London Probation Trust

* *With support from the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union, European Commission - Directorate-General Home Affairs.*

Reducing Influences that Radicalise Prisoners (RIRP) EU Project *

RESEARCH PAPER

PART I: 'The International Context', Linda Pizani-Williams - European Institute for Social Services (EISS)

PART II: 'Muslim Offenders convicted of terrorism related offences in the UK- Executive Summary', Alyas Karmani

PART I: The International Context

Linda Pizani-Williams, June 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explore the responses to acts of violent extremism in different European countries, with particular focus on the criminal justice agencies, both in custody and the community. Particular attention is paid to the Reducing Influences that Radicalise Prisoners (RIRP) Project partner countries: UK, Netherlands, Germany and Spain, although there are interesting examples from around the globe which are included. This paper also establishes the international context for the case studies undertaken by Alyas Karmani (2008-2010), commissioned by the Project Board, which sought to identify the influences which radicalise Muslim offenders.

Extensive desktop research has generated a wealth of information and publications which are referred to in this paper and listed in Appendix A. In addition, a questionnaire was circulated via the European Organisation for Probation (CEP) network to ascertain the extent to which violent extremist offenders had given rise to academic research or specific interventions and programmes in different European countries.

What is evident from this research is that there is considerable attention being given to the issue internationally. This means that there is an evolving body of research and evaluation. For example, there are currently two research projects being undertaken by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), one of which is comparing and evaluating government policies on terrorist and extremist prisoners and the various programmes and initiatives aimed at de-radicalisation and rehabilitation in 15 different countries.[1] This research is being carried out in with the University of Maryland (START) and is funded by the UK Home Office, the Dutch and Australian governments. This project is expected to be concluded in 2010. The other ICSR research project aims to enhance understanding of the dynamics of violent radicalisation by comparing pathways into radicalisation in Europe and North America. This comprehensive research, carried out in collaboration with the University of Maryland and the Swedish National Defence College, is focusing on Muslim communities and radicalised offenders, to better understand how radicalisation occurs and who might be most susceptible to this phenomenon.

[1] Not yet published

2. CONTEXT

The concern in the Western world with Al-Qaeda influenced violent extremism has become significant since the events of 11th September 2001 in New York, March 2004 in Madrid and July 2005 in London. All European governments are involved in a process of understanding and preventing violent radicalisation within their Muslim communities, some drawing on their experience of other movements such as right wing extremists, the IRA or ETA. Whilst Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe, driven by immigration and high birth-rates, it represents only 5.2% of the population and 2.4% of the global Muslim community.[2] Countries with historically high Muslim populations, such as Indonesia (88%), Egypt (95%) and Saudi Arabia (97%) have been tackling the issue of violent radicalisation for many years and introduced a range of deradicalisation programmes, with varying degrees of success and some questionable methods.

Approaches to De-radicalisation

The range of responses to violent radicalisation has varied from coercive government-led approaches to more individual based preventative methods.

For example in Egypt, the government claims to have transformed the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG), the organisation that was responsible for the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981. The EIG renounced violence in 1997, but at that time 20,000 of its supporters were in jail and thousands of others had been killed by Egyptian security forces. It is unclear, therefore, how much the switch was based on a genuine ideological transformation rather than on pure strategic calculation. However, the group's ideological leaders (mostly released) have written 25 volumes of revisions to key doctrinal issues including the concept of *takfir* – declaring a Muslim an apostate and therefore permissible to kill; attacks on civilians and foreign tourists; and waging jihad against a Muslim ruler who does not apply sharia law. In Indonesia, which has a large deradicalisation programme, there are some doubts over the claimed success because it appears that those who are "cured" have been bribed with economic inducements, such as better housing, employment and money. However, Indonesia has since moved towards the more common practice of recruiting former militant leaders to persuade radical extremists to renounce violence.[3]

[2] S. Stencel, A. Useem, T. Miller, and S. Tisdale (eds.), *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population*, (Washington: Pew Research Centre, 2009).
[3] Jeb Koogler, *Deradicalisation Programmes: Changing Minds? (Foreign Policy Watch, 2007)*

Other governments, particularly in Europe, have adopted a different approach, distinguishing between structural, motivational and environmental factors. The United Kingdom and Netherlands for example are investing in preventing radicalisation, focusing on early intervention and working closely with local communities.[4] In the United Nations First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism (March 2009), seventeen of the 34 respondent countries have designed counter-radicalisation programmes which rely on cooperation between the state and communities and have introduced frameworks to empower and amplify moderate local voices to rebut and discredit violent extremist ideology. Within Europe, one of the first programmes to support young people who wanted to disengage from radical racist or neo-Nazi groups, was Norway's Exit Project established in 1997, copied by Finland in 1998 and in Germany in 2000. These projects were managed by local authorities but implemented by local community leaders, youth workers, teachers and others with experience of working directly with young people. This model has been adapted and developed in several countries to deal with radical Islamism.

Mobilisation of 'Radical Islam'

The political response to violent radicalisation has had an impact on the traditional breeding grounds for extremism. The 2007 report on Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe[5] (ICSR), suggests that Islamist militant recruitment efforts have largely been driven underground, with little overt propagation and recruitment now occurring at mosques. This is partly due to legislation and criminalisation of incitement to racial and/or religious hatred and partly due to the response of the majority Muslim society who have become more vigilant and willing to confront and expose extremism within local communities. Rather than radical Imams, this report suggests that it is militant activists who are orchestrating recruitment from "gateway" organisations, exploiting young Muslims' identity conflicts between Western society and the "cultural" Islam of their parents. The report also finds a clear difference between countries in Southern Europe, where Muslim immigration is recent, and those in which the second and third generation of European Muslims is reaching adolescence, where language is less of an issue and the identity conflict is less pivotal.

[4] WODC, *First Inventory of Policy on Counter terrorism: Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US – research in progress (2006)*

[5] Peter R Neumann & Brooke Rogers, Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe, (London, ICSR, 2007)

There are geographical and demographic issues to consider in the spread of radical Islamism in Europe. In Spain, it's proximity to Morocco and Algeria (where two principal Salafist groups form part of al-Quaeda's North African network), has provided an easy route into Europe. Since the March 2005 attacks in Madrid, the Spanish security services have increased their surveillance of suspected Islamic radicals, and created the Joint Spanish-French Inquiry Corps which targets both ETA and Islamic extremists in Europe.

Environments for Recruitment

With the constraints faced by Islamist extremists in the "open" environment, other means of recruitment and indoctrination. One of the most vulnerable places for recruitment and radicalisation is in prisons and the United Nations report articulates the dilemma for prison administrations – whether to separate or integrate violent extremists within the prison population. "Allowing violent extremists to mix freely has carried serious costs in allowing them to seek out and successfully recruit fellow prisoners; but evidence also shows that separating extremists in separate blocks has allowed them to maintain an organisational hierarchy and hone their operational skills" [6] In 2005, Spanish authorities decided to separate radical Islamist prisoners from one another and disperse them throughout the country. Apart from managing the prison population, thirteen of the UN respondent states reported having developed or are in the process of developing special prison programmes aimed at preventing their incarceration facilities from becoming breeding grounds for terrorism and a pool for recruitment. Differences in national laws in relation to terrorist suspects create other issues, such as detention without formal charge, limited access to lawyers and relatives, or restricted access to prosecution files for defence lawyers.

A report published in November 2009 by the Quilliam Foundation in the UK highlights the issue of radicalisation in British prisons, suggesting that extremists initially radicalised in prisons take an average of 5 – 7 years to become fully violent, meaning that such prisoners leaving prison today may "graduate" into terrorism around 2015. The research identifies ways in which extremist prisoners are enabled to not only radicalise new recruits, but to perpetuate jihadist propaganda and promote violent attacks.[7]

[6] Cuthbertson (2004) quoted in First Report of the Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes, (UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, 2007)
[7] James Brandon, *Unlocking Al-Qaeda: Islamist Extremism in British Prisons, (London, Quilliam, 2009)*

Educational establishments are also perceived as vulnerable environments for recruitment, particularly in secondary and further education establishments. In recognition of this, many governments have introduced specific educational programmes designed to promote tolerance and mutual respect as part of the civic education curriculum. In addition, there are some specific support mechanisms being put in place for both teachers and young, vulnerable people who may be exposed to violent extremist influences. However, this is a particularly sensitive issue for secular societies such as France and the Netherlands.

An issue of increasing concern is the use of the internet which is not only used to propagate violent radicalisation, but an entirely new form of militant activism described by the ICSR as "virtual self-recruitment". Young disaffected Muslims can find "links to the jihad" and deepen their involvement in the Islamist militant movement through the internet and it is recognised as a global challenge to intervene in this process.

In addition to these, sports clubs, social groups and places of worship are all considered vulnerable places for recruitment, but greater vigilance and awareness in local communities has made it more difficult for violent extremists to exploit these opportunities.

Process of Dis-engagement

A study prepared by the Institute of Migration and Ethnic Studies, based at Amsterdam University, examined the process of disengagement and de-radicalisation by analysing the Moluccan movement in the 1970's, Squatters in the 1980's and Extreme Right Wing movement in the 1980's and 1990's.[8] They use this analysis to attempt to predict those factors which will facilitate the decline of radical Islamism. They highlight the impact of public opinion and media in alienating Muslims who do not feel accepted as part of Dutch society and because, in public debates, radicalism and Islam are often regarded as one and the same thing. If the Muslim community feel that they, as Muslims, are being held responsible for violent radicalisation it creates a sense of solidarity, causes people to close ranks and feeds anger and frustration. The study also highlights the consequences of the fundamental difference between Islamic radicalism and the previous cases, because "from the viewpoint of Dutch secular society, radical Islamic ideology is regarded as illegitimate and as an irrational cause whose arguments should not be taken seriously." "The division

[8] Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs, Jean Tillie, *Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation (Institute of Migration and Ethnic Studies, Amsterdam, 2008)*

between church and state means that the government is hardly able to be involved in an ideological discussion between radical and non-radical views, as this pertains to a religious ideology". It is probably for this reason that the innovative work which has been undertaken in the Netherlands has been facilitated by local communities and NGO's.

Most of the research also attempts to identify the causes of violent radicalisation, but this is clearly a complex phenomenon which cannot be reduced to a single issue. The United Nations report explores the degree to which inequality and deprivation can explain violent extremism and terrorism, but considers it to be an indirect correlation at best. However, respondents recognise that "economic and social inequalities (real or perceived) fuel discontent and encourage grievances that create conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism". Therefore, several countries have introduced policies and programmes designed to improve the social conditions and economic empowerment of minority groups in their societies as part of their overall counter-radicalisation strategy.

For some young people from Muslim immigrant families, Islam becomes something different from the Islam of their parents and as they find out more about it, it becomes a positive and more accessible means of expression for an individual to reinforce their sense of identity. This search for "pure" Islam can lead vulnerable young people to come to the attention of recruiters who prepare them ideologically and socialise them into the extremist "milieu" (ICSR: 2007). Recently published research by the Centre for European Policy Studies[9] suggests there is a distinction between the basis of violent radicalisation and that "Al-Qaeda in Western Europe is best understood as a youth movement, in which "young guys jump into violence" after a short and thin period of radicalisation. The degree of success achieved by Bin Laden has been not so much to have spread theology or ideology, but to have invented a narrative that could allow rebels without a cause to connect with a cause". If this proposition is correct, then it has significant implications for counter-radicalisation strategies.

An interesting article, written by Dr. Jeffrey Stevenson Murer, Lecturer on Collective Violence at the University of St. Andrews,[10] argues that airing extremist views would allow them to be properly, publicly discredited. He points out that some of the conservative Salafist positions are not dissimilar to conservative Christian sects – such as denouncing

[9] Michael Emerson (Ed.), *Ethno Religious Conflict in Europe: Typologies of Radicalisation in Europe's Muslim Communities, (Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2009)*
[10] Jeffrey Stevenson Murer, *Radical Citizenship, (Public Service Review: Home Affairs – Issue 19, 2009)*

homosexuality. He concludes that if conservative Christians are not seen as a potential threat to society when uttering content similar to conservative Muslims, it is not the content of the speech but Islam itself which causes concern, which inevitably exacerbates the sense of exclusion.

3. RESPONSES

The nature of the responses to violent radicalisation can be broadly divided into two approaches: prevention and de-radicalisation.

Prevention

Preventative actions take place locally, nationally and internationally. Examples of local interventions include the Preventing Extremism Project in Birmingham, which was launched in 2007 in response to several arrests in the Birmingham area under the "Prevention of Terrorism" legislation. The programme is based on the idea that the Islamic value system offers good foundations for being a good citizen and therefore the Islamic faith can be used to combat radicalisation. There are several components to the programme which target different groups, both radicalised and those at risk of radicalisation. One component, the Journey of the Soul programme, which coincides with the traditional teaching methods in Muslim communities, includes visits to the religious sites of Mecca and Medina. In 2007 a group of fifteen youths who had been sentenced to prison were taken on this trip, whilst being educated in different religious interpretations and supported in their search for identity. According to the project leader, since returning they have not reverted to negative behaviours.[11]

Another example of a local initiative is in Amsterdam and takes a much more individualised approach. The system is based on formal and informal networks, from neighbourhood organisations, youth workers, teachers and key figures in the Muslim community. The aim is to detect and share behaviours which potentially indicate radicalisation as early as possible through the Radicalisation Information Management Unit. The case is then discussed in the Case Council and a plan of intervention proposed which involves individual counselling by an appropriate person with the aim of making the person more resilient to radical ideas and more connected to mainstream society.

[11] Ibid IMES 2008

At a national level, the United Nations Inventory of State Programmes identified eleven key strategic issues which governments were addressing: engaging and working with civil society; prison programmes; education; promoting alliance of civilisations and inter-cultural dialogue; tackling social and economic inequalities; global programmes to counter radicalisation; the internet; legislative reforms; rehabilitation programmes; developing and sharing information and training and qualifying agencies involved in implementing counter-radicalisation policies.

Of the 34 respondents to the UN exercise, seventeen had designed systems of co-operation between the state and communities and have introduced frameworks to empower and amplify moderate local voices to rebut and discredit violent extremist ideology. In Italy, one of the key roles of the Youth Advisory Board, set up in 2006 jointly by the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, is to engage young people of different cultural backgrounds in dialogue and mutual understanding. These young people also offer the government opinions and proposals on issues related to the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and faiths. This builds on the model of cultural mediators which was developed by the Andolfi Foundation in the late 1990's to promote community cohesion. The Andolfi Foundation is now engaged in working in prisons.

At an international level, governments are working in different ways to eradicate the causes of violent extremism. The Australian approach has been to focus on Southeast Asia, co-sponsoring a series of major regional interfaith dialogues between 2004 and 2008 as a way to undermine the claim of moral legitimacy by violent extremists. The UK has increased international aid for regionally-led reform in the Muslim world to help address the political and socio-economic environment which extremists exploit. It has also redirected the scholarship programme of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to offer work and study opportunities to representatives from Islamic countries.

De-radicalisation

In terms of criminal justice agencies, it is predominantly the prison administrations which are developing policy and practice responses to radicalised prisoners. As referred to previously, there is some debate about whether to integrate or separate violent extremists within the prison population. In the UK, the need for specialist training for prison Imams was identified, in order to support their daily work with all Muslim prisoners, including those

imprisoned for terrorist-related charges. As an indicator of the concern of prison authorities across the EU, the Swedish Directorate-General for Prisons hosted a 2 day conference in July 2009 to coincide with the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, entitled "Prison Service on Twin Tracks: against Radicalisation, for Rehabilitation".

A very useful and comprehensive handbook was produced in 2009 by a collaborative project between Austria, France and Germany, with financial support from the European Commission.[12] This handbook is intended for front line practitioners in the prison environment to help them recognise early signs of possible radicalisation or behaviours which might make a prisoner vulnerable to radicalisation. This handbook also recognises and recommends the need for strong support networks following release, although probation may be perceived as part of the system of sanctions and therefore leaves little room for voluntary, constructive co-operation.

The Italian Ministry of Justice monitors all prisoners charged with crimes of international or extremist terrorism (or associated crimes) and segregates them from all other prisoners.

In the Netherlands, there are two "terrorist wards" within the adult prison establishment, but the regime is not based on long term solitary confinement and the prisoners are allowed to participate in communal activities. There are no special programmes aimed either at the prevention of further radicalisation or at deradicalisation. However, the risk of radicalisation is recognised in the Young Offenders Institutions and led to a project funded by the Ministry of Justice, carried out by FORUM (The Dutch Institute for Multicultural Development) with the aim of working more effectively with young people of foreign heritage and their parents, and learning how to handle the considerable ethnic-cultural diversity of these young people.[13] The resulting report extensively covers the risks of radicalisation of juveniles in detention. As a result of this work, FORUM organised a training course for staff members of the Young Offender Institutions to "identify and handle alienation and radicalisation amongst young people".

[12] Restricted publication
[13] Rob Witte, *Practical Guide to the Deradicalisation of Youngsters (FORUM, Utrecht, 2009)*

The French Penitentiary Administration has developed a three stage threat level which identifies behaviours and counter measures to assist prison staff to recognise and manage prisoners who are at risk of radicalisation or already radicalised.

In Germany, there has been a long history of community based programmes which target right wing extremism, as the number of extreme right wing young people rose dramatically since the fall of the Berlin Wall to an estimated 39,000 in 2006. In 2006 it was claimed that at least 28 extreme right wing offences were committed each day, two to three of them involving violence.[14] (8th Report - Monitor Racism & Extremism, Dec 2008). In response to this, many programmes have been developed, primarily within the community, mostly aimed at supporting those wanting to withdraw from the right wing extremist group, but with different target groups (key persons, experienced activists, hangers-on or sympathisers), different methodologies and organisational structures. Some were government led, either at federal or state level, and some nationwide programmes were NGO led, such as EXIT-Deutschland. The programme developed in prisons for right wing extremists by Violence Prevention Network appears to be the only programme which worked with young right wing extremists during their imprisonment and offered continued support for them and their families after release. This programme has been adapted to work with violent Muslim offenders and is currently being piloted and evaluated.

Within some of the newer EU Member States, penitentiary systems, structures and regimes are undergoing significant reform, developing programmes for different types of offender and introducing parole supervision (or conditional release). The responses to the RIRP mapping exercise from these countries suggest that, although there is recognition of the potential risk of radicalisation in prisons, it has not yet achieved attention from the policy makers. However, the responses from some of the established Member States suggest that there is a denial of the potential problem. It may be that the respondents to the questionnaire were unaware of issues facing colleagues in other government departments, or that there is little media attention to the issue in that particular country. It is hard to ascertain from the responses what the reasons may be, except that there has not yet been a major terrorist incident in that country.

In terms of extremist offenders released from prison subject to statutory supervision, it appears that only the UK is developing policy and practice in this area. This is largely due

[14] Sara Grunenberg & Jaap van Donselaar, *Deradicalisation: ;lessons from Germany, options for the Netherlands? (8th Report of Monitor Racism and Extremism, Anne Frank Foundation, Amsterdam, 2008)*

to the fact that offenders convicted under the terrorism laws are becoming eligible for parole, or being released subject to statutory supervision (for information, any person sentenced to more than 12 months imprisonment, will be subject to statutory supervision for a specified period on release). The statutory agencies involved are working closely with the local Muslim communities to manage the risk such offenders present.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that European responses to the rise of violent radicalisation have adopted a twin track approach. On the one hand, there has been legislation to criminalise a wide range of activities which contribute to radicalisation, but on the other hand there has been a significant investment in improving the dialogue with the mainstream Muslim community and building their capacity to contribute to the deradicalisation process. Where deradicalisation programmes exist, the majority employ moderate Imams or previously militant activists to challenge the jihadi narrative and other radical interpretations of the Koran texts. The UN report concludes that "the increased attention given to a non-coercive approach to violent extremism that aims to prevent disaffected individuals from resorting to violence in the first place, reverses a previous reliance on "hard approaches" and highlights a growing recognition among States that military and other suppressive approaches alone are insufficient, and in some cases may even be counter-productive".

Despite the extensive literature and internet research, as well as the mapping exercise conducted earlier in the RIRP project, there are still gaps in information for some countries. However, as mentioned earlier, there is current research being undertaken by ICSR which will compare and evaluate deradicalisation and disengagement programmes in prisons in 15 countries, mostly those in Western Europe and North America. This will make a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of effective practice in this area.

It is also clear that currently the challenge for criminal justice agencies is perceived to be within the prison establishments and for the prison regime. Community based agencies, such as probation services, have not yet developed policies and strategies for working with this group of offenders because, with the notable exception of England and Wales, they are not being released from custody under statutory licence.

This paper summarises the information currently available in the public domain, but should be regarded as "work in progress" as there is likely to be more significant research findings during and after the lifetime of this project.

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APPENDIX A - RIRP SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

REDUCING THE INFLUENCES THAT RADICALISE PRISONERS

MAPPING EXERCISE
QUESTIONNAIRE

London Probation Trust is working with the Ministry of Justice National Offender Management Service, the CEP and partners in Germany and Spain as part of a European funded project to develop good practice in reducing the influences that radicalise prisoners. As part of this project, we are undertaking a mapping exercise to establish what is happening in this field across Europe. We would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire and/or send it to a colleague who has knowledge in this field.

Please return the completed questionnaire to:
Linda Pizani Williams at LindaPizaniWilliams@eiss.org.uk

Name of respondent	
Organisation	
Contact email address	
Country	
Date	

1. Is there academic or professional recognition in your country that prisoners may be vulnerable to becoming radicalised whilst in custody?

   YES **Go to Q.4** NO

2. If NO – Do you believe that this risk exists in your country?

   YES NO

3. If YES – would you like to be kept informed of developments in other countries?

   YES NO

4. Are you aware of any specific projects/interventions in your country which address this issue?

   YES NO

   If YES – please detail below:

Project or intervention name	**Location**	**Organisation**	**Contact person**	**e-mail address**

5. Are you aware of any academic research which has been undertaken in your country on this issue?

   YES NO

   If YES – please detail below:

Title of research	**Researcher**	**Institution**	**Contact details**

6. Do you have any other comments or information regarding this issue which might contribute to the development of good practice?

……
……
……
……

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

If you have any queries regarding this survey, please contact Linda Pizani Williams at

Lindapizaniwilliams@eiss.org.uk

8/6/09

Part II: Muslim Offenders convicted of terrorism related offences in the UK- Executive Summary

Alyas Karmani

The following summarises key findings from a research report funded by the European Union and commissioned by the Reducing Influences that Radicalise Prisoners (RIRP) Project Board. The findings reported are those of the researcher and reflect solely the views of those interviewed. They do not represent any views held by Project partners or related organisations. Due to the small number of offenders convicted under the UK Terrorist Act, and thus the small numbers interviewed, these findings and recommendations should be seen as assistive and indicative. The information received and insight gained from a small number however still holds value.

The summary also outlines a potential framework for assessing the risks of extremist radicalisation for prisoners and makes recommendations in relation to supervision of offenders; support and guidance for staff working with offenders; and the role of agencies and stakeholders who can support service provision and facilitate the de-radicalisation of offenders who have been influenced by violent extremism.

Objectives of the Research

- To identify some of the key influencers for prisoners and offenders on supervision, particularly those from Muslim backgrounds, that may cause extremist radicalisation
- To develop a potential framework to enable staff to identify at risk groups and risk factors with a view to undertaking early interventions, detection, de-radicalisation and prevention work in partnership with key support workers and agencies from the Muslim community
- Strengthen the evidence base in relation to violent extremism of Muslim offenders
- Inform the development of training and development resources and support and guidance for staff
- Clarify the role of community support agencies from the Muslim community and their working relationship with staff

Research Methodology

The research was undertaken through the following methods:

- In-depth qualitative interviews in 2008 with 12 Muslim offenders convicted of terrorism related offences
- In-depth qualitative interviews in 2008 with 15 Offender Managers who were currently supervising Muslim offenders convicted of terrorism related offences
- Interviews in 2008 with 6 community support agencies involved in the support and de-radicalisation of Muslim offenders convicted of terrorism related offences in London and West Yorkshire.

In the course of the research there were a number of challenges. These included:

- The number of offenders interviewed is comparatively small due to that fact that a small number of offenders are currently on supervision and within that sample a small number agreed to be interviewed and were given permission to be interviewed.
- Given the sensitive nature of the research it was critical to build trust with the offenders who were interviewed in order to secure their co-operation and openness and more time could have been given to this relationship building.

Findings from in-depth qualitative interviews with Muslim Offenders convicted of terrorism related offences

1. **Experiences of Muslim TACT Offenders Pre-Arrest**

a) The offenders have all had different experiences in relation to how they were radicalised, their offending, arrest, investigation, detention, release and supervision; hence it has been difficult to make generalisations and identify categories of offending behaviour. Each case is complex in its own right with a differing interplay of core influencer factors.

b) Some offenders are young, naive and impressionable and may have been easily influenced and manipulated; they show a lack of confidence and ability to challenge

senior dominant figures in their Islamic grouping. However other individuals are emotionally secure, resilient and confident and were not unduly influenced by the Islamic group and have different motivations for their involvement with extremist Muslim groups.

c) Some of the offenders experienced high levels of social exclusion and feel very alienated from British society whereas other offenders had little conflict with being a Muslim in Britain and had broad friendships with Muslims and non-Muslims.

d) Some of the offenders have a strong ideological attachment and drive and strong commitment to the different tenants of extremist Jihadist ideology whereas others pay little attention and have little commitment to the ideology.

e) Some offenders express strong feelings in relation to the perceived oppressive foreign policy of the west and non-Muslims towards Muslims whereas others are very apolitical and whilst they have some concerns are not strongly influenced by these factors.

f) The mindset of some offenders reinforces an 'us and them' view of the world and this relates to a victimhood that they are being persecuted for being Muslims and that society is anti-Muslim:

"Islam full-stop is the problem for them; they can never accept us if we follow our faith"

2. Experiences of Muslim Offenders during Arrest and Detention

a) The Muslim offenders all had different experiences in prison with some who had previously been in prison able to cope and adjust well and others who were disturbed and severely destabilised by the experience. The young, first-time offenders were affected adversely the most by the experience compared to older offenders and repeat offenders:

"I had done time before and was not overawed by the experience; I knew how to cope and get by; I didn't just stick with the Muslims but got on with everyone"

"Prison still affects me. I still have nightmares and things come back to me; I was bullied and intimidated by guards and inmates; I had never been in prison before I did not know what to expect"

b) The experience of prison also accentuated emotional distress in particular being away from family and friends and association with other serious offenders:

"I was strip searched….I tried to resist but had no choice"

c) Family support and visitation was identified as very helpful and gave support and solace to offenders; however this was also distressing when family members were perceived as being given additional scrutiny by guards when visiting:

"My family showed me loyalty; I have remorse that I let them down and was not there for them when they went through hardships this really made me feel I had to make amends"

d) Offenders mentioned that they felt they were seen with suspicion by staff especially when they were observing their faith; this was seen to be a sign of radicalisation and interaction with staff varied depending on if they were seen as observant and practicing. This perception accentuates the 'us and them' feelings:

"I helped some prisoners to read and write and they stopped me because they saw it as radicalisation; Muslims prisoners had more surveillance and more harassment"

e) In some cases there was discriminatory treatment directed at Muslim prisoners in addition to the racist attitude of some staff; this accentuated feelings of victimisation and could influence extremist radicalisation.

3. Muslim Offenders experience of Supervision

a) The Muslim offenders have all had different experiences in relation to their supervision. For some the relationship with their Offender Manager (OM) has been positive, constructive and open and has fostered co-operation. In other cases it has been problematic, antagonistic and there has been misunderstanding and mistrust. Core to the success of relationship building has been fostering mutual understanding and open communication.

b) Where there was misunderstanding and miscommunication this was due to the difference in understanding and worldview; the offenders felt that non-Muslim OMs were not able to understand them, their faith, background and motivations. This subsequently led to a failure to communicate and build mutual trust and co-operation and what is perceived by the offenders as excessive and extremely harsh conditions placed on them as part of the supervision:

"I feel that I am not understood, they don't believe me and there is a brick wall between us...what would help is someone who understood me and my background a Muslim worker would be more effective"

They were suspicious of me when I was in prison and they are still suspicious of me. They have put extreme conditions on me and they have added conditions that are nothing to do with my offence""

c) Offenders felt that as part of the misunderstanding was the inability of the OMs to assess their views, behaviour, opinions and gauge the change process; this meant that their views remained unchanged through the supervision process:

"They don't understand me, how I think, Muslims in general and what changes us and motivates us"

d) Many of the offenders felt the OM's asked inappropriate, offensive and culturally inappropriate and insensitive questions; they felt the questions would not be asked of any other offender:

"I was asked if I would help the family of a suicide bomber; I was shocked by the question…..what do I say, I felt that it was meant to trap me or was a type of test; but me saying no does not prove anything; you cant ask questions like that"

e) All of the offenders felt their supervision placed excessive conditions on them and this prevented them from normalising their lives and moving on; this also added to their alienation and frustration. This was expressed as the biggest challenge and difficult in relation to supervision:

"I just want to have a normal life again but cant because I have all these conditions of reporting in and curfews; they stop me from getting on with my life, work and business""

f) Some of the offenders felt they would prefer supervision by a male rather than a female mainly due to Islamic sensitivities on cross gender mixing; others who were being supervised by a female worker had no issues with it.

g) Most of the offenders would prefer to be supervised by a Muslim worker mainly because they felt a Muslim worker would be able to assess them accurately and there would be less misunderstanding and cultural sensitivity:

h) All the offenders have received some support following release from prison from community support agencies; in some cases this has worked very well and in other cases has been less effective; where it has been effective it has been due to good mentoring from a credible senior figure.

i) All the offenders express the need for mentoring by an independent person who they can confide in and who can give support and guidance; they felt this person should have a strong awareness of Muslim issues and the lives and experiences of Muslims:

"My mentor has been very good he is like an older brother and has shown a lot of care and given me time and attention and looks out for me"

j) For some there were insecurities, mistrust and paranoia about the future. Others were focussed on the date of the end of their supervision and returning to normality. By most there was a recognition that things will never be the same and fears of getting employment were expressed:

"What kind of a job am I going to get, when the employer see that I have been convicted of being a terrorist"

Influencer factors for Violent Extremism

A range of potential factors that influence violent Muslim extremism have been identified in the course of the in-depth interviews with Muslim offenders and their OMs. These broadly fall into the following five categories:

1. **Emotional Well-being -** factors related to emotional vulnerability, poor emotional well-being, poor relationships, personal experience of trauma, violence and abuse that were unresolved and the need for social and emotional support.

2. **Social Exclusion and estrangement** - factors related to identity, inclusion and integration, related to not fitting into British society, search for personal and group identity, feeling dislocated and an outsider, experience of racism and disillusionment with democratic process and institutions.

3. **Perceived Injustice and grievance -** factors related to experienced discrimination, disadvantage, humiliation, racism and Islamophobia on a personal and group level.

4. **Foreign Policy -** factors related to the perceived detrimental impact of US and UK foreign policy in the Muslim world in particular in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, the perceived exploitation and occupation of Muslim lands and subjugation of fellow Muslims.

5. **Extremist Ideology -** factors related to indoctrination by extremist methodology, promotion/propagation of that ideology, adherence to an Islamic group, loyalty to an Amir and deep conviction in ideology.

The research identified that jihadist recruiters are very competent at identifying Muslims that who are vulnerable to external radicalisation. The most vulnerable Muslims are those that experience the strongest congruence of the five influencer factors.

De-radicalisation Interventions

The following range of interventions are currently being used by agencies:

- **Emotional well-being support** - counselling and mentoring to develop resilience and overcome personal distress and trauma
- **Re-integration** - enabling them to have a place in British society through integration in employment, education, mentors- linked to Islamic teaching on role of citizen in observing social contract
- **Breaking down 'Us and Them'** and reactive victim hood
- **Theological resilience** - deconstruct extremist ideology and replace with correct Islamic understanding
- **Justifiable cause** - engaging them in legitimate means of activism
- **Mentoring -** substituting surrogate family and father figure
- **Alternative narrative** - presenting them with more balanced and broader narrative than narrow self-affirming one
- **Compassionate re-integration** into the community
- **Safe space open discussions** and protection of vulnerable Muslims in particular young and new Muslims

Recommendations based on findings

The following recommendations are based on the key findings from the research. The recommendations relate to responding to the critical issues which emerged from the research in relation to each of the groups that were consulted:

1) There needs to be a strong recognition that each offender is unique and the experiences, factors and dynamics that caused their offending are also unique and hence any approach that attempts to categorise into discrete categories must be resisted.

2) An approach which aims to develop an open relationship with an offender based on understanding their lived experience and the context in which they offended is key to facilitating relationship building and securing their cooperation.

3) There needs to recognition that many offenders have stronger levels of perceived grievance, humiliation and injustice that has accentuated through their experience of the criminal justice system.

4) Closed, prescriptive and overly regimented supervision is counterproductive to relationship building and adds to the polarisation in the supervision relationship and reinforces radicalisation that may have been accentuated through the prison experience and should be avoided. There needs to be recognition that supervision conditions placed on terrorist offenders can be perceived as overly controlling, restrictive, punitive and add to feelings of grievance and victimisation as a Muslim.

5) There is a need to recognise that offenders have emotional well-being issues related to their arrest and detention especially younger first time offenders. Such offenders need additional support when they are in high security prisons.

6) Younger offenders display low self-esteem and this is a factor in them being influenced by older more charismatic males who they took as mentors and senior role models.

7) Supervision needs to be proactive about eliminating polarising events, discussions and questioning.

8) The level and extent of ideological extremism varies in each offender; theological deconstruction must be tailored to the level and nature of extremist ideology an offender displays.

9) There is a strong need to recognise the foreign policy link to offending behaviour and this also needs to be reflected in any intervention programme.

10) Offenders have experienced traumatic events and incidents through their experience of arrest and detention and should be provided access to a counsellor who is a specialist in working with Muslims.

11) Offenders should also be given access to an independent third party counsellor/advocate that can represent their needs and concerns to probation workers.

12) Offenders need to have a mentor provided for them in the course of supervision; the role of the mentor will be to replace the role of Amir and provide emotional support, guidance and correct theological understanding.

13) Staff need to be able to make clear distinction between mainstream Islamic observance and extremist radicalisation.

14) Offenders need to be integrated into a social support circle and group that substitutes the Islamic group/jamat and 'brotherhood'.

15) Many offenders feel alienated and estranged in British society and hence it is vital supervision supports re-integration and interaction with British society and non-Muslims.

16) Offender managers need to be sensitive to supporting and engaging the families of offenders.

17) The faith needs of the offenders need to be accommodated as best as can be and where they cannot be met it should be demonstrated that attempts were made within the flexibilities and capabilities available to meet their faith needs.

18) Offenders should be allowed to engage in some level of Islamic activism that is legitimate as many are frustrated from not being able to engage in activism; this can be achieved through the community support agencies.

19) Offenders need to be provided theological deconstruction that develops future theological resilience to violent Islamic extremism.

20) There needs to be awareness of the negative impact of media coverage on the offenders.

21) There needs to be recognition that the offenders are insecure about their future and there will be challenges for them securing employment and reintegration as people who have been charged with terrorist offences.

22) There needs to be recognition that offenders see their treatment as disproportionate, discriminatory and punitive compared to other offenders and non-Muslims.

23) Offenders need to be made more aware of their legal rights and their responsibilities whilst they are in the criminal justice system.

24) The strong perceived experience of racism in prison needs to be addressed quickly and equitably. Racist hate crime and racially motivated incidents that are declared by Muslim offenders need to be responded to quickly, transparently and equitably at every point in the criminal justice system and offenders must be made aware of the channels and mechanism for reporting offences.

25) There needs to be recognition that faith is strong reinforcer for positive behaviour and a strong motivator for positive change and rehabilitation and should be used proactively and confidently. Prison Imams play a vitally important role and are particularly effective when they are British born Imams that have a strong awareness of the lived reality of offenders and who are confident to advocate for their needs within prison.