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# Evaluation of the Muslim Council of Wales' Prevent work

Research Summary

Social research

Number: 23/2012

OPM were commissioned by the Welsh Government (WG) in October 2010 to conduct an evaluation of the Muslim Council of Wales (MCW) preventing violent extremism work, known as the ADFYWIAD programme. The aim of the evaluation was to provide WG with:

1) A process evaluation to determine what has been delivered under the programme, and whether different sections of the Muslim communities have been reached.

2) An outcome evaluation to determine whether intermediate positive impacts have been achieved.

3) Advice and recommendations on how the Prevent component of the Community Cohesion Strategy can be implemented more effectively.

## Introduction:

The aims and objectives of the ADFYWIAD programme as a whole were to:

- build the capacity of Mosques, madrassahs and Muslim organisations so that they are better able to identify and support those at risk of violent extremism
- increase participation and interest in civic and community life by Muslim women and youth
- develop the leadership skills of Muslim youth
- make Muslim youth less vulnerable to extremist rhetoric and recruitment from extremist groups

The key elements of the programme, agreed between the MCW and the Welsh Government (WG), were:

- To raise awareness of the ADFYWIAD programme: This included meetings with mosque trustees, marketing stalls, and a Ramadan Radio discussion
- Governance and child protection training for mosques, madrassahs and Muslim organizations in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham
- Engagement, and provision of training: This included meetings between police officers and Imams and one-off sessions on citizenship, British Muslim identity, and civic responsibility

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Analysis for Policy

- 'Radical Middle Way' training sessions for mosques, madrassahs and Muslim organisations in Cardiff and Newport
- iLead youth development projects
- Monthly 'keep fit' activities for young women
- ESOL classes for Imams: No progress was made in the first two years of the programme although a small group of Imams are currently attending a 3 month course with the view to enrolling in mainstream provision at the end
- Ijazahs for Imams - a certificate that indicates that they have been authorized to transmit Islamic knowledge: This element of the programme was not delivered.

### **Methodology**

This evaluation used a Theory of Change approach which included developing a model that stated the intended outcomes of the programme, the activities to be implemented to achieve these outcomes, and the change mechanisms that link the activities

to the intended outcomes.

OPM adopted a primarily qualitative approach to evaluating the programme, including 5 focus groups and 14 in-depth interviews. Fieldwork was conducted over two phases. The first phase of fieldwork was conducted between April and July 2011 and the second phase was conducted between January and March 2012. OPM also designed a short online survey, the purpose of which was to test the awareness of Muslim communities of the programme of work being delivered in their local area. The survey link was emailed to 64 institutions across Wales and 29 responses were received, a response rate of 45.3%.

Over the course of the evaluation OPM experienced a number of challenges associated with conducting fieldwork and gathering data. For example, it proved difficult to recruit participants to take part in interviews due to the wariness of participants about the research, the unresponsiveness of MCW to requests for data, and the absence of attendance lists.

## **Evidencing impact – findings**

In the sections below, we discuss the extent to which a number of intended outcomes identified in the theory of change model have been achieved.

*Intended outcome: Muslim institutions develop the organisational structure, knowledge and skills they need to better support the Muslim communities they serve.*

The elements designed to meet this intended outcome included governance training, child protection training, Radical Middle Way training on identifying and tackling extremist ideology and ESOL classes for Imams. It also included the issuing of Ijazahs for Imams. However, only the governance training, child protection training and Radical Middle Way training were delivered.

The interviewees that attended the governance and child protection training reported finding it very useful and were able to provide many examples of how the training had motivated them to improve the

working practices of Muslim institutions.

The participants of the Radical Middle Way's training also felt that the training had better equipped them to protect the communities they serve, particularly young people, against the arguments of extremists. Many participants also felt that the training had given them a better understanding of arguments and misinterpretations of Islam that extremist groups use to recruit vulnerable people.

*Intended outcome: Muslim institutions develop better partnership working both between themselves and with statutory agencies, such as the police.*

There were three different elements of the programme that were designed to contribute to this intended outcome. This included the governance and child protection training and the engagement between Imams and police officers. With regards to the governance and child protection training, there was very little evidence to indicate that taking part in the training had resulted in better partnership working with

representatives from other Muslim institutions.

With regards to the meetings between Imams and police officers, there were no interviews conducted with Imams due to difficulty in identifying who attended these meetings. However, two police officers interviewed reported that the meetings had been very helpful and in their view helped build trust and confidence amongst those present.

*Intended outcome: Increased participation and interest in civic and community life by Muslim women and youth participants*

The elements designed to contribute to this item included one-off sessions on citizenship, British Muslim identity and civic responsibility. Unfortunately, no interviews were conducted with participants of these elements of the programme, because no attendance lists were kept, and it is thus not possible to comment on the impact of these activities. However, the above outcome has to a certain extent been met by the iLead youth leadership projects which not only encouraged

increased participation in community life but also encouraged participants to take on leadership roles in the community.

*Intended outcome: Muslim youth participants are less vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups*

Two elements of the programme were designed to meet this outcome. The first included one-off sessions on citizenship, British Muslim identity and civic responsibility but no fieldwork was conducted with participants of this element, because, as noted, no attendance lists were kept, so it is not possible to comment on the impact of these activities. The second included monthly social activities for young Muslim women which were intended to be an alternative to local meetings of the extremist Al-Muhajiroun group that had been attracting young people and women at the Channel View Centre in Cardiff. There is limited evidence to indicate that participating in these activities has made the participants less vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups.

The participants themselves were not able to make the link between

these activities diverting them from attending meetings held by extremist networks.

*Muslim youth participants are better able to act as leaders in their community*

Two elements of the programme were designed to enable Muslim youth participants to be better able to act as leaders in their community – the iLead youth development leadership project for 13 to 16 year olds, and the similar project for those over 16 years. There is good evidence to indicate that these projects have enabled participants to develop a range of useful and practical skills and that they feel better equipped to take up leadership roles in the community.

### **Implementation of the ADFYWIAD programme**

It appears that the most substantive parts of the programme were the governance and child protection training, the iLead youth leadership project, the monthly social activities for women and the Radical Middle way training sessions. Two elements of the original programme of work did not take place - ESOL classes for

Imams, and the issuing of Ijazahs for Imams – and there was little subsequent expansion of the programme.

Additionally, the extent to which the programme has had a distinctive brand is unclear. Participants tend to associate the training programmes with MCW rather than with the ADFYWIAD brand, although marketing materials and certificates of attendance tend to carry a mix of MCW and ADFYWIAD branding. These findings were also echoed by survey respondents.

### **Recommendations**

*Programme commissioning, management and delivery*

- In future the WG should commission programmes through an open tendering process that builds in clear outcome objectives, indicating how these will be measured, tighter reporting requirements and clarity about recruitment and project spend. This will increase the quality of proposals submitted to run this kind of programme.

- Any future programmes should include a longer planning process.

*Supporting people who are vulnerable to violent extremism*

- Future programmes funded with the goal of preventing people becoming involved in violent extremism need to be clearly focused on tackling those individuals who are at risk and vulnerable to being attracted to violent extremism.
- Research is required to explore the drivers and causes of violent extremism in Wales, providing a stronger evidence base to inform the commissioning of Prevent activities in the future.

*Lessons for the Prevent element of the Cohesion Strategy*

This evaluation found that this programme, similar to many UK Prevent-funded programmes over the last 4 years, seeks to promote cohesion at the same time as tackling violent extremism. There is a risk inherent in this programme's wider cohesion aims if the

programme continues to target only Muslim communities.

- Several participants involved in different elements of the programme (iLead, governance and child protection training and Radical Middle Way training sessions) have developed some of the necessary skills to deliver elements of the programme themselves. In order to sustain these activities beyond the funding and scope of this programme, the WG should explore ways to make training, funding opportunities and tools available to interested participants so that they can deliver these programme elements in their local communities.
- The WG should consider future projects which seek to tackle all forms of extremism and not just Al Qaeda inspired extremism. This might include projects that bring together people of different faiths to explore how they can work together to tackle some of the causes of both Al Qaeda inspired extremism and far right extremism, such as

breaking down ethnic and  
religious based prejudice.

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