

**Forward Thinking**

**UK 'Building Bridges' Programme**

**Community Roundtables Report:**

**Supporting Effective Community Engagement between the Crown  
Prosecution Service and British Muslim Communities**

# Contents

- Foreword by Baljit Ubhey, Director of Prosecution Policy and Inclusion, Crown Prosecution Service .... 2
- Recommendations ..... 4
  - 1. Supporting Effective Community Engagement ..... 4
  - 2. Supporting Effective Policy Making Within the CPS ..... 6
  - 3. Supporting Individual Victims of Crime ..... 8
  - 4. Supporting Communities Affected by Hate Crime ..... 9
- 5. Key challenges to Effective Community Engagement ..... 10

## **Foreword by Baljit Ubhey, Director of Prosecution Policy and Inclusion, Crown Prosecution Service - March 2018**

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. We are independent. Our duty is to make sure that the right person is prosecuted for the right offence, and to bring offenders to justice wherever possible.

As the principal prosecuting body for England and Wales, we value the insight of the communities we serve. For more than a decade, the CPS has had a strategy for improving public confidence through community engagement. We regularly convene National and Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels, enabling communities to scrutinise our prosecution decisions. We have long recognised that listening to communities builds greater trust with the public, improves victim and witness satisfaction, and leads to better informed prosecution policy and practice.

We are not, however, complacent. As the Director for Prosecution Policy and Inclusion, I have been reviewing the CPS approach to inclusion and community engagement to ensure that our strategy is refreshed and fit for purpose. It is vitally important that the CPS builds and maintains trust with all communities, particularly those who may have a low level of confidence in the criminal justice system. Given the recent increases in recorded hate crime, I felt that our review should capture the views of Muslim communities, including voices from communities who have had no prior experience of engaging with the CPS. I am very grateful to Forward Thinking for facilitating a series of meetings with diverse Muslim communities in Bradford, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Manchester, Stockport and at Finsbury Park Mosque, London. I am certain that our work in this area will be more effective as a result of these meetings and Forward Thinking's support for our work.

The recommendations in this report are not those of the CPS, but came from the participants in these meetings. Their views have been very important as we consider how to engage with communities in the future, particularly Muslim communities who may not otherwise have had a voice in discussions. We will carefully consider these recommendations as we take forward our work in this area.

This report does not mark the end of a conversation, but the start of an ongoing dialogue. The CPS is committed to working with the diverse communities we serve, and we are grateful to all of those who have taken the time to share their views with us.

## **Introduction**

Facilitated by Forward Thinking between October-December 2017, roundtables were held with a diversity of community and Islamic faith organisations across seven distinct areas with significant Muslim populations.

The recommendations and themes within this report are not our own, but are directly from the communities themselves from the following locations:

- 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017: **Dewsbury, Bradford Huddersfield**
- 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017: **Didsbury, Stockport, Whalley Range**
- 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017: **London (Finsbury Park Mosque)**

We seek to elevate these insights to the level where they can assist local and national thinking and decision making in the CPS, the wider criminal justice system, in addition to Parliamentarians and policy makers. Deeper understanding cannot be gleaned from an office in London, nor solely through the apparatus of government. Therefore, an accurate assessment of issues requires engagement with as many segments of British society as possible.

The visits enabled over 50 participating community and faith representatives, with constituency, to provide a real-time assessment of CPS activities, the implications of CPS policy, and the diverse responses and perspectives of communities on the ground.

We are sincerely thankful to Baljit Ubhey, Director of Prosecution Policy and Inclusion, and Graham Ritchie, Head of Prosecution Policy and Inclusion, for engaging with the issues and communities so substantively. We are also thankful to those participants who gave up their time so willingly to reflect on prevalent issues facing their respective communities. These soundings are by no means authoritative of every Muslim community across the UK, however, they are illustrative of contemporary challenges faced.

These roundtables formed a part of Forward Thinking's 'Building Bridges' Programme which facilitates inclusive dialogue between UK Muslim communities and grassroots organisations, and British authorities (local government, parliamentarians, policymakers and the national media). Since 2004, we have facilitated community meetings with Ruth Kelly, the former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; John Reid, former Home Secretary; David Anderson QC, former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation; Max Hill QC, current Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, in addition to over 400 British civil servants. The ultimate aim of all such engagements is to promote greater understanding between communities and British authorities and to develop shared approaches to common challenges.

**Jordan Morgan,**

**UK Programme Manager, Forward Thinking**

## Context to the Visits

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is the principal prosecuting authority for England and Wales. Established as an independent body in 1986 to prosecute criminal cases, it works closely with the Police and other investigators to advise on lines of inquiry and decide on appropriate charges or other outcomes, in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors<sup>1</sup>. CPS prosecutors prepare cases for court and present cases in both the magistrates courts and the higher courts. The CPS is required to balance the tension between the needs of victim and offender and makes potentially life-changing decisions for individuals and families of victims, and of those being prosecuted. To do this sensitively, there is the need for an informed and nuanced understanding of developments and perspectives from diverse communities.

Despite relatively positive coverage in the Lammy Review<sup>2</sup>, which reviewed the treatment of and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals, the CPS recognises that it sits within a criminal justice system that many perceive to be fundamentally unfair, unjust and unequitable. The review highlighted that those who are charged, tried and punished are still ‘disproportionately likely to come from minority communities’:

- BAME men and women constitute 14% of the British population, yet make up 25% of prisoners, ‘while over 40% of young people in custody are from BAME backgrounds’.
- In the last decade, the number of Muslim prisoners has increased by almost 50%, from approximately 8,900 to 13,200. This equates to almost 15% of the prison population, despite Muslims comprising only 5% of the general population of the UK.

The CPS thus recognises the need to prioritise reinvigorating its community engagement, including the strengthening of positive channels of communication between itself and Muslims grassroots organisations.

## Recommendations

### 1. Supporting Effective Community Engagement

1.1. **Giving Communities the Tools to Defend the Criminal Justice System:** The cornerstone to a more positive approach to engaging communities is recognising that Muslim communities are an essential part of the solution, and not a problem to be managed within the criminal justice system. Greater and improved engagement must foster understanding and positive relationships between community organisations and the CPS’s local and national officials. A focus on positive relationship-building will engender greater understanding, trust and confidence in not just the CPS, but the criminal justice system as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Code for Crown Prosecutors can be viewed here: [https://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/code\\_for\\_crown\\_prosecutors/](https://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/code_for_crown_prosecutors/).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review>

1.2. **Creating a Link Between Communities and Local Chief Crown Prosecutors:** A regular and ongoing dialogue between key community organisations and the numerous CPS Regional Chief Crown Prosecutors can foster an improved understanding of the CPS at a community level. This engagement should be direct in order to ensure that insights around local issues are not lost through misinterpretation. Furthermore, engagement should be balanced across community groups, it should be inclusive, for example, include those groups who support and those who oppose government backed countering violent extremism efforts, in order to ensure a diversity of perspectives are heard.

1.3. **Rooting the CPS and Criminal Justice System within Communities:** A criminal justice system that is well-rooted within communities can help to share the responsibility of keeping people out of the system in the first instance. Partnerships with effective and dynamic community organisations that possess a rich local knowledge, understanding and networks to help prevent issues *before* they arise are thus essential. Whilst this is challenging in areas where the reputation of the Police is negative, the CPS does not carry the same level of negative stigma as that associated with the Police. This therefore offers a greater potential for a synergy between the CPS and a diversity of Muslim community stakeholders.

1.4. **Unrepresentative Community Voices:** Far too often, community issues are inaccurately represented through national organisations, think tanks, so-called ‘experts’, or ‘community leaders’ who claim to speak on behalf of the UK’s diverse Muslim population. Such organisations and individuals often hold little, if any, ability to effect positive change within the communities about which they speak. This disempowers grassroots organisations who are on the frontline of dealing with the issues facing communities, supporting victims of crime, and rehabilitating offenders.

1.5. **Community Ownership of Sensitive Community Issues:** The importance of empowering communities to take ownership of sensitive issues faced is often understated. This is not to say that internal community issues should be solely tackled by ‘insiders’. However, the successful arbitration of such issues often relies on individuals rooted within a community, who are able to effectively navigate through religious and cultural sensitivities at a depth and complexity that secular institutions may not understand.

1.6. **Action and Outcome-Driven Consultation:** Community engagement should be action-driven, rather than ‘consultative’ to overcome endemic ‘consultation fatigue’ within Muslim communities. Communities are frustrated at the lack of tangible outcomes and improvements in their lived reality, despite previous efforts to engage with various departments and consultations. Changes made by the CPS as part of the review of its community engagement strategy should be effectively communicated to communities after consultations have taken place. Reports, such as the Lammy report, are welcome but lack the financial and political resources to enact urgent changes. Communities have pointed to the futility of reports if there is no change on the ground; for example, the Ministry of Justice released a report in 2013 on issues of disproportionality in the criminal justice system, yet four years on, communities are experiencing the same issues as detailed in the report – if not worse.

1.7. **Using Local Community Media:** As part of CPS campaigns, local Chief Crown Prosecutors should consider using local media channels to discuss the CPS, its role, responsibilities and recent, relevant

activities, as they are better able to reach ‘hard to reach’ audiences who may not engage with ‘mainstream media sources’.

**1.8. Moving Beyond Community Elders – Engaging, Empowering and Building Confidence of Female and Youth:** It is pivotal to move beyond primarily engaging with ‘community elders’ as a means of community engagement, by engaging, empowering and fostering the confidence of female and youth voices. The focus here should be on leadership, civil society and democracy. Through work experience and shadowing opportunities, young leaders can be equipped to become ‘CPS Ambassadors’, able to influence peers within their communities. The establishment of ‘Inner City Youth Scrutiny Panels’ at local levels and ‘National Youth Scrutiny Panels’ should also be explored as a means of engaging youth more effectively.

**1.9. From ‘Reactive’ to ‘Proactive’ Engagement:** Engagement must move from being ‘reactive’ – catalysed by crimes or terrorist incidents – and should instead move to being ‘proactive’, ensuring that communities are engaged before issues arise. As part of this, engagement should support more recently established migrant community groups to develop positive links to support institutions, such as the CPS. For example, this would be positively received by Manchester’s diverse Libyan community, which, despite being one of Europe’s largest Libyan diaspora communities outside the Arab world, is often left unengaged by key institutions. The community described a situation in which they feel that their issues have been historically side-lined by the authorities and that the ‘Government only wanted to engage after the terror attacks in May’, as the Manchester Arena attack was committed by a Libyan from Manchester.

**1.10. Improving Understanding of the Cultural Sensitivities Surrounding and Mitigating Circumstances That Push Muslim Women into Crime:** It is important that actors outside of communities have a nuanced understanding of the manifold circumstances that can push Muslim women to commit crimes, such as peer and family pressures. This is alongside understanding the stigma that female Muslim offenders face upon their release and the challenges they experience within communities in terms of rehabilitation. Some female participants argued that bold steps must be taken by some within conservative communities to ensure that all voices are heard and considered equally useful as men’s.

## **2. Supporting Effective Policy Making Within the CPS**

**2.1. Building Trust through Open Scrutiny of Decision-Making and Self-Critique:** Practices that engage communities, explain decision-making, and provide effective avenues for feedback on CPS approaches were highlighted as some of the most effective ways of building trust and confidence in the CPS at a community level. Local scrutiny panels and random case reviews that examine the quality of decision-making were highlighted as positive from a public perspective; indeed, this was also highlighted in the Lammy Review, which praised the CPS opening itself up to external scrutiny in 2000-09. The CPS should endeavour to explain to communities when the CPS can prosecute, and why it has prosecuted in certain cases, as this is an area riddled with misconceptions, in particular in relation to terrorism cases.

**2.2. Challenging the Status Quo:** Attempting to address shortcomings in an open and honest way increases the likelihood of genuine partnerships between the authorities and communities that positively contribute towards changing the status quo. Policies seen to be ‘imposed’ by ‘outside institutions’,

without first attempting to understand their impact on the ground through consultation and dialogue with communities, will likely fail. By contrast, policies formed in conjunction with communities have a much higher chance of success. Such an approach allows community organisations to effectively communicate policy changes to their constituencies, which ensures active stakeholder participation within decision-making processes and increases the likelihood of policies being favourably received.

**2.3. Supporting Community-Based Research into Sensitive Community Issues:** Pioneering research has been led by local Muslim organisations in Huddersfield and Bradford, improving understanding of the stigmatisation of Muslim women in prison and the challenges facing their successful rehabilitation upon their release, as referenced in the Lammy review. Such issues are said to be ‘easier to ignore’ because of the cultural and religious sensitivities, and difficulties are experienced in avoiding community backlash owing to the ‘shame and dishonour [female] offending brings to the community, families and individuals’. However, individuals rooted within communities have secured positive outcomes for individual women involved in research into this area. The CPS should actively support such efforts and feed such learning into its own procedures and policies.

**2.4. Engagement must not be for the Sake of Engagement:** One focus of community engagement should be providing BAME youth with employment opportunities, internships and work placements within the criminal justice system, including the Police, the CPS and other judicial bodies and institutions. Indeed, the proportion of staff identifying as BAME in the CPS is 19%, compared to 14% within the wider proportion. However, the CPS recognises that there is still scope for improvement with regards to its overall workforce representation, in particular as this headline figure masks geographical disparities. Therefore, improved national engagement by the CPS could aim to boost local diversity and BAME representation, in particular at more senior decision-making levels.

**2.5. Rooting CPS Policy within an Understanding of Diverse Faith Backgrounds:** There remains a need for guidance within the CPS about the distinct cultural and religious norms within contemporary minority faith community contexts. However, it is important to ensure that no individual voice or perspective dominates or seeks to speak on behalf of ‘British Muslims’, as this fails to take into consideration their religious, cultural and ethnic diversity.

**2.6. Fostering Positive Channels of Communication between Secular Court Systems and Sharia Courts:** There would be value in positive channels of communication being established between secular court systems and religious Sharia courts. This would enable constructive conversations to take place that could facilitate the exchange of feedback and best practices. Indeed, it was suggested that the CPS’s safeguarding practices could be explored by a Sharia court in Dewsbury, bearing in mind that any secular regulation of a religious court should be handled extremely carefully. Furthermore, there is potential for Muslim intermediary groups to help the CPS understand cultural and religious aspects within diverse Muslim communities.

**2.7. Training Hate Crime Ambassadors:** It would be valuable to provide youth and community training to develop local ‘hate crime ambassadors’. There is said to be a significant amount of hate crime that does not get reported to the Police, in part due to the perception that successful prosecutions are unlikely. Local hate crime ambassadors would be able to encourage people to report crimes and to address this

apathy and disillusionment towards recourse to the criminal justice system. Moreover, specific attention should also be paid to hate on social media, even if it is difficult to prosecute due to the high thresholds set by the CPS.

**2.8. Hate Crime Champions as Underused Tools:** Existing Hate Crime Champions and coordinators are underused tools in community engagement, with their focus overly inward-looking. Working alongside community inclusion managers, they have the potential to build much-needed public confidence in hate crime prosecutions. Hate crime scrutiny panels are equally valuable and key to improving the CPS's understanding of the perspectives of communities and how to engage most constructively.

**2.9. Violence against Women and Girls:** Local Chief Crown Prosecutors should engage and support more Muslim women and organisations engaged in tackling domestic violence against women and girls. This would develop a response that considers the nuances of local contexts and is informed by both men and women, who can both promote behavioral changes. However, change will 'not come through shaming', marginalising or stigmatising sections of a community, but rather through advocacy, and raising awareness of the causes and consequences of such violence.

### **3. Supporting Individual Victims of Crime**

3.1 There is the need for improved support for victims of crime. Non-attendance in court is a challenge in part due to the practical factors that stop people attending court; this is in particular a problem for taxi drivers and night-time economy workers, who are often the victims of crime, but equally struggle to attend day-time court sessions. However, there is room for a broader improvement in victim support, something that is acknowledged by the various institutions that form the criminal justice system. Indeed, a pilot project in London titled 'Catch'<sup>3</sup> is looking at improving the support offered to victims of hate crime.

3.2 **Underreporting of crime:** Improved support for victims will also help to address the underreporting of crime, in particular hate crime. This was said to be of particular importance for Muslim women and those for whom English presents a language barrier. Community work with Muslim women is an important means of challenging misconceptions of, and lack of faith in, the criminal justice system and negotiating the perceived trauma and shame that can come with engaging with the Police and court system.

3.3 **Increasing understanding of crime:** As the CPS notes on its website, 'without the help of victims and witnesses, it can be difficult for the CPS to achieve a successful prosecution and bring an offender to justice.'<sup>4</sup> The essential starting point is for individuals to understand what a crime is and where to report it. Therefore, the CPS should work more closely with frontline community organisations to provide them with timely and accurate information that enables them to effectively engage with and help victims of crime. A two-way conversation would inform communities of when a tolerance of certain viewpoints and practices becomes problematic from a British legal perspective. Moreover, further conversations

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.catch-hatecrime.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> CPS: Victims and Witnesses. Available at: [http://www.cps.gov.uk/northeast/victims\\_and\\_witnesses/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/northeast/victims_and_witnesses/).

need to explore how to send a strong message of deterrence ‘without stigmatising or being seen to criminalise a whole community’. For example, tackling sexual harassment prevalent in some areas of Bradford is an area that needs to be sensitively discussed.

#### **4. Supporting Communities Affected by Hate Crime**

Growing disillusionment and enmity towards the criminal justice system, and the increased insularity of British Muslim communities, is compounded by the dramatic rise in religiously and racially motivated hate crime.<sup>5</sup> Such hate crime is defined by often violent and verbal manifestations of intolerance towards sense of self, community identity and places of worship.

Growing intolerance reflects a worrying change in attitudes towards Muslim communities in the UK and is fuelled by a negative political and media rhetoric, as well as the impact of major terrorist tragedies in 2017.

Tackling hate crime is thus crucial to ensure that it is not normalised. Unfortunately, for some young Muslims hate crime is increasingly perceived as a ‘fact of life’ in the UK, despite such flagrant prejudice and intolerance being at odds with respecting the equal rights of all British Citizens. Left unprosecuted, hate crime compounds the narrative that the criminal justice system and, indeed, British society does not work in the best interests of British Muslim communities.

**4.1 Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels:** Concerns were raised about so called ‘community leaders’ sitting on current hate crime scrutiny panels. ‘Community facilitators’ with constituency, rather than ‘community leaders’ or ‘gatekeepers’, should sit on such panels as they can more accurately reflect the experiences of those in their communities. Indeed, in Whalley Range, it was felt that many who contribute to government agency panels have poor relationships with the community and youth in particular; they are widely perceived to be ‘yes men’ with little knowledge of the issues facing young people.

**4.2 Attacks on Places of Worship:** The Mosque remains a central meeting point within Muslim communities. However, there is growing ‘anti-Muslim’ criminal damage directed at mosques and other Islamic institutions. However, the CPS lacks specific data on attacks against mosques in England and Wales. In depth conversations between communities, local hate crime scrutiny panels and regional Chief Crown Prosecutors should explore the prevalence of such attacks in order to promote a change in data collection locally, which, in turn, will promote a more informed national discussion.

**4.3 Improved Quality of Data and Informed Decision-Making:** In 2016, statistics showed an increase in the reporting of hate crime; for example, in Manchester, it reportedly increased by 500%. However, there was a small fall in the number of prosecutions for hate crime. Data from different police forces across England and Wales should be collected and examined to see why this has happened. Participants

---

<sup>5</sup> The CPS uses the term ‘hate crime’ to describe ‘a range of criminal behaviors where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim’s disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. These aspects of a person’s identity are known as ‘protected characteristics’. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose. Full definition available at: [http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims\\_witnesses/hate\\_crime/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/hate_crime/).

also suggested that more data should be collected on the ethnicity of defendants and victims to catalyse a more nuanced and sophisticated conversation on responses.

**4.4 Community Impact Statements:** Community Impact Statements are intended to show the prevalence of crime and their impact within certain locales. Due to the diversity of communities that exist in England and Wales, the CPS cannot take a ‘one size fits all’ or ‘zero tolerance’ approach to prosecution decision-making. However, if an issue is prevalent in a given area, an impact statement can act as a powerful tool in raising awareness of this. These statements can also be used to assist in deciding whether prosecution is in the public interest. For these statements to be of the utmost value for decision makers, they need to be part of a wider process that brings communities together with CPS regional managers and neighbourhood police teams to gather evidence, data and discern impact on witnesses.

**4.5** Reinvigorating channels of communication with communities would allow the CPS to better share ‘success stories’ and boost community confidence in the CPS and quash misconceptions. It would be valuable for ‘success stories’ to be communicated nationwide when relevant; this was highlighted by the fact that the successful prosecution of two individuals for hate crimes related to the Finsbury Park Mosque attack was not communicated by the CPS to members of the Mosque’s Board<sup>6</sup>.

## **5. Key challenges to Effective Community Engagement**

**5.1 The Impact of Violent Extremism and Counter Terrorism Raids :** Relationships between communities and the CPS are affected by the ways in which the police conduct their enquiries. Communities in Manchester, Huddersfield and Dewsbury stated that police tactics may undermine relationships with communities, and families affected by police counter-terrorism investigations do not receive adequate support. This may in turn impact on the willingness of communities to engage with the CPS.

**5.2** Further to the lack of support offered, those affected by raids described an increased level of ostracisation from their own communities. For example, in Didsbury, divisions within and between the well-established South Asian community and the Libyan community were said to have deepened in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack and the subsequent security and Police response. For some within Manchester’s Libyan community, there was the perception that more established Muslim organisations immediately ‘left [them] stranded’ for fear of being accused of being linked with ‘extremism’ or ‘terrorism’ further down the line.

**5.3 Negative Political and Media Language:** The national language used to describe Muslims and lazy stereotyping – for example, ‘Muslims = Terrorists’ – is not only dehumanising an entire faith group, but also has a stark impact on individuals, in particular young Muslims.

**5.4 The Sense of Double Standards:** There is a concern that when Muslims are victims of crime they are not treated the same as non-Muslims. This is perpetuating a ‘Them vs. Us’ mentality; for example, it

---

<sup>6</sup> Finsbury Park Attack: Son of hire boss held over Facebook post. BBC. 20 June 2017. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-40347813>

was said that ‘if a Muslim is attacked by a non-Muslim, it is charged as a hate crime, whilst if a non-Muslim is attacked by a Muslim it is charged as terrorism’.

5.5 There is also the feeling that Muslim communities are ‘being made an example of’ and that the rise in Muslim prisoners correlates with a rise in terrorism-related prosecutions. However, to some extent, this is a question of perception; as the Lammy Review noted, this figure is in fact very small – only 175 Muslims have been prosecuted for terrorism-related crimes between 2001 and 2012.

5.6 **Understanding Diversity within British Muslim Communities:** Community experience of engagement with the British authorities is diverse and rooted within local contexts and historical interactions. Therefore, there is no ‘one size fits all’ community engagement policy. Community experiences of and perceptions of the CPS are equally varied; on the one hand, some communities felt that they lacked the detailed knowledge, trust or confidence to engage effectively with the CPS or wider criminal justice system, while other organisations have well-established and positive links with the CPS and Police.

5.7 A lack of understanding of the diversity of religious and cultural practices within communities by the Police and CPS can be problematic. Some believe that secular institutional mindsets often undervalue the importance of faith and religion, and/or treat conservative religious, in particular Islamic, values with disdain. This can create conditions where community and individual religious identities are positioned as being ‘other’. This is a particularly difficult position to be in for young Muslims whose pluralistic identity is felt to be at odds with being British.

5.8 Engagement should seek to redefine relationships based on common understanding and consensus. This is key to developing shared approaches to common changes, whilst respecting religious and cultural diversity. However, this respect should not extend to religious or cultural practices that jeopardise the safety or restrict the rights of others.

5.9 The CPS has previously been criticised for focusing excessively on minority group issues. Although the CPS must be careful to not move into a ‘crime prevention space’ or be seen to ‘target or alienate a particular community’, it must equally not be overly risk averse or shy away from communities from which perpetrators have come. Constructive dialogue with these communities would be a useful step to ensure that critical insights are not missed.

5.10 **Youth Offending:** Young people across the areas visited lack the necessary structures to support their emotional, mental and physical development, which is pivotal to fostering the exploration of identity and sense of belonging.

5.11 Historically, the CPS has engaged young people by visiting schools to discuss hate crime. However, this has been resource-intensive, and it was concluded that schools are not necessarily the best forum through which to inform young people of the criminal justice system, as it means that young people view it as a lesson. Fostering an improved understanding of the criminal justice system should come through forums that young people have actively chosen to engage with already, such as youth

clubs. Moreover, engagement through schools is likely to miss out those young people at a higher risk of offending.

5.12 For many young people, the justice system is 'seen as a big stick' with which to shake at the 'weakest' in society. The key challenge for communities and the authorities alike is how to identify and reinforce effective preventative measures that keep young people out of the criminal justice system in the first place, which in turn can begin to change youth perceptions of the justice system.

5.13 **Beyond Selective Engagement:** Muslim community confidence in the CPS has been undermined by what is perceived to be 'selective engagement' by national government. The depredations of crime affect all communities, therefore communities need reassurance that future engagement efforts are inclusive, transparent and fair. A more inclusive approach to engagement would also allow for CPS policy to be productively informed by community insights, which would enable the development of a more nuanced understanding of Britain's diverse Muslim communities.

**JM/LC 13.12.17**