on 7/7?

Why has there been no public enquiry?

Hazel Blears has openly declared that the police will adopt a policy of 'racial profiling'. What does the panel feel will be the result of such a policy? Will it not result in the alienation of those people whose help we need the most?

What will be the outcomes of an event like this?

Are the issues raised, discussed and concluded actually going to be implemented by the government or are these events taking place to make Muslims think they are being considered|?

What is the future? How are we going to channel the insight from the contributions that have been made today?

⁷ Many of these questions had already been answered during the feedback session from the groups.

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Appendix 4 – List of attendees

Name	Town
Nazmeen	Nelson
Ejaz	Brierfield, Nelson
Bilal	Nelson
Shakeel	Nelson
Nasir	Address not provided
Shabaz	Nelson
Sughra	Burnley
Asia	Burnley
Bilal	Nelson
Saleem	Nelson
Maryam	Nelson
Kauthar	Nelson
Shakela	Brierfield, Nelson
Shahida	Nelson
Sufyan	Nelson
Halima	Nelson
Sabab	Nelson
Ghalib	Nelson
Qamran	Nelson
Ifran	Address not provided
A	Brierfield, Nelson
Imran	Nelson
Nazya	Nelson
Zulfikar	Nelson
Ifzal	Nelson
Shahida	Nelson
Arif	Nelson
Farakh	Nelson
Ajaz	Nelson
Nisar	Nelson
Nasir	Nelson
Shakeel	Nelson
Asma	Nelson
Taiba	Nelson
Maqsood	Nelson
Mohammed	Nelson
Shazib Bin	Nelson
Q Ahmed	Nelson
Kamran	Nelson

Appendix 5 – Photographs of the event

Photograph 1:



Anayat Mohammad Opening the Event

Photograph 2:



Mussurut Zia Facilitating the Red Group

Photograph 3:



Tariq Malik & Salim Jogi Facilitating the Blue Group

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Photograph 4:



Samina Kauser facilitating the Lilac Group

Photograph 5:



Gordon Prentice MP with Delegates

Photograph 6:



Dr Ikram Malik with Delegates

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Acknowledgements

The Steering Committee wish to convey their appreciation and thanks to the following for their participation on the event panel:

Gordon Prentice MP, Member of Parliament for Pendle

Cllr. Alan Davies, Council leader, Pendle Borough Council

Imam Khalid Mehmood, Ghosia Mosque & Pendle Muslim Forum

Dr Ikram Malik, PPWA & Chair Building Bridges Pendle

Ch. Insp. Richard Debicki, Chief Inspector, Pennine Division, Lancashire Constabulary

Cllr. Afzal Khan, Lord Mayor, Manchester City Council

Dr Shazia Malik, Home Office Task Group

The Steering Committee also wishes to convey their thanks to the following organisations for their support and financial assistance:

East Lancashire Together

Lancashire Constabulary (Hate Crime & Diversity Unit, Pennine Division)

Building Bridges Pendle

Pendle Pakistan Welfare Association

Pendle Borough Council