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## **INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES STRATEGY GREEN PAPER**

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### **Response from Humanists UK, June 2018**

#### **About Humanists UK**

At Humanists UK, we want a tolerant world where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We work to support lasting change for a better society, championing ideas for the one life we have. Our work helps people be happier and more fulfilled, and by bringing non-religious people together we help them develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them. Founded in 1896, we are trusted to promote humanism by over 70,000 members and supporters and over 100 members of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group. Through our ceremonies, pastoral support, education services, and campaigning work, we advance free thinking and freedom of choice so everyone can live in a fair and equal society.

Humanists UK is an active member of many organisations working on education, integration, human rights and equality, and secularism, including the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (REC), and the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics (EPPSP). We also run Faith to Faithless, a community support network for apostates and the ex-religious struggling with the challenges of leaving their religion behind.

We have representative status in our own right at the UN Human Rights Council, where we make regular interventions in support of freedom of expression, conscience, and religious or belief globally, as well as in support of LGBT rights, children's rights, women's reproductive rights, and more.

#### **Response to consultation questions**

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**Are you happy for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to contact you to discuss your response?**

Yes

**Are the views expressed on this consultation your own personal views or an official response from an organisation you represent?\***

Organisational response

***Please provide the name of your organisation:***

Humanists UK

**If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select the option which best describes your organisation.\***

Voluntary or community organisation

## **General Overview**

### **Question 1**

**We define integrated communities as communities where people - whatever their background - live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Do you agree with our definition?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

We agree with the definition used for integrated communities.

### **Question 2**

**We believe that the varied nature and scale of integration challenges means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to tackle the issues specific to particular places. Do you agree?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

We agree that the level of integration and the success of different measures to encourage integration vary across the country. Some groups who share a particular ethnic or religious background sometimes reside in isolated communities or silos and have specific concerns or belief systems that need to be addressed in order to promote integration. In these instances, locally tailored interventions are appropriate.

We also believe that is important not to fall into the trap of viewing particular communities as entirely homogeneous, or able to be effectively represented by just a few community or religious leaders. As we should all be aware, groups of any kind play host to significant internal diversity and failing to recognise that diversity risks undermining the rights and interests of individuals. By way of example, Humanists UK operates a support network for apostates called Faith to Faithless, which works closely with people who have left or are leaving their religion. These individuals, particularly those who are forced to leave their very closed religious communities, face particular challenges, and often have to cut off all contact with their families and communities before entering a wider society that they are grossly unprepared to exist in. The need for tailored plans and interventions for these individuals, who make up a significant minority in every religious group, is clearly important. We will expand on this in our responses to questions 4 and 12.

That said, we do believe there is a place for a national strategy, too, particularly in policy on schools segregation, curriculum, and admissions, to drive the integration agenda forward on a nationally agreed basis.

### **Question 3**

**Do you have any examples of successful approaches to encourage integration that you wish to highlight, particularly approaches which have been subject to evaluation?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

The most effective approach to encouraging integration is to facilitate the mixing of children in school. As well as being a simple matter of common sense, this is consistently borne out by the evidence.

Last year the Department for Education published research that it had commissioned into 'diversity and social cohesion in mixed and segregated secondary schools'. The study, which examined the contact between young people from White-British and Asian-British pupils at secondary schools in Oldham, sought to assess the extent to which mixing in school can 'improve both attitudes towards outgroups and intergroup relations.' Researchers found that:

- 'Attitudes were more positive and, as would be expected, mixing was more frequent in mixed than segregated schools'.
- 'Mixed schools do result in more social mixing between ethnic groups over time, and mixing is reliably associated with more positive views of the outgroup.'
- 'Attitudes of pupils who mix with other backgrounds were more positive compared to those who remain with their own ethnicities.'

In addition, the study examined the outcomes of a merger of two ethnically segregated schools into a single mixed school, finding that 'over a four-year period, intergroup anxiety significant decreased, and liking and outgroup contact significantly increased for both Asian-British and White British pupils.'<sup>1</sup>

More recently, in May of this year, new research conducted by the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics revealed that schools that are more ethnically diverse lead to greater cohesion between children of different ethnicities. The study of 4,000 Year 10 pupils in 96 English state schools focused on children who are white British, Asian British, and black British. It looked at attitudes towards 'openness', both social and political, as well as asking pupils to rate their feelings of warmth towards those of different backgrounds on a scale from zero to one hundred.

The findings demonstrated that at more diverse schools a higher proportion of pupils expressed more warmth towards those of other ethnicities. For children of a white British ethnicity, for every ten percent increase in the number of black pupils in their school, their feelings towards them increased by 1.74 points on the scale. With regard to schools that were less diverse, the report warned that:

'highly segregated school system[s] will generate a lot of pupils with negative orientations towards other groups'

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<sup>1</sup> *Diversity and social cohesion in mixed and segregated schools in Oldham*, DfE, August 2017: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/634118/Diversity\\_and\\_Social\\_Cohesion\\_in\\_Oldham\\_schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634118/Diversity_and_Social_Cohesion_in_Oldham_schools.pdf)

The report concluded that 'the value to researching and implementing policies to encourage integration and contact is therefore clear'.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar study published in January 2015, survey data was collected from over 100,000 13 and 14 year olds in 38 countries to ascertain whether or not more diverse classrooms make pupils more tolerant towards immigrants and those from different backgrounds. The research found that more diverse classrooms produce more tolerant students, and concluded that 'schools should be as inclusive in their admissions policies as possible'. The report also emphasised the need to positively encourage meaningful inter-ethnic contact and friendship within schools and classrooms so as to ensure that diversity and integration go hand-in-hand.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted, too, that increased diversity within schools is valued by parents. A survey published by NatCen Social Research in May 2018 found that 91% of people in Britain agree that it is either 'very important' or 'quite important' for a good secondary school to have a mix of pupils from different backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> This is reflected in the fact that an overwhelming majority of the population are opposed to the use of faith-based admissions criteria, which divide children along religious lines (and, by proxy, along ethnic and socio-economic lines too). 80% of the British public supported keeping the 50% cap on religious selection at free schools when polled last year (including a majority within each religious group),<sup>5</sup> and 72% of people oppose any kind of religious selection at all in school admissions.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, therefore, the evidence is absolutely clear that mixing in schools is vital to promoting integration and social cohesion, just as it is clear that the majority of people support such mixing. The Government should seriously consider withdrawing the freedom of state faith schools to religiously select their pupils, and in so doing prioritise the interests of children and society as a whole over the minority opinions of a small and unrepresentative faith school lobby.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cream-migration.org/publ\\_uploads/CDP\\_07\\_18.pdf](http://www.cream-migration.org/publ_uploads/CDP_07_18.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 'Do Ethnically Mixed Classrooms Promote Inclusive Attitudes Towards Immigrants Everywhere? A Study Among Native Adolescents in 14 Countries', Germ Janmaat, January 2015:  
<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/10021124/>

<sup>4</sup> Attitudes towards good schools and selective education, NatCen Social Research, May 2018:  
<http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1442622/grammar-school-selective-education-report-final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Populous interviewed 2,033 people living in Britain between May 5th to the 7th 2017:  
<http://accordcoalition.org.uk/2017/05/29/overwhelming-majority-of-the-public-want-to-maintain-the-50-religious-selection-cap-for-new-faith-schools/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://accordcoalition.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/0mFaith-Schools\\_Q2.pdf](http://accordcoalition.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/0mFaith-Schools_Q2.pdf)

## **Chapter 1: Strengthening Leadership**

### **Question 4**

**The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?**

No

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

We believe there are several problems with the proposals to set out in the strengthening leadership section of the Green Paper. Firstly, throughout the section only 'faith' leaders are mentioned. The Equality Act to which the section refers makes it clear that the equality strand at stake is not 'faith' but 'religion and belief,' thereby recognising the role that non-religious people play in integrating communities. According to the 2017 British Social Attitudes Survey, the most robust national survey of British people's beliefs and attitudes which is published each year by NatCen, 53 percent of the public describe themselves as non-religious. This figure rises to 58 percent in Scotland and to over 70 percent of those aged 16-29.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that around half of the non-religious hold humanist beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Given that the non-religious and humanist populations make up such a substantial proportion of the UK, it is not appropriate that humanists are not considered in this part of the integrated communities strategy.

Secondly, the Green Paper contains no detail about how to define a leader, or how to ensure that those who are designated as such are minded to use their position to promote equal opportunities between those who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and those that do not. There are many fundamental points of conflict between the ideals of integration based on the characteristics of the Equality Act and the religious beliefs of many faith groups, and it is unclear how focusing solely on developing leadership roles within faith groups will resolve them. For example, a number of faith leaders represent groups who hold homophobic views, believe in the inferiority and subjugation of women, deny the existence of transgender people, believe in the inferiority of those of lower castes, treat people less favourably due to their marital status, and believe that members of other faiths and beliefs are infidels. More generally, the views of religious hierarchies is often less tolerant than those who they claim to represent, on for example LGBT rights and women's rights.

This tension was highlighted by Ofsted last year when it repeatedly failed Vishnitz Orthodox, a private Jewish faith school, because it refused to teach about LGBT issues. However, as far as the school and its community leaders are concerned, to teach about such issues would be to fundamentally contravene their religious beliefs and would breach their right to freedom of religion and belief. Rather than promoting faith leaders to have a greater voice, the integrated communities strategy should focus more on mechanisms, such as dialogue and shared social spaces, can be used to resolve areas of tension between different faith groups and between groups and 'British values.'

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.britsocat.com/>

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<https://humanism.org.uk/2017/06/15/new-poll-shows-one-in-five-are-humanists-and-a-third-hold-humanist-beliefs/>

Humanists UK supports the extension of section 6 of the Human Rights Act to treat religious organisations providing public services on behalf of the state as public authorities, and to end the exemptions from the Equality Act for religious groups which allow much egregious discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and of sexual orientation to continue lawfully. These measures would ensure that religious groups and their leaders are bound in their actions to consider both the Human Rights Act and the public sector equality duty (PSED) when carrying out public functions. It will also have a normative effect of promoting equality and non-discrimination within faith communities.

Crucial to the notion of integration are the presumptions of fairness and equal treatment, where regardless of ethnic, religious, or non-religious background, opportunities are open to all all upon merit. Another way to improve cohesion is therefore to end religious discrimination in publicly funded posts such as non-teaching jobs in religious schools or general pastoral support jobs in hospitals and prisons, which are often unfairly reserved only for religious people or people of particular religions.

We believe that integration is most successful when social institutions are designed in such a way as to encourage those of different ethnic backgrounds and religions or beliefs to mix, exchange ideas and build constructive relationships. The success of integration is not invested in individuals such as faith leaders, but in fair and open public institutions.

We are also concerned that the Integrated Communities Strategy has not considered the potential negative consequences that supporting leadership within faith communities will have on minority groups within those communities. The Green Paper take a very broad view of faith communities, wrongly presenting those within a faith group as homogeneous. Minority groups within faith communities, such as those who are LGBT, apostates, or members of different castes, face multiple barriers in being able leave a particular faith community, to establish a distinct identity within their community, or to have their voices and interests heard. The Integrated Communities Strategy must be careful not empower leaders in such a way as to facilitate the suppression of 'dissenting' elements from within their community.

## **Chapter 2: Supporting New Migrants and Resident Communities**

### **Question 5**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to support recent migrants so that they have the information they need to integrate into society and understand British values and their rights and responsibilities. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

### **Question 6**

**The Controlling Migration Fund was constructed to deal with the short-term migration pressures and associated costs that local authorities can encounter. Do you think it adequately achieves this objective?**

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

## **Chapter 3: Education and Young People**

### **Question 7**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

The education system is the best tool we have to promote integration. Indeed, schools are one of the few remaining institutions, public or private, where people from a range of different backgrounds come together en masse, regularly and for prolonged periods of time. Unfortunately, this opportunity to promote integration, mutual understanding, and social cohesion is not being used nearly as effectively as it ought to be.

Below, we set out the various barriers to both integration and the preparation of children for life in modern Britain that exist in this country, and our recommendations for overcoming them.

### **Faith school admissions**

The introduction to the green paper gives the Government's definition of 'true integration' as 'communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together'. This seems to us to be an uncontroversial definition of integration and a state of affairs that the Government is right to aim for. However, if it genuinely wants people from all backgrounds to 'learn' together, it has some way to go in reforming its policy on faith schools and the discriminatory admissions policies that many of them operate.

When faith schools use faith-based admissions criteria to select their pupils, children and families are segregated in three important ways: along religious, ethnic, and socio-economic lines. The evidence for this is clear.

### **Religious segregation**

We assume that there is no need to set out the evidence that religiously selective faith schools segregate along religious lines. Faith-based admissions criteria are specifically designed to ensure that as much of a school's intake as possible is of the same religion. Indeed, the Office of the Chief Rabbi recently stated that its opposition to Jewish schools having open admission arrangements was grounded in the fact that such schools should provide 'a completely immersive Jewish environment - something which is far more challenging' without fully selective admissions arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 'Race is on to open third Jewish secondary despite warnings from Chief Rabbi', *Jewish Chronicle*, July 2014:

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/race-is-on-to-open-third-jewish-secondary-despite-warning-from-chief-rabbi-1.60692>

Given recent evidence that religion is seen as more of a source of tension and division in Britain than in almost every country in the world,<sup>10</sup> bringing children from different religious and non-religious backgrounds should be a priority for the Government. Regrettably, as long as religious selection in the state school system continues to be permitted, such integration will always be frustrated.

### ***Ethnic segregation***

While schools are not allowed to select pupils on the basis of their ethnicity, religious selection - no more justified in our view - acts as a proxy for ethnic selection. This effect has been well-evidenced in recent years.

For instance, analysis of the impact that the 50% cap has had on ethnic diversity in religious free schools reveals that faith schools subject to the cap are significantly more ethnically diverse than faith schools that are fully selective.

The headline figures are these:

- 63% of pupils at CofE free schools are white, compared to 78% at fully religiously selective CofE schools.
- 55% of pupils at 'other Christian' (non-Catholic) free schools are white compared to 85% at fully religiously selective 'other Christian' schools.

In other words, religious free schools opened while the 50% cap has been in place are significantly less likely to be overwhelmingly 'white' than religious schools that are fully selective. Further:

- Only 3% of pupils at 'other Christian' schools that are fully religiously selective are Asian, while nearly a fifth (19%) of pupils at 'other Christian' free schools are Asian.
- Only 6% of pupils at CofE schools that are fully religiously selective are Asian, while 15% of pupils at CofE free schools are Asian.<sup>11</sup>

These figures do not include Catholic schools,<sup>12</sup> which are often misleadingly described as being among the most ethnically diverse schools in England. Virtually all Catholic state schools in England religiously select for 100% of their places. This means that while they may admit a reasonable proportion of children from ethnic backgrounds associated with Catholicism (those from Afro-Caribbean families, for instance), they are disproportionately exclusive of children from other ethnic backgrounds, particularly Asian backgrounds.

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<sup>10</sup> *BBC Global Survey: A world divided?*, Ipsos Mori, April 2018: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-04/bbc-global-survey-a-world-divided-2018.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> 'Ethnic diversity in religious free schools', British Humanist Association, Sept 2016: <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016-09-15-FINAL-Ethnic-diversity-in-religious-Free-Schools.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Due to the opposition of the Catholic Education Service to the 50% cap on religious selection, there are no Catholic free schools.



Indeed, research from 2013 found that on average Catholic schools admitted 4.4% fewer children from Asian backgrounds than would be expected given their local areas, worse than any other type of school.<sup>13</sup> The effect of this should be clear – a mix of schools in a local area, some with very high proportions of Asian pupils, some with very low proportions of Asian pupils. In other words, a segregated community. The impact of this segregation in terms of pupil attitudes is outlined in our response to question 3.

Given the evidence we have from the data on the 50% cap that open admission arrangements leads to greater ethnic integration, the Government should seriously consider ending its continued support for religiously selective schools.

### ***Socio-economic segregation***

It is now widely accepted that religious selection almost always acts as a proxy for socio-economic selection too. In other words, wherever religious selection criteria are employed, the access of children from poorer backgrounds is negatively affected.

In the last couple of years alone, the Education Policy Institute has found that religiously selective schools ‘educate a lower proportion of disadvantaged children’, and ‘enrol a larger proportion of high attaining pupils’;<sup>14</sup> the Sutton Trust has found that ‘faith schools are among the most socially selective category of top school, more than three times as socially selective compared to their catchment area than non-faith schools’;<sup>15</sup> and research published jointly by The Challenge, SchoolDash, and the ICoCo Foundation found that ‘faith schools are more likely to cater to more advantaged students’, recommending that ‘the collective impact of faith schools... needs to be examined’.<sup>16</sup>

Whether it is the intention of religiously selective faith schools to manipulate their intakes in favour of more affluent pupils or not, the effect is clear and must be addressed.

### **Religious Education**

It was disappointing not to see any mention of religious education (RE) in the green paper, particularly given its potential to contribute to the Government’s ambitions. In our recent submission to the Commission on RE, we set out the purpose that we believe the subject should fulfil:

‘We believe that RE should provide pupils in all types of school the opportunity to consider philosophical and fundamental questions, and that in an open society we should learn about each other’s beliefs, including humanist ones. We want a subject on the curriculum which helps young people to form and explore their own beliefs and develop an understanding of beliefs and values different from their own; contributes to social cohesion and mutual understanding; enriches

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<sup>13</sup> Religious schools most racially segregated state schools, new findings show’, Humanists UK, 18 October 2013:

<https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/18/religious-schools-racially-segregated-state-schools-new-findings-show/>

<sup>14</sup> Faith Schools, Pupil Performance and Social Selection – Education Policy Institute

<sup>15</sup> Selective Comprehensives 2017 – The Sutton Trust

<sup>16</sup> Understanding School Segregation in England: 2011 to 2016 – The Challenge, SchoolDash, and the ICoCo Foundation

pupils' knowledge of the religious and humanist heritage of humanity and so supports other subjects such as History, English Literature, Art, Music, and Geography; and allows pupils to engage with serious ethical and philosophical questions in a way that develops important skills of critical thinking, reasoning and inquiry. As such, RE should be inclusive, pluralistic, objective, fair, balanced, and relevant to all pupils, in all types of school, allowing them to explore a variety of religions and non-religious worldviews.'

In other words, RE is the subject in the school curriculum that is best placed to deliver exactly what the Government wants to see of its education system. Good RE prepares children to live in a modern, diverse society, promoting mutual understanding and respect between people of all backgrounds and with all beliefs. Moreover, it gives children and young people a crucial grounding in the beliefs, practices, and traditions that make up our cultural heritage, emphasising both our shared heritage and our shared values. RE of this nature ought to be at the heart of the Government's plans for the education system's contribution to integration, not omitted from them entirely.

As an aside, it is worth noting that while good, inclusive, and balanced RE can lead to all the benefits listed above, RE that is narrow, doctrinaire, and exclusive can lead to just the opposite. Faith schools are free to teach RE in this way, and while some claim not to, it is clear that a great many do. This kind of RE, with its narrow focus on the particular religion of the school, often to the exclusion of all others, and its tendency to proselytise rather than inform, does not build mutual understanding or respect, it does not prepare children for life in a diverse society, and it does not encourage children to make up their own minds about questions of morality and purpose. In supporting **good RE**, the Government should consider withdrawing the freedom of religious schools to teach 'faith-based' or 'confessional' RE and to teach a broad, balanced, and objective syllabus instead.

Good and bad RE notwithstanding, however, the subject has not been properly supported in recent years - its omission from the Ebacc and the significant withdrawal of bursary funding for RE teacher training being just two examples. The Commission on Religious Education is due to publish its final report in September 2018 and will make a number of recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the subject and its provision in England. We urge the Government to take heed of those recommendations and explore how it can better support this vital subject going forward.

## **PSHE**

All schools are required to promote the social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development of their pupils, and to prepare them for life beyond the school gates. Schools should be encouraged to do this in the way the school as a whole is run, of course, but delivering a full PSHE curriculum is an important and effective way of fulfilling this duty.

The Department for Education acknowledged this only recently in a briefing on the value and effectiveness of PSHE. The briefing states:

'The evidence shows that personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education can improve the physical and psychosocial well-being of pupils. A virtuous cycle can be achieved, whereby pupils with better health and well-being can achieve better academically, which in turn leads to greater success.'

'... PSHE education provides an opportunity to provide or enhance skills such as perseverance, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self-management, self-respect, teamwork, locus of control, time and stress management.'<sup>17</sup>

This evidence is well-established and has been helpfully rounded up by the PSHE Association on its website.<sup>18</sup>

The value of PSHE is currently reflected in the fact that independent schools are required to provide PSHE to their pupils, as set out by the Independent School Standards. These standards state explicitly that PSHE 'encourages respect for other people', 'enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options', 'and helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential'.<sup>19</sup> It is not acceptable that pupils at private schools are able to avail themselves of these benefits, while pupils at state-funded schools are not.

If the Government is to ensure that all children are prepared for life in modern Britain, PSHE must be made compulsory in **all** schools. Due to the provisions of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government is now able to make this change through regulation rather than primary legislation. We urge it to seize this opportunity as soon as possible.

### **Unregistered schools**

The green paper announced that the Government 'intend[s] to amend the registration requirement for independent education settings so that all such settings which children attend full-time during the school day have to register, and we will consult in due course on detailed proposals.'

This is an incredibly welcome step and one that we have been calling for for some time.<sup>20</sup> As we identify on our website:

'The education provided in many unregistered religious schools is known to be narrow in its scope, predominantly scriptural in its content, and deeply conservative, intolerant, and extreme in its outlook. In a series of advice notes to the Secretary of State for Education in 2015 and 2016, former Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw detailed the findings of inspectors in a number of unregistered Muslim settings, including 'a narrow Islamic-focused curriculum', 'inappropriate books and other texts including misogynistic, homophobic and anti-Semitic material', and 'children and young people... at significant risk of harm and indoctrination'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> PSHE: a review of impact and effective practice, DfE, March 2015:

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/system/files/Review%20of%20effective%20practice.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Evidence and research, PSHE Association, May 2018:

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/what-we-do/evidence-and-research>

<sup>19</sup> Independent School Standards 2014:

[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/pdfs/uksi\\_20143283\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/pdfs/uksi_20143283_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> For more details of Humanists UK's work on illegal schools, see:

<https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/faith-schools/illegal-faith-schools/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unregistered-schools-ofsted-advice-note>

'Similarly, Ofsted reports published by Humanists UK in 2016 exposed the situation within illegal Charedi schools, revealing that the curriculum 'encourages cultural and ethnic insularity' and prevents pupils from 'developing a wider, deeper understanding of different faiths, communities, cultures and lifestyles, including those of England.'<sup>22</sup> Former pupils report to us that they only study the Talmud and the Torah, often for fourteen hours a day, six days a week, and leave education as adults unable to speak any English, in spite of sometimes being third or fourth generation Londoners. They report having frequently experienced physical abuse by staff, something that was recently exposed as part of a joint investigation by Humanists UK and the BBC,<sup>23</sup> as well as being aware of child sexual exploitation too.

Needless to say, the children trapped within these settings are neither integrated with wider society nor prepared to live in it even if they were. In fact, as the above evidence illustrates, much of the teaching within these settings is explicitly designed to isolate and to foster a negative opinion of people living outside the immediate community. We look forward to commenting on the proposals to regulate unregistered schools and urge the Government to bring forward these proposals as soon as possible.

## **Question 8**

**The Green Paper sets out proposals to support parents with their choice of out-of-school education settings. Do you agree with this approach?  
Not sure/Don't know**

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

### **Guidance for parents**

While not a bad idea in itself, we are not clear what problem this proposed guidance is seeking to solve. The out-of-school settings identified as the most concerning by the Government are those that espouse a doctrinaire, intolerant, or extremist ethos. The communities they serve tend to be closed, and parents send their children to them either *because* they espouse this ethos, or because they are all but obliged to by their religious or community leaders. Guidance will not help such parents or their children. Much firmer action must be taken.

### **Voluntary code of practice for out-of-school settings**

The green paper states that the Government will be consulting on a voluntary code of practice for out-of-school settings, which will 'set out clear standards for providers, explaining what they need to do in order to run a safe setting.' Whilst we welcome the

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<sup>22</sup> Humanists UK reveals illegal faith schools allowed to stay open for years despite repeated Ofsted warnings, January 2016:  
<https://humanism.org.uk/2016/01/15/bha-reveals-illegal-jewish-school-allowed-to-stay-open-for-years-despite-repeated-ofsted-warnings/>

<sup>23</sup> Joint BBC/Humanists UK investigation reveals abuse at illegal religious schools, February 2018:  
<https://humanism.org.uk/2018/02/26/joint-bbc-humanists-uk-investigation-abuse-at-illegal-religious-schools/>

Government's commitment to safeguarding children within out-of-school settings, we do not believe a voluntary code will capture those settings of most concern.

When the Government consulted on a system of **mandatory** registration and inspection for out-of-school settings back in 2016, it did so on the understanding that there were a number of settings, mostly religious, where the ethos, teaching, and conditions were particularly concerning. In our response to that consultation, we commented:

'It seems likely that settings which do not currently fulfil the proposed obligations, and which **may not have any intention of doing so**, will seek to evade registration. This may be particularly true of religious settings such as yeshivas and madrassas whose teaching does not comply with the proposed obligations regarding British values'.<sup>24</sup>

Setting aside our disappointment that the Government has chosen not to introduce any form of regulation for out-of-school settings, it is clear that a 'voluntary code' will not solve the problem we identify. Only mandatory registration and inspection, bolstered by the threat of closure and/or prosecution, can tackle settings that are intent on providing an entirely unacceptable, intolerant education. We ask that this issue is considered by the Government before full details of the proposed code are published for consultation later this year.

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<sup>24</sup> Response of Humanists UK to out-of-school education settings consultation, January 2016: <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015-01-07-v3-JH-RT-PD-Out-of-school-education-settings-consultation-BHA-response-FINAL.pdf>

## **Chapter 4: Boosting English Language**

### **Question 9**

**(a) The Green Paper proposes a number of measures to improve the offer for people to learn English. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

We support the overall approach of the Green Paper which recognises that there is not a one-size-fits-all measure that can address a lack of proficiency in English. There are many reasons why people do not obtain a sufficient standard of English. For example, we work to support apostates through our programme Faith to Faithless, those who leave isolated or coercive religious groups or cults. Some ex-members of the Charedi community despite living in the UK for the whole of their lives are not taught English and are taught to mistrust secular authorities. This means that those who leave the community are often not able or unaware that there are support services out there to help improve their English. As a result, we believe that there should be as many entry points into language support as possible and responsibility for provision should be controlled at the local level where it can be adapted to respond to the specific needs within local communities.

**(b) Do you have any other suggestions on how we can improve the offer for people to learn English?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

In Faith to Faithless, we run the only support network in the UK for apostates, who leave extreme or coercive religious groups or cults. There is a link between such groups, which can be very isolated from other communities, and a lack of proficiency in English language. For example, some ex-members of the Charedi community despite living in the UK for the whole of their lives are not taught English and are taught to mistrust secular authorities. This should be recognised as a distinct barrier to improving English language skills. The integrated communities strategy should recognise both apostates and those living in isolated religious groups as particularly vulnerable groups who require specific targeted language policy.

## **Chapter 5: Places and Community**

### **Question 10**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

The strategy does not mention the link between segregated housing and segregated schools. We have dealt with the impact that faith schools can have on segregation elsewhere in our response, but it is worth reiterating here that many 'residentially segregated communities' have been created, and are being created, by schools operating discriminatory admissions policies. Again, the evidence for this is set out elsewhere, but suffice to say that the area around a school that caters for one particular religious or ethnic group will quickly become dominated by that group. This, in turn, reduces the diversity of the areas around it. Residentially segregated communities can be very difficult to diversify, and certainly there are no quick fixes, but ensuring that schools in these areas are open and attractive to all is an important way of transforming segregated communities over time.

## **Chapter 6: Increasing Economic Opportunity**

### **Question 11**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to provide tailored support to people, especially those who may not currently be active in the labour market, to build their confidence and skills to take up employment. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***



## **Chapter 7: Rights and Freedoms**

### **Question 12**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to encourage integration and resist divisive views or actions. Do you agree with this approach?**

No

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

Although we supports the approach outlined in this chapter overall, we believe that some of the measures proposed lack detail and clarity and do not consider the role played by the non-religious, who comprise over 50% of the UK population, in promoting social and community integration. The proposals touch upon areas of tension between British values and freedom of religion and belief but lack details about how the strategy will approach dispute resolution. Additionally, there is no mention of the non-religious and the role that secular community institutions play. We believe that any strategy must include consideration of both of these areas.

We are concerned that the strategy contains a commitment to expanding the Strengthening Faith Institutions programme to help these institutions upskill their staff and improve their governance structures. This support is not limited to improving the work of faith groups towards community integration, but goes further to help these faith institutions develop 'robust financial management procedures'. This commitment goes beyond the intended aim of the strategy, which is promote integration between communities, to directly promoting faith institutions themselves. This support will allow such faith institutions to concentrate more of their resources upon their evangelical mission, at the expense of non-religious and secular institutions who will not receive government support to ensure they have robust financial governance. This is privileging religious community institutions over other secular or non-religious community institutions. We request that an Equality Impact Assessment is carried out on this proposal to ensure that it does not unfairly disadvantage those groups and institutions that are involved in bringing communities together, but are not part of a religious organisation.

We are also concerned that strengthening faith institutions will have a detrimental effect on marginalised groups within those communities, who would be further prevented from being able to challenge the dominant religious narrative. Though our work with the apostate support network Faith to Faithless, we aware that some faith communities suppress, control and, in many cases, simply deny the existence of internal minorities, such as Ex-Muslims or LGBT people. Many apostates have experience many barriers in the process of leaving their faith community and due to the restrictive nature of their environment are not prepared for life outside of the community and are unaware of support services. The Integrated Community Strategy needs to be mindful that a drive for integration does not lead to the empowerment of faith institutions to suppress internal diversity. Integration should not be at the expense of an individual's rights within that community, including their right to change or abandon their religion and belief, to leave that community, and to be protected from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, marital status or gender identity.

## **Relationships and Sex Education in faith schools**

The green paper admirably states:

‘The government will always protect people’s legitimate right to free speech, to hold traditional views and to practise their religion within the law, but we will not shy away from challenging cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals, restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain.’

To the extent that this position will be shared by most, the challenge is in deciding what constitutes ‘harmful’ and what limits, as a consequence, ought to be put on freedom of speech or on freedom of religion or belief. There are obviously a number of scenarios where such limits could be or already are deemed appropriate, but we want to focus on what limits should be enforced on teaching within schools.

Last year the Government legislated to make relationships and sex education (RSE) compulsory in all English schools. As welcome (and overdue) as this was, the Department’s subsequent clarification that ‘faith schools will continue to be able to teach in accordance with the tenets of their faith’ is troubling. Put simply, this statement risks inviting some faith schools to deliver RSE in a discriminatory and damaging way that may well fail to prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain, either by undermining their autonomy and self-expression or by fostering intolerance.

This concern is easy to evidence. In fact, in the course of the Government’s recent consultation on the content of RSE, we revealed various religious groups recommending that the following be included:

- ‘The courtesies and respect due to each of the sexes (for example, men taking on harder physical tasks etc.)’<sup>25</sup>
- ‘The mental and physical risks of sexual promiscuity and homosexual practices’<sup>26</sup>
- ‘Schools should not be required to teach that gender is fluid or that same-sex marriage is morally equivalent to marriage between a man and a woman.’<sup>27</sup>

Whilst, of course, there should be no limit on people holding these views, nor (necessarily) on expressing them in certain settings, we do not believe it is acceptable for these views to be communicated to children by state-funded schools, religious or otherwise. These views and the doctrines behind them have led to a great deal of suffering and hardship for women and LGBT people, and they continue to. The Government has stated boldly that it ‘will not shy away from challenging cultures and practices that are harmful to individuals, restrict their rights and hold them back from making the most of the opportunities of living in modern Britain’. Unfortunately, that is

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<https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SPUC-briefing-notes-on-DfE-consultation-Jan-2018-final.pdf>

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<https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/RSE-Consultation-Guidance-Christian-Concern.pdf>

27

<https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Family-Education-Trust-rsebriefingjan2018.pdf>

precisely the effect that homophobic and misogynistic teaching has on children and young people, particularly when it is presented as the corporate policy of the school or religious community of which the children are a part. This mustn't be allowed, and the Government ought to be clear about this.

### **Question 13**

**The Green Paper proposes measures to address practices which can impact on the rights of women. Do you agree with this approach?**

Yes

***Please enter any additional comments below:***

#### **Marriage**

We support the proposals to help voluntary sector organisations to do more to educate and raise awareness that unless religious marriages are conducted in a registered place of worship, then they are not legally recognised. This is an issue that has a disproportionate negative affect upon the Muslim community and particularly Muslim women. Many women are often not aware that judgements from so-called 'sharia courts', as well as other settings like beth din, are not legally recognised, that there is institutionally less favourable treatment of women, and that by securing a legal marriage, they will have the right to redress in divorce, inheritance and custody disputes in the civil courts.

However, we would be concerned if the law were to change to make it so that any religious weddings *must* be accompanied by a legal marriage. Couples may have perfectly legitimate reasons for wanting to have a symbolic wedding ceremony only that is not recognised by the law, and may be fully aware of the implications of doing so. For such couples, forcing them to have a legal marriage may well be a denial of their freedom of religion or belief.

Instead we would welcome more limited legislative reform in this area that focuses on ensuring that for every non-legal wedding a couple enters into, the individual conducting the wedding has to guarantee that the couple is aware that the wedding is non-legal, and the consequences of this in terms of their rights. Such an approach has been proposed in the past by Baroness Cox through her Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bills.

It would be particularly ironic, were the law be changed to make all wedding ceremonies compulsorily legally recognised ceremonies, as humanists have been pushing for years for legal recognition for humanist ceremonies in England and Wales, with no support from the Government.

This is despite humanist marriages being legally recognised in Scotland since 2005. In the 13 years since their recognition, humanist marriages are the single most popular form of religion or belief-based marriage in Scotland, with over 4,900 wedding ceremonies performed. This overwhelmingly suggests that humanist marriages are popular and that legal recognition of them is practically achievable. In 2017, Humanists UK won a legal case at the High Court to establish recognition for humanist marriage in Northern Ireland. We are currently awaiting judgment in an appeal against this decision by the Attorney General.

In May the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group published its report, *'Any Lawful Impediment?'* A report of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group's inquiry into the legal recognition of humanist marriage in England and Wales, which concluded that the human rights case for such recognition is overwhelming.<sup>28</sup> The Government should extend legal recognition to humanist marriages at the soonest opportunity. And regardless of whether it does or not, it must be mindful of the impact of any reforms in this area on non-legal humanist wedding ceremonies.

Humanists believe in a secular legal system, where the law applies equality to all people, regardless of religion or belief, and laws are made on the basis of reason, empathy, and evidence and not upon religious or doctrinal considerations. We oppose the recommendation by the independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales to create an official regulatory body for 'sharia courts.' We are pleased that the integrated communities strategy recognises that there is a significant danger that introducing any regulatory scheme would result in these 'courts' being given legitimacy as alternative forms of dispute resolution.

### **Empowering women and girls through education**

We welcome the Government's commitment to supporting women and girls, particularly those marginalised by certain religious practices and institutions. The green paper is absolutely right to state that 'respect for faith communities' cannot extend to turning a blind eye 'if women and girls are denied their right to education or to participate in decision making, or when the education of children is inadequate to prepare them for life in modern Britain'.

We are concerned, however, that too many girls continue to be held back by the education provided to them in some faith schools. The Department will presumably be well-furnished with evidence from Ofsted on this issue, and many of the examples are extremely troubling.

Earlier this year, for instance, we revealed that a state faith school in London was redacting its textbooks to remove references to various women's rights as well as examples of women socialising with men. The school's behaviour policy also stated that 'girls may only visit public libraries if accompanied by a parent'.<sup>29</sup>

In 2016, a letter written by the leaders of a Charedi sect, which oversees an independent school, stated:

'It has lately become the new trend that girls and married women are pursuing degrees in special education. Some attend classes and others online. And so we'd like to let their parents know that it is against the Torah.

'We will be very strict about this. **No girls attending our school are allowed to study and get a degree. It is dangerous. Girls who will not abide will be forced to leave our school.** Also, we will not give any jobs or teaching position

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<sup>28</sup> <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/APPHG-report-on-humanist-marriage.pdf>

<sup>29</sup>

<https://humanism.org.uk/2018/03/09/state-faith-school-redacts-textbooks-to-remove-mentions-of-homosexuals-and-womens-freedoms/>

in the school to girls who've been to college or have a degree.'<sup>30</sup>

In 2015, the Rabia Girls' and Boys' School in Luton was criticised by inspectors for, among other things, not giving girls 'the same access to laboratory facilities that the boys have' and teaching a design and technology syllabus that 'limits girls to activities on knitting and sewing'.<sup>31</sup>

It is also worth mentioning the co-educational faith schools that segregate girls and boys for the entirety of their education, an issue brought into sharp focus by the *Al Hijrah* case earlier this year.<sup>32</sup> In that case, we believe the Court of Appeal was right to rule that such segregation represented unlawful discrimination, but we are concerned about the consequences that ruling might now have. Some schools have already proposed to 'de-amalgamate' into two separate, single-sex schools, and this solution appears to have been accepted by the Government. However, we urge the Government to be mindful that, given that the segregation is enforced for overtly religious reasons, and most likely to the detriment of girls, allowing such schools to simply split in two may not improve the lot of the girls within them. Indeed, by simply entrenching the segregation, it may be to their detriment.

We would also remind the Government that while the Equality Act 2010 does contain an exemption for single-sex schools, this exemption only applies to those sections of the Act that prohibit discrimination in school admissions. For obvious reasons, single-sex schools are not exempt from the prohibitions on gender, or any other, discrimination more generally, including in what pupils are taught. If schools like *Al Hijrah* continue to teach a discriminatory or gender stereotyped curriculum to girls (or indeed to boys) once they have de-amalgamated, that is clearly not acceptable, and fails to adequately prepare the children involved for life in modern Britain. The Department and Ofsted should deal with this issue **before** giving schools permission to de-amalgamate, not after. If schools do not show willing, as seems likely, then they should either be forced to educate girls and boys alongside each other, or they should be closed.

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<sup>30</sup> Girls banned from university, Faith Schoolers Anonymous, 2016:

<https://faithschoolersanonymous.uk/2016/08/girls-banned-from-going-to-university/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/130331>

<sup>32</sup>

<https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/summary-interim-executive-board-of-al-hijrah-school-20171013.pdf>

## **Chapter 8: Measuring Success**

### **Question 14**

**The Green Paper proposes core integration measures for national and local government to focus on. Do you agree these are the right measures?**

Yes

*Please enter any additional comments below:*

**For more details, information and evidence, contact Humanists UK:**

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