Humanists UK

APPG ON HATE CRIME INQUIRY:
HOW DO WE BUILD COMMUNITY COHESION WHEN HATE CRIME IS ON THE RISE

Response from Humanists UK, July 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 works actively on education, integration, human rights and equality, and secularism, and is part of many related coalitions including the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF), the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (REC). We also run Faith to Faithless, a community support network for apostates and those 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, in particular around blasphemy and apostasy laws, as well as in support of LGBT rights, children's rights, women's reproductive rights, and more.

RESPONSE TO INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. **Best practice: What schemes, initiatives and projects exist to build community cohesion in the face of rising hate crime and hate speech?**

The education system is the best tool we have to promote community cohesion. 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. However, 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. All factors that lead to division, misunderstanding, and inter-community tension. The evidence for this is clear.

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

Religious segregation

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.[1] 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,[2] bringing children from different religious and non-religious backgrounds should be a priority for the Government.

Ethnic segregation

While schools are not allowed to select pupils on the basis of their ethnicity, religious selection 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.[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 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';[4] 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';[5] and research published jointly by The Challenge, SchoolDash, and the ICoCo Foundation found that

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[1] '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
[2] *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
[3] '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
[4] Faith Schools, Pupil Performance and Social Selection - Education Policy Institute
https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/faith-schools-pupil-performance-social-selection/
[5] Selective Comprehensives 2017 - The Sutton Trust
https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/selective-comprehensives-2017-state-school-attainment/

'faith schools are more likely to cater to more advantaged students', recommending that 'the collective impact of faith schools… needs to be examined'.[6]

The most effective approach to encouraging community cohesion is to facilitate the mixing of children in school. 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 significantly decreased, and liking and outgroup contact significantly increased for both Asian-British and White British pupils.'[7]

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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[6] Understanding School Segregation in England: 2011 to 2016 - The Challenge, SchoolDash, and the ICoCo Foundation
https://the-challenge.org/uploads/documents/TCN-Understanding-School-Segregation-in-England-2011-to-2016.pdf
[7] *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

The report concluded that 'the value to researching and implementing policies to encourage integration and contact is therefore clear'.[8]

The evidence is absolutely clear that mixing in schools is vital to promoting integration and social cohesion. 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. We are concerned by the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Education to allow religious organisations to bypass the free school assumption and open new 100% religiously selective voluntary aided schools.[9] The evidence strongly suggests that this will have a negative impact on community cohesion.

Humanists UK also operates a support network for apostates, Faith to Faithless, which not only provides peer support to those leaving controlling and coercive religious communities and cults, but provides training for statutory services in tackling hate crime targeted at apostates. We believe that if the Government were to support the roll out of this training to all police forces and children's services then such crimes could be reduced.

2. **What can national and local government do to increase community cohesion in the face of rising hate crime and hate speech?**

As above, we believe that the most effective measure for increasing community cohesion is to facilitate the mixing of children from different backgrounds and experiences at school. This can be achieved by ending support for religious selection in admissions criteria.

Religious Education

We believe that community cohesion can be promoted through children in all types of school being able to to learn, question, and understand each other's beliefs and especially those from other religious or ethnic groups. We believe that this can be achieved through reform of Religious Education, so that it focuses on helping young people to form and explore their own beliefs and develop an understanding of those different from their own. Good RE should contribute to social cohesion and mutual understanding; enrich pupils' knowledge of the religious and humanist heritage of humanity and so support other subjects such as History, English Literature, Art, Music, and Geography. 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, the reasons why someone might change or stop holding a religious belief, and humanism.

However, faith schools are free to teach Religious Education with a narrow focus on the particular religion of the school, often to the exclusion of all others, and to proselytise

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[8]Simon Burgess and Lucinda Platt, *Inter-ethnic relations of teenagers in England's schools: the role of school and neighbourhood ethnic composition,* Discussion Papers CPD 07/18 Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration
http://www.cream-migration.org/publ_uploads/CDP_07_18.pdf

[9] Freddie Whittaker, *Damian Hinds 'cannot say' how many new voluntary-aided schools will open,* Schools Week, 14 May 2018
https://schoolsweek.co.uk/damian-hinds-cannot-say-how-many-new-voluntary-aided-schools-will-open/

rather than inform. This does not build mutual understanding or respect, it does not prepare children for life in a diverse society. In supporting **good RE**, the Government should consider withdrawing the freedom of religious schools to teach 'faith-based' or 'confessional' Religious Education and to teach a broad, balanced, and objective syllabus instead.

Its omission from the Ebacc and the significant withdrawal of bursary funding for Religious Education teacher training is also undermining the effectiveness of this education as a means of promoting community cohesion. 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 also believe that local and national government could do more to raise awareness of hate crimes targeted at apostates. Faith to Faithless provide training for police forces and children's services focusing on identifying abuse within isolated religious communities, supporting those who leave, and tackling hate crime.

3. **What role do police forces play in increasing community cohesion in the face of rising hate crime and hate speech? Are there practical examples of their work, say after terrorist attacks when cohesion may be affected?**

Police forces have an important role to play in providing protection and access to support services for vulnerable individuals who are ostracised from isolated or coercive religious communities or experience hate crime as a result of choosing to leave such communities. Humanists UK is currently the only organisation providing training to statutory services, such as the police, and third sector organisations into abuse experienced by those who leave coercive religious communities and cults, through our section Faith to Faithless.

Through our work with Faith to Faithless we have seen significant patterns of 'spiritual/religious abuse.' This is characterised by a systemic pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour in which religious texts or beliefs are used as a reason and justification of this behaviour. Controlling behaviour may stem from the victim's dress or make-up which is not approved by the family/community, resisting an arranged marriage, seeking divorce and reporting domestic violence. This abuse is often perpetuated by family and community members using shame and guilt to ostracise or control the victim, and can include hate speech and physical violence. Such abuse has a negative impact on cohesion between the religious community and those who leave it, and on relations between the community and wider society.

Apostates are a particularly vulnerable group, who experience multiple and unique barriers to accessing support services, both whilst still living within their religious group or cult and after leaving. There is an intersectionality between the religious abuse experienced within closed religious communities and other protected characteristics such as sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which can make abuse hard to identify by outside agencies. Many apostates form a minority within a minority and are at acute risk of homelessness or honour killing after familial rejection. Some ex-members of the Charedi Jewish community despite living in the UK for the whole of their lives are not taught English and are taught to mistrust secular authorities. We recommend police forces build into their training programmes a module focusing on

abuse within closed religious communities. We have already piloted such training with the London Metropolitan Police Force and Childline with significantly positive feedback. In the Met Police we trained a group of hate crime officers, who all spoke about the need for police officers to be more aware of the issues apostates face. The training led several of them to reassess their understanding of hate crime towards this group of people as there were no policies in place or mention of apostates in any other part of police training or practice.

4. **What role can community organisations, charities and others play to increase community cohesion in the face of rising hate crime and hate speech?**

The role of community organisations in increasing community cohesion is to promote the ideals of tolerance, fairness, and equality between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Unfortunately, community organisations and charities that have a religious character are exempt from many of the provisions of the Equality Act and do not have to act in accordance with the Human Rights Act when providing public services on behalf of the state as public authorities.[10] These exceptions have divisive effects on the community with implications for social cohesion and equality, as one religious group is seen as privileged, even in the delivery of public services. These exceptions can lead to discriminatory treatment against employees of no or another religion, unfairly poor promotion prospects for those of the 'wrong' religion, reduced rights for service users of the 'wrong' religion, less favourable treatment of LGBT people whether employees or service users, religious harassment, and the artificial boosting with public funds of the prestige and strength of religious organisations.

We recommend that the Government amends legislation to extend section 6 of the Human Rights Act to include religious organisations providing public services on behalf of the state, and to end the exemptions in the Equality Act for religious groups which allow much egregious discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and on other grounds such as sexual orientation to continue lawfully.

5. **Are there projects that help individuals to support their emotional, mental health and practical needs when they are targeted online and offline?**

Faith to Faithless runs a series of facilitated peer support groups to help apostates when they are survivors of hate crimes. These groups meet, mostly in London, in a variety of public and safe spaces, depending on the needs of the survivors. They serve to provide emotional support, and the facilitator is on hand to provide signposting to organisations and statutory bodies the apostate should turn to when a hate crime occurs. The main website of Faith to Faithless provides resources and signposting to apostates around a large range of topics, and is the main way in which apostates get in touch to request support.[11]

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[10] As explained in our campaigns page on public service reform:
https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/secularism/public-service-reform/
[11] https://www.faithtofaithless.com/

Faith to Faithless is the only service that provides support to apostates, and there is a recognition that limited capacity means we are not able to offer help on the scale at which it is needed. We need more capacity in order to be able to introduce a helpline and more resources, not only for apostates but for their friends and family members who are supportive of them as well.

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

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