

**WANDSWORTH LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP****17th JUNE 2009****Report by the Chief Executive of Wandsworth Council on the Prevent action plan – year end update 2008-09 and action plan for 2009-11****Introduction**

1. The Wandsworth Local Strategic Partnership (WLSP) received a report in January 2009 outlining the key elements of Government's Prevent policy, which forms part of the national counter-terrorism strategy (paragraph 7), and providing an overview of the activity programme for Wandsworth in relation to the Prevent agenda. This report provides a progress update on the key projects and actions implemented during 2008-09 and sets out the priorities to be addressed through the Wandsworth Prevent Strategy and draft action plan for 2009-11. The action plan for 2009-11 plan is still being developed and is subject to inclusion of additional partner actions and commentary as well as input from other community groups. It is being presented to the WLSP as a draft to meet the Government Office for London (GoL) deadline for submission of year end updates and proposed forward plans by July 2009.
2. The action plans reflect WLSP's agreed approach to this sensitive and complex agenda – a commitment to maintain and strengthen the cohesiveness of the Borough, keeping Wandsworth a community of active citizens and good neighbours where a culture of respect and mutual support is commonplace. The plans also complement and build on the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to make the borough safer by tackling terrorism and violent extremism on a foundation of community confidence and cooperation. As such, the local prevent strategy continues to focus on building resilience within communities whilst also attempting to address the vulnerability of those who may become engaged in violent extremism.
3. Wandsworth received £145,000 of Prevent funding in 2008-09 to deliver the action plan and address the objectives set out in the national Prevent Strategy. In 2009-10 the level of funding has increased to £175,000; as in previous years it is included in the area based grant. Funding allocated is based on the estimated size of the local Muslim population and not on any known or potential 'risk' associated with the area. Boroughs with Muslim populations of 5% or more were included in the programme; Wandsworth has a Muslim population of c. 5%.

**Recommendations**

4. The WLSP is recommended to:
  - a) Note the year end update for 2008-09 and endorse proposals to continue longer-term projects / actions and monitoring and communication arrangements.
  - b) Endorse the draft action plan for 2009-11 subject to any feedback from consultation and the inclusion of additional actions.

**Activity in 2008-09**

5. The 2008-09 action plan was presented to the WLSP in January 2009. The activities included in the plan were primarily targeted at increasing understanding of different cultures

and faiths especially amongst young people and front-line staff, as well as establishing key contacts and building on good working relationships with the local Muslim community. Some of the key highlights are summarised below:

- c) Faith Literacy courses – 3 courses held covering 5 main faiths in Wandsworth with 34 participants from Council and partner agencies. Participants mainly from services working with and supporting young people. Of those completing a feedback form (over three-quarters), 4 in 5 said that they had gained a greater understanding and knowledge of the faiths and could use some of the interactive exercises included in the training with young people.
  - d) Targeted training – the local police service in conjunction with a respected and approved Muslim organisation has developed a tailored training programme for partner agencies designed to provide a more in-depth awareness of Islam and how to identify and work with vulnerable individuals. This training is being rolled out in 2009-10. Tailored training was also provided for those working with young offenders to enable them to better support Muslim young people.
  - e) Support for the Islamic Youth Club – a service level agreement was introduced in August 2008 focusing on increasing interaction with other clubs and providers and improving activity programme for club users' especially young women. Attendances at the club increased by 17% compared with the previous year, with almost 4 in 10 attendances by females. Female users were also supported to submit funding application to develop activity programme and encouraged to participate in club user forum. The club also supported the multi faith workshops for young people in Battersea and held an open day event for the local community.
  - f) Multi-faith workshops for young people In Battersea – held in February and March 2009 with over 40 participants; local Young people involved in designing workshop and content focusing on common aspects of different faiths, addressing misconceptions, challenging stereotypes. Feedback from young people indicated that the workshops were rated as either excellent or good.
  - g) Women's heritage project – funding used to establish contact with and involve 7 Muslim and Asian women's groups in embroidery heritage project. Project brought together females from different traditions and generations and helped to raise confidence and self-esteem by providing volunteering opportunities and involvement in securing £20,000 heritage lottery funding for 10 workshops in 2009-10.
  - h) Prevent Project lead – a project officer was appointed to implement the targeted workshops with young people, and establish links and good working relationships with local Muslim organisations. An initial mapping exercise identifying key contacts has also been completed and will be used to involve local groups in multi-faith projects and develop additional projects promoting shared values and understanding.
6. These projects are very much longer-term initiatives seeking to strengthen productive working relationships between local organisations and public services as well as providing opportunities for potentially vulnerable young people to participate in positive activities that promote good citizenship and mutual understanding. The PVE Steering Group, which oversees the delivery of the action plan (paragraphs 12), has reviewed and evaluated these projects and recommended that are also included in draft action plan for 2009-11.

### **Draft Prevent action plan for 2009-11**

7. The Government's counter terrorism strategy, commonly referred to as CONTEST, is divided into four strands; Prevent is one of these strands and is focused on preventing individuals from becoming radicalised and supporting or engaging in violent extremism. The other three components of CONTEST are :

- a) Pursue – disrupting terrorists and their operation to reduce the threat of a terrorist attack
  - b) Protect – reducing vulnerability to a terrorist attack
  - c) Prepare – ensuring that the UK is prepared to deal with the consequences of a terrorist attack
8. The Prevent component of the national counter-terrorism strategy has five main objectives, listed below, which are reflected in Wandsworth's draft action plan (attached as appendix 2). The plan is very much based on a partnership approach involving the public, private and voluntary sector in addressing local issues and concerns as well as reflecting national priorities. The five Prevent objectives are:
- a) challenging the violent extremist ideology and supporting mainstream voices;
  - b) disrupting those who promote violent extremism and supporting the institutions where they are active;
  - c) supporting individuals who are being targeted and recruited to the cause of violent extremism;
  - d) increasing the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and
  - e) addressing the grievances that ideologues are exploiting
9. The Government's focus on the Prevent agenda has intensified with a resultant increase in monitoring and reporting requirements for Local Authorities and partners. Recent guidance from the Home Office (Office for Security and Counter Terrorism – OSCT) and GoL is prescriptive and requires partnerships to address all five Prevent objectives in the 2009-11 plan. Previously, as mentioned, the approach adopted was to concentrate on actions that further strengthened community cohesion and the development of positive inter-faith activities for young people. This approach has helped to counteract some of the negative perceptions associated with the Prevent funding stream and will continue to play a prominent part in Wandsworth's local plan.
10. The guidance requires that the 2009-11 action plan is supported by a narrative document (appendix 1) which should provide a description of the local area, a risk and vulnerability assessment which outlines any local risks as far as they can be identified, and sets out the priorities to be addressed through the Wandsworth prevent strategy and action plan. The narrative document highlights and emphasises WLSP's vision to make Wandsworth '*a place which is safer, healthier, more prosperous and sustainable – a good place to live and work now and a better place in the future*' by supporting active citizenship and good neighbours and ensuring that a culture of respect and mutual support is commonplace.
11. The requirement to identify and assess local risks has proved challenging given that no detailed guidance has been provided outlining what should be covered in this assessment as well as the potential sensitivity of the information required. Page 4 of the narrative document sets out the limitations and difficulties associated with such an assessment, namely that there is an absence of relevant and credible information to determine risk and that negative perceptions associated with the Prevent agenda and its funding may be heightened further by focusing on these aspects. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to meet these requirements to ensure that the draft action plan is based on information that is available as well as reflecting the local priorities set out in Wandsworth's Sustainable Community Strategy.
12. The draft action plan is also being expanded to ensure that it reflects not only the lead role of the Council and the local Police service but also other key partners such as Probation Service, and local Higher and Further Education Colleges. As such it is a flexible document that will be developed and refined during the next few months. It also addresses the

observations made by GoL and the Home Office recommending areas for development and strengthening. As such, the plan concentrates on the following key areas:

- a) Developing the successful programme of workshops for young people, providing opportunities for constructive and informed debate, and challenging extremist views. Exploring opportunities to work jointly with reputable organisations and local groups to support vulnerable young people.
- b) Working with the Islamic Youth Club to improve its activity programme and develop joint work with other providers and groups in the area.
- c) Rolling out targeted training for front-line staff including counter-terrorism, identifying and supporting vulnerable individuals and Faith Literacy.
- d) Developing identification and referral processes for vulnerable individuals drawing on existing good practice and Home Office guidance.
- e) Exploring the possibility of introducing a programme of structured and informed debates in the community.
- f) Developing links at grass roots level with local communities including informal women's' groups and Muslim youth groups; working with these groups to develop joint projects and /or involvement in existing projects. Meetings with local Mosques and Muslim organisations will continue to take place to discuss the prevent agenda and opportunities for joint working.
- g) Meeting with Further Education Colleges and Universities and inclusion in the Prevent agenda.
- h) Involvement of the Prison Service in the local Prevent agenda ensuring key actions are reflected in local action plan.

## **Monitoring and governance arrangements – Prevent agenda**

13. The strategic management of Prevent is detailed on page 2 of the narrative document; this emphasises the importance attached to the agenda despite reservations about the negative associations for the Islamic community. Operationally, implementation and review of the action plan, identification of additional and changing priority areas and any issues to be resolved are the responsibility of the multi-agency Prevent Steering Group. This group is chaired by the Head of Policy for Wandsworth Borough Council. The operational management arrangements have been strengthened with the creation of a Prevent Board with the Chief Executive and Borough Commander taking a joint strategic lead for Prevent. As outlined in previous reports, all key agencies are represented on the Prevent Steering Group and links have also been made with local further and higher education establishments as well as the Prison Service.

## **Community consultation on future plans**

14. The Leader of the Council together with Senior Council and Police representatives have embarked on a series of consultation meetings with local Mosques. Feedback so far has made clear that the focus of Prevent and the explicit title of the funding to support it (Preventing Violent Extremism) is problematic for the local Islamic community as it is seen to perpetuate the stereotype of Muslims as potential terrorists. As such there is very limited interest in engaging directly with the specific activity or the local action plan or in any broader developments. Nevertheless, efforts are continuing to open a dialogue and explain openly the local approach to the Prevent agenda.
15. It is proposed that a copy of the draft action plan is shared with all local Mosques and key partners including the WLSP Multi-faith group. Feedback on the plan will also be picked up through the programme of meetings with Mosques being undertaken by the Chief Executive

and Borough Commander. Consideration is also being given to the establishment of a reference group of local groups / individuals who would be willing to contribute to the development of the Prevent strategy in 2010/11. The Prevent project officer has a specific role in discussing the agenda at a grass roots level and will use opportunities to share the plan with local groups and organisations, particularly young people, as well as continuing to encourage involvement in and development of projects.

## **Conclusion**

16. The Prevent action plan 2009/11 supports the continued commitment to break down cultural and religious barriers and build a stronger community. It endeavours to address the key objectives of the national prevent strategy whilst retaining a clear focus on building and strengthening relationships with the local Muslim community despite the negative feedback and perceptions associated with this agenda. It also acknowledges that in the absence of clear information about threat, the Prevent partners can only ensure that systems and procedures for information sharing and the support for vulnerable individuals are in place should they be required.