

## All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration

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### Notes from visit to Halifax – 23/08/2016

#### Present (APPG members)

- APPG Chair – Chuka Umunna MP
- Holly Lynch MP

#### Present (Calderdale Council)

- Robin Tuddenham, Director of Communities and Service Support, Calderdale Council
- Jo Richmond, Neighbourhood and Cohesion Manager, Calderdale Council
- Sadia Hussain, PREVENT Co-ordinator, Calderdale Council
- Tahira Iqbal, Principal Cohesion and Equality Officer, Calderdale Council
- Sail Suleman, Cohesion and Equality Officer (Hate Crime Reduction), Calderdale Council

#### Present (others)

- One member of staff from the Chair's office
- One member of staff from the office of Holly Lynch MP
- Two members of staff from The Challenge (the Secretariat)
- Vicky Ledwidge, Director of St Augustine's Centre
- A group of young people from Mixenden Activity Centre

#### Overview

The visit to Halifax was held as part of the APPG's inquiry into the integration of immigrants, which explored how communities could be better supported to manage demographic and cultural change and better facilitate integration, and what the division of responsibility for integration policy should be within government.

As part of the inquiry, the APPG conducted a series of site visits, including this one to Halifax, to speak to different communities across the country, and learn about the views and perspectives of a wide variety of people on the integration of immigrants. The evidence gathered on these visits informed the inquiry's interim and final reports, published in January 2017 and August 2017 respectively.

### Session 1: Queen's Road Neighbourhood Centre

Alongside Chuka Umunna MP and Holly Lynch MP from the APPG, and members of staff from their respective offices and the APPG's Secretariat, The Challenge, this session included:

- Robin Tuddenham, Director of Communities and Service Support, Calderdale Council
- Jo Richmond, Neighbourhood and Cohesion Manager, Calderdale Council
- Sadia Hussain, PREVENT Co-ordinator, Calderdale Council
- Tahira Iqbal, Principal Cohesion and Equality Officer, Calderdale Council
- Sail Suleman, Cohesion and Equality Officer (Hate Crime Reduction), Calderdale Council

Discussion proceeded as follows:

- In contrast to Italian and Polish people who moved into the area following the Second World War, the group said the **South Asian community** has tended to cluster residentially. The **Czech Romani community** is also integrating at a very slow pace, according to the group.
- Speaking about the political implications of immigration, and the **rise of the far-right**, the group highlighted that Mixendon ward witnessed the first BNP gain in Yorkshire. This aligns with the studies of Political Science professor Matthew Goodwin in the period from 2010, examining the social bases of support for the BNP and the far-right more generally.
- They said the **BME community** is now moving beyond Park ward into other, more affluent areas – generating suspicion and tension over school places as well as litter and house prices. Unfortunately racism is expressed fairly openly on the streets.
- In highlighting the **tension between different groups of immigrants**, the group said the Asian community have complained of areas being taken over by Eastern Europeans. Where tension boils over into violence however, the community responds by expressing solidarity with the victims.
- Two-thirds of secondary schools in the area have fairly mixed intakes, while the remaining third are almost entirely segregated.
- **Calderdale Council (CC)** operates on the basis that **Prevent and community integration are not one and the same** – they are two very distinct strands of policy. Chuka Umunna MP also commented that issues of counter-radicalisation and integration have been mistakenly conflated at the national level.
- However, this is not to say that a community-focused approach has not been adopted by the council with regard to Prevent. **Joint work with the National Citizen Service (NCS), Open Space events, and others**, has sought to ensure the programme is a means of facilitating community dialogue rather than spying.
- Calderdale Council is the only local authority to run a **joint-project with the Council of Mosques**. This has provided a way for British values to be '*halalified*'.

- A local resident commented that they are happy if integration happens naturally, but that people in the area don't like specific social cohesion programmes.

## Session 2: St Augustine's Centre

Alongside Chuka Umunna MP and Holly Lynch MP from the APPG, and members of staff from their respective offices and the APPG's Secretariat, *The Challenge*, this session included representatives from Calderdale Council, as well as the Director of the St Augustine's Centre, Vicky Ledwidge, and service users.

### Discussion proceeded as follows:

- Immigration to the area has encompassed members of the Syrian population, destitute refugees, and there are now 48 nationalities present (not including English and Welsh). Communication involves lots of hand gesticulation, and the area is a **non-verbal melting pot**.
- The centre offers **Skype** to help service users stay in touch with friends and relatives, and delivers **ESOL classes** three times a week, which are free, and run by volunteers. The classes are supported by the council, but receive no funding from central government.
- While the government wants **joint working and partnerships**, those from the centre said that charities are working in different areas, often with different groups with varying needs, which makes this joint working more challenging.
- The discussion focused on the question of **how to integrate service users with British society?** According to the group, the problem lies with society – misconceptions and prejudice abound. There is a '*Daily Mail mentality*', and the media are ignoring their responsibility to report objectively.
- That said, the group pointed to **good examples of people from different backgrounds coming together**, such as **Neighbours Day** and **community Ifar** events. The staff at St. Augustine's Centre emphasised the importance of personal connections – if you know someone, if you mix with members of other groups, you can connect.
- The centre wants to provide opportunities for service users and local residents to mix, but the former are aware of public hostility and shut down.
- Towards the end of the discussion, the question was asked, '**To what extent does mixing vary between classes?**' According to the centre's staff, the middle class do mix more, partly because of increased opportunities. There are also differences between the attitudes of generations. This highlights the fact that **questions of integration cut across numerous social fault lines – ethnicity, class and age**.
- According to the centre's staff, **territory and ethnicity both shape residents' identities**, with people gaining a sense of meaning from the area of town they live in.
- The Chair commented that, whereas in Boston council officers and community leaders seemed to believe that issues of integration would sort themselves out in time, in Halifax settled

migrants are not meeting and mixing with the host community, and intervention appears more necessary.

### Session 3: Mixenden Activity Centre

Alongside Chuka Umunna MP and Holly Lynch MP from the APPG, and members of staff from their respective offices and the APPG's Secretariat, The Challenge, this session included representatives from Calderdale Council, as well as the Director of Mixenden Activity Centre and young service users.

Discussion proceeded as follows:

- According to the group, **immigration is the main problem** in the area, given its negative impact on housing and jobs. A young resident called Ashley said he had been undercut in trying to find a job.
- Participants in the discussion said the integration of immigrants isn't about skin colour, it's about **culture and language**, and showing that you're '*sound*' over time.
- Ashley, who is at college, said he didn't mix due to a perceived hostility from young people from other backgrounds.
- The group said the area is a **tightknit community**, in which people don't often leave, but there is a **territorial element** as well. Migrants who run takeaways are one example of a group who are perceived as contributing to this community.

### Session 4: Holly's office

Alongside Chuka Umunna MP and Holly Lynch MP from the APPG, and members of staff from their respective offices and the APPG's Secretariat, The Challenge, this session included representatives from Calderdale Council, as well as local residents, community activists and civil society organisations.

Discussion proceeded as follows:

- The group said that, broadly speaking, different communities in Halifax don't tend to mix. Attitudes towards mixing differ between generations, with the older generation concerned about preserving a perceived local identity. This again demonstrates the **overlapping considerations of ethnicity with age** when it comes to questions of integration.
- Some members of the group noted that **migrants of the 1960s and 1970s** now view new migrants in the same way as they were viewed by the white British population during those decades.
- The **older generation** believe they had to work harder when they arrived in the UK. The group said that in the **1970s**, for example, **Pakistani men** worked together to buy houses but became entrenched in particular areas as a result.
- According to some discussants, there are some members of the **Czech Romani community** that mix with people from other backgrounds, but it's rare.

- The group said that **young people rarely see colour**, but that school catchment areas reinforce segregation. Some members of the discussion argued that local authorities should be empowered to enforce **admissions caps** on schools to combat segregation.
- The discussion focused on the question of how to build relationships between adults from different cultural backgrounds. Some members of the group suggested that there needs to be **more sustained funding for a range of community projects** – for example **sport** can be utilised to bring people together.
- The group spoke about how the **European Integration Fund** was used to good effect here to offer language support and integration programmes to ‘third country nationals’ who had been in the UK for less than ten years.
- **ESOL classes** are offered in children’s centres, which in fact act as the only providers of ESOL for the Polish community.
- The group said the word ‘**integration**’ can have **negative connotations** for migrants, as it can imply a **one-way process** in which they have to adapt to the culture of the host country. It was not clear to the group that the term implies dialogue. They said the word ‘**mixing**’ is better.
- Members of the group argued that the **Prevent brand is toxic**, as it is viewed as being disproportionately targeted towards Muslims in particular – i.e. it places responsibility for a lack of integration (and the worst results of this) directly on Muslims, rather than seeing these challenges as requiring effort from the whole of society, and being a two-way street.
- **Holly Lynch** argued that **Prevent intervenes at too late a stage**, and interventions should instead be frontloaded and designed to facilitate dialogue at an earlier stage.
- People with **multiple identity reference points** sometimes fall into an **identity gap** – they are viewed as not quite Muslim enough by Muslims of an older generation, and not British enough by members of the settled population.
- According to some members of the group, being **mixed race** means you can have the benefits of both identities, but you can also have the worst of all worlds – it varies from individual to individual. The worst thing is being asked to choose between identities.
- Based on the anecdotal evidence of those in the group, **streets are still rapidly transforming from majority White British to majority Asian spaces**. An estate agent told one discussant that they lived on the ‘*interface*’ between the White British and Asian areas.
- Following the **2016 Brexit referendum**, there have been far more **anecdotal reports of hate crimes** than reported incidents.
- Discussing Brexit also led some participants to raise the fact that misinformed residents believed the referendum vote would force second generation Asian migrants to leave the area.