

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY POLICING: NEGOTIATING CHANGING RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

PROJECT REPORT



*Dr Alistair McFadyen  
Dr Melanie Prideaux*

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## Executive Summary

This Report gives the results of interviews with members of the Metropolitan Police Service's territorial policing teams in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Barking & Dagenham. The research set out to establish the place that awareness of religion and of (changing) religious identities occupy in the operational policing environment. More specifically, it sought to identify the extent to which operational officers engage faith communities and recognise religion as significant in their work, how they do so, and in what contexts they do so. The intention of the research was to identify good practice and make suggestions whereby this work could be best developed and supported. Our goal is to help police develop the ways in which they understand and navigate the complex social geography of their local communities in order to enhance an effective and responsive policing service by forming appropriate, positive relations with local religious communities and to navigate issues of belief, faith and religion as they arise in the operational and institutional environments of British policing.

It should be read by those who seek to understand police engagement with faith communities, with religion and belief, and who wish to help develop practice and performance in relation to:

- neighbourhood policing, especially
  - community engagement,
  - community accountability,
  - 'big society' initiatives, such as community involvement in criminal justice,
  - the extension and expansion of other community involvement structures, such as the special constabulary and volunteers in policing;
- faith-hate and religious aggravation;
- diversity as an internal and external agenda;
- critical incident evaluation where religion may be a factor; and
- religiously-based counter-terrorist work.

The significance of police engagement with faith communities receives little public acknowledgment and has correspondingly received next-to-no academic attention as an area which might be deserving of scholarly study or, indeed, of academic support. The one exception has been the engagement of police with Islam and with Muslim communities in the context of counter-terrorism. Important as that sphere of active engagement unquestionably is, this research set out from the assumption that its primacy should not be taken-for-granted. This report therefore sets the research project into a set of broader contexts in which the significance of religion has achieved increasing acknowledgment in British public life, the field of policy-making generally, and in British policing in particular. The research itself has been conducted on the assumption that police engagement with religion and with faith communities is far broader than the counter-terrorism agenda, and, moreover, that the engagement with faith communities undertaken under the auspices of that agenda is best understood within that broader context. The researchers make this case more extensively in a separately published, related article.

For that reason, this report sets the research in the context of these broader currents whereby religion is 'placed' in British public life more broadly and British policing in particular, just as the research itself was

designed in part to explore the 'place' that religion holds in the routine policing practices of officers not primarily concerned with counter-terrorist work.

This research thus attempts to report the 'place' of religion in contemporary policing practice. One of its findings is that other dynamics within policing prove to be far more significant in determining religion's 'place' than the counter-terrorism agenda. These include, primarily:

- The move towards an intelligence-led model of Neighbourhood Policing;
- The explicit extension of hate-crime legislation to incorporate reference to faith-hate and a corresponding extension of potentially aggravating factors in some crime types to include religion;
- The high potency attaching to the diversity agenda within the police service (both inward- and outward-facing), now similarly extended to include reference to belief, faith and religion as factors in individual and communal identities.

The political and policy context within which these developments in British policing have taken place is undoubtedly set to undergo significant changes, consequent both on a new government being elected and the emergence of a new economic context since the research was undertaken (mid-2010). The direction and the language of policy in relation to both policing and terrorism is set to change as this report is being written (late 2010), as are some of the institutions which in the recent past have provided coordinating activity at the national level, as well as supported research, reflection, development and training in the service. Whilst the future and its relationship with the past are uncertain, we are convinced that police engagement with faith communities will continue to be an area of immense significance as the framing language changes from 'social cohesion' to the 'big society'. We hope that the research findings presented here, rather than prove already outdated, might rather play some useful role in helping policy-makers and those in the service develop understanding and practice in this area into a future where declining resource is likely to meet increasing expectation and demand in relation to public responsiveness, accountability, engagement, satisfaction and confidence in a context where the distinctiveness and knit-togetherness of identities in society is likely to remain a significant and challenging aspect of all public service provision – a challenge which achieves a special importance and shape in relation to the police service.

The fieldwork component of the research consisted of 39 structured interviews with police officers and Police Community Support Officers in the two London boroughs of Barking & Dagenham and Tower Hamlets. The research involved a unique partnership between the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Leeds, drawing on the expertise in 'Community Religions', interfaith and religion & public life at the University of Leeds; the human resources, interest and openness of the Metropolitan Police; the networking capability and innovation of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme. Dr Mel Prideaux of the University of Leeds acted as project manager, Dr Al McFadyen (a full-time academic but also a serving officer in West Yorkshire Police) acted as project consultant. Both have written this report based on the interviews conducted by Ms Katie Miller and Dr Chandra Jangbahadoor, both at the time members of MPS staff.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

- ✦ The research found widespread evidence of a well-internalised awareness of the broad diversity agenda running through the police service, articulated in terms of a subtle emphasis on fairness in response to particularities of identity, rather than a simplistic equalities approach.
- ✦ The research found similarly widespread awareness of the way in which this agenda has broadened from a concern with race and ethnicity to incorporate religion, belief and faith (as well as gender, sexuality, etc.), though the report notes the strong gravitational pull of the categories of race and ethnicity, which explains a tendency to conflate or confuse religious with racial and ethnic identities.
- ✦ The research shows several examples of impressive local knowledge and understanding of specific faith communities, though this seems to be achieved in a way that has been relatively uncoordinated. Formal partnership work appeared to be limited mainly to the use of faith community buildings for jointly sponsored activities.
- ✦ The research also identified several examples where officers showed impressive understanding of the changing religious landscape of a specific area, by its nature more up-to-date than published handbooks or learning materials. The dynamic nature of the local community topography represents a significant challenge in terms of appropriate training, which the report notes and describes before making recommendations.
- ✦ The research also suggested that understanding of inter-religious tensions and relations were developing (though with few examples of engaging with inter-religious groups), but that knowledge and understanding of intra-religious tensions might in some cases be under-developed.
- ✦ The report highlights the importance of developing context-specific religious literacy and religious awareness as a means of understanding and engaging diverse and changing local communities and, thereby, of enhancing the delivery of an effective and responsive policing service.
- ✦ The research found a significant level of critique of some aspects of development and training related to religion and to the diversity agenda more broadly, especially where such learning was not clearly and immediately related to 'doing the job'. There was a significant level of appreciation of some MPS materials, though a widespread disinclination to take the NCALT web-based packages seriously as learning tools.
- ✦ The perceived distance of religion (its dis-'placing') from the essentials of policing may in part explain a disparity suggested by the research between members of Safer Neighbourhood and response teams, where emergency responders were less likely to see religion as of potential significance to policing situations requiring an immediate or urgent response (with the exception of sudden deaths, where there was uniform, impressive sensitivity to the potential significance of religion, faith and belief).
- ✦ The report notes the difficulties presented to an institution with a dynamic workforce of retaining local understanding, knowledge and other fruits of engagement generated as fruits of the work of individual officers once they have moved on or of extending the benefits of such knowledge and engagement to the rest of a team – the retention of what we term 'institutional memory'. The research generated several examples of the importance to operational work of the sergeant as deposit of 'institutional memory'.



**The report recommends** all these points be addressed through the development and resourcing of patterns of learning that are specific to local characteristics (rather than general courses on Hinduism, say), that do not concentrate exclusively on the belief aspects of religion, that do not isolate learning in this area from core police practice. We therefore commend the move towards a skills- and experience-based learning model that helps officers to understand what they need to know in the immediate context of their own practice and to develop this in a planned and structured way – as they do their job – and to record the results of their engagement in a way that makes them accessible to others.

- ✚ The research threw up some unexpected results concerning the significance of the relationship to belief or non-belief of individual officers. These include the risks of sometimes inappropriate expectations of adherents holding and operationally utilising expertise faith in their tradition or community, as well as inadequate support for the demands sometimes placed on members of specific faith traditions to become the functioning experts. The research also evidenced, however, that some officers who either do not hold religious beliefs, or who hold beliefs antagonistic towards religion, experience the agenda of religion as personally challenging and sometimes as professionally questionable.

The Report commends further consideration of the best ways of managing and supporting staff engaging with religion and faith communities, having regard to their own beliefs and location in a faith community. Positive engagement with faith associations within the MPS is encouraged in this regard.

- ✚ The research found no evidence to suggest that recognition of the potential operational significance of religion, faith and belief was driven by the Prevent agenda or that engaging faith communities was seen primarily as a means for combating terrorism or radicalisation. Indeed, although there were disparities between the two boroughs, the general sense is that Counter-Terrorism was not at the forefront of the operational consciousness of most officers. However, despite this, the research found that officers showed high levels of confidence that they would appropriately identify issues worthy of reporting, and the mechanisms they would follow to do so.

## 1. Introduction

This Report gives the results of interviews with members of the policing teams in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham. The interviews were designed to explore how police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) negotiate and engage with the (changing) religious identities found among the local communities. The research project aims to establish the extent to and the ways in which religion and faith figure in everyday policing practice; more specifically, the extent to which and how faith communities are being engaged – with what sense of preparedness, purpose and direction, and with what likely outcomes – in a context that is dynamic and changing. We seek to identify and disseminate best practice and to identify ways in which practice in this area might best be supported and developed. Our goal is to help police develop the ways in which they understand and navigate the complex social geography of their local communities in order to enhance an effective and responsive policing service by forming appropriate, flourishing relations with local religious communities.

Religion and faith have achieved a newly acquired importance in many aspects of public life and public policy in the UK, including policing, as awareness of the significance of religion to identity and to behaviour in the public sphere have undergone perceptible shifts in public consciousness. Faith and religion have emerged as independent variables, intersecting and interacting with other facets of identity, such as race and ethnicity, the significance of which have long been uncontested. This increasing attentiveness to faith and religion in the public sphere has emerged out of a context which is not only avowedly secular, but which has also seen marked declines in active participation in religious practice. This decline makes religion unfamiliar terrain to many and not an automatic conceptual category with which to navigate or analyse the social world; the corresponding decline in religious literacy amongst those not overtly religious likely inhibits both from noticing the topographical features of faith and religion in the British social landscape and from recognising their potential significance. Hence, this shift towards recognising religion as an independent facet of identity of potential public significance is both new and challenging.

This change in the ‘placing’ of religion in public discourse and public life itself reflects changes in the religious topography of Britain. Two changes are especially significant in relation to this research. First, patterns of migration have introduced, and continue to introduce, diverse and sometimes unfamiliar communities from different parts of the globe, for whom religion and faith are significant components of identity in ways no longer typical of the majority of the UK population. Second, some, especially diasporic, faith communities have begun asserting the significance of the faith components of their identities in ways that impinge on the public sphere. The situation (and not just awareness of it) in which police and other public bodies have become newly attuned to the significance of religion and faith and attempt to engage faith communities is a dynamic one.

In addition to these changes in British public life and discourse more broadly, a similar shift towards the recognition of the significance of faith and religion may be seen in the specific context of contemporary British policing. In several interlaced strands in both policy and operational practice, British policing increasingly pays explicit attention to faith and religion as components of individual and communal identity, where it might previously have thought in terms only of race and ethnicity. These developments can be seen, for example, in the unavoidable and potent agendas related to diversity in policing, the introduction of the Human Rights Act, and in the extension of hate-crimes explicitly to incorporate religious- and faith-hate. But at least, if not more, important is the emphasis on social cohesion and community engagement in the context especially of the comprehensive organisational, structural and cultural move towards the Neighbourhood Policing model, where engaging faith communities has been identified as having a potentially significant role. Finally, the impact of the counter-terrorist agenda in heightening the importance of faith and religion as facets of identity and of police engaging specific faith communities cannot be ignored, but is easily overplayed.

This project is a partnership between the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and the Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Leeds. It has therefore been a unique and exciting project drawing on the expertise in 'Community Religions', interfaith and religion & public life at the University of Leeds, the human resources and interest of the Metropolitan Police, and the networking capability of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme. Dr Mel Prideaux of the University of Leeds acted as project manager, Dr Al McFadyen (a full-time academic but also a serving officer in West Yorkshire Police) acted as project consultant. Both have written this report based on the interviews conducted by Ms Katie Miller and Dr Chandra Jangbahadoor, both members of MPS staff.

The project was designed as a self-contained and complete piece of research, resulting in a report, a toolkit for practice and scholarly articles. It is now envisaged, however, that further research to test the findings and the toolkit, especially in organisational, operational and policy environments outside London, would enhance the value of the project and its outcomes.

## 2. Summary of Findings

### 2.1. The Place of Religion in Policing Practice

Although particularly evident in neighbourhood policing, faith and religion are increasingly significant, though contested, categories in all areas of police work. Hence, religious literacy, an ability to engage faith communities and individual faith identities in the provision of a local policing service and to navigate social topography partly structured by faith and religion will enhance this work. As well as important in the work done by MPS Safer Neighbourhood Teams (Neighbourhood Policing is delivered in the MPS by Safer Neighbourhood Teams) to engage and reassure local communities, we find that it is also of relevance to reactive policing, including the work of response teams dealing with immediate graded emergency and priority calls.<sup>1</sup>

The Report recommendations for both policing practice and theory and research therefore focus on a greater awareness of faith and religion and of their significance in delivering the core elements of a high quality policing service.

### 2.2. Institutional Memory and Concentration of Knowledge

Knowledge can become concentrated among a few people and this, along with a dynamic work force in which people change role and location frequently can lead to failures and loss of institutional memory.

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<sup>1</sup> In the MPS, an immediate graded response is one where the 'immediate' attendance of a police officer is required. The target for resource arrival is within 12 minutes. This grade extends exemptions under the road traffic act to attending units and is likely to be applied where a serious incident is ongoing, involves actual or potential violence, harm, damage or impediment to traffic safety, where offenders are in the vicinity or have been detained by members of the public and are non-compliant. A priority grade indicates attendance within the hour and is applied where these circumstances do not apply, but where the call for service relates to an agreed local priority, where investigation might be impeded by delay, where there are distressed or vulnerable witnesses or victims, compliant detained persons, an injury accident, traffic obstruction, or where the crime is a hate crime. Other calls will either be graded as suitable to be dealt with by a police officer or PCSO by appointment or as not requiring attendance (say, by taking a crime report over the telephone).

The report recommendations for policing practice therefore focus on developing training, operational processes and information sharing systems which retain institutional learning and disseminate best practice.

### 2.3. Religious Change

The religious profile of local communities is constantly evolving, with new religions and new forms of religion arriving, developing and leaving – sometimes over relatively short spaces of time. This can be a challenge for police trying to engage with new religious forms and feeling ill-prepared to do so.

The report recommendations for policing practice therefore focus on developing training and information systems which are skills- rather than knowledge based, and for the development and maintenance that retain but also allow and require updating of information held.

### 2.4. Policy and Practice

Areas of policy, law and police regulations which relate to faith and religion or where both may be significant are diverse and regularly change. Issues related to institutional memory and information sharing are significant here, as is awareness of and engagement with the categories 'faith' and 'religion' in policy making.

The report recommendations for policing practice therefore include developing training and information sharing systems. Recommendations for research and theory include encouraging debate and multi-disciplinary engagement on the role and significance of 'religion' in policing.

### 2.5. Training

Our research finds that many officers perceive certain forms of training concerning faith communities and religion as more 'successful' and 'relevant' than others. The research revealed a preferred emphasis on what amounts to embedded learning, where what is learnt is not abstracted from either operational working or the local operational context.

The report therefore recommends that initial and continuing training be developed and orientated towards skills and experience-based learning, where learning is by doing, and where this learning might itself generate new understanding and knowledge.

### 2.6. Personal Religiosity and Policing Practice

The report includes findings concerning the significance of personal religiosity, or non-religiosity, in policing practice, but also the ways in which it may be experienced to be problematic. One's personal position in relation to faith can be a resource in, but may also be threatened by, engagement with religion and with communities and people of faith. Either way, the research identifies a number of potential challenges, benefits and conflicts of interest and expectation across a range of situations.

The report recommendations for policing practice therefore include that consideration be given to how best to manage and support people of faith in the police service.

## 3. Report Recommendations

### 3.1. Policing Practice

From the research findings identified below it is possible to make recommendations specifically for consideration in policing practice.

#### 3.1.1 Training

It is clear that the religious profile of local communities is constantly evolving, with new religions and new forms of religion arriving, developing and leaving over relatively short spaces of time. The complexity of religious identities, and of a changing and dynamic religious landscape is a potential and actual challenge for police engaging with people of faith and feeling ill-prepared to do so.

***It is therefore recommended that training be developed that encourages engagement with 'faith' and 'religion' as a category and as a live issue in contact with people of faith.***

The report demonstrates that police perceive certain forms of training as more successful than others. Knowledge based training tends to focus on imparting information and to provide a picture of religion that is normative, generalised and abstract. This has its place, is unavoidable and important. Yet it is unrealistic to think that acquisition of knowledge can ever be complete in this context, and will not be sufficient always to meet the unpredictable demands of the range of situations in which faith and religion might be relevant in operational policing. More importantly, an emphasis on imparting knowledge on its own will not develop the more personal capacities that are called for in operational policing: more often wise and judicious discernment and actively engaged enquiry that can draw on previously acquired knowledge and understanding but is not limited to or by it. An emphasis on learning about the local community and engaging with people of faith in the routines of operational encounter was found from many interviewees who demonstrated good, reflective practice and high levels of faith-community engagement.

***It is therefore recommended that initial and continuing training be developed and orientated towards skills and experience-based learning. It is recommended that value be placed on active engagement with people and communities of faith, and that this be emphasised in Borough inductions which encourage awareness of local religious complexity, but also that faith-community engagement be built into the work of officers as appropriate in a deliberate, structured way.***

#### 3.1.2. Information Sharing

In a huge and complex institution, knowledge can become concentrated among a few people and this, along with a dynamic work force where staff frequently changes role or location can lead to failures of institutional memory. Contacts can become lost, experience under-utilised, and good practice under-valued.

***It is therefore recommended that information-sharing systems be developed which retain institutional learning and disseminate best practice. Where a focus on developing local knowledge, e.g., through the 'Faith Officers' is lost due to restructuring, there should be a plan in place to retain learning, contacts and skills. These information-sharing systems should feed into training.***

Policy and regulations which relate to religion or where religion may be significant are diverse and regularly change. Awareness of and engagement with the categories 'faith' and 'religion' in policy implementation can

be immensely beneficial. Where there are limitations on institutional memory and where information sharing is limited the relevance of religion, and the related knowledge which may benefit policy implementation, can be lost.

***It is therefore recommended that information sharing systems which support policy implementation should engage with the significance of faith and religion.***

### 3.1.3. Management

The report includes findings concerning the significance of personal religiosity, or non-religiosity, in policing practice, but also the ways in which it may be experienced to be problematic. One's personal position in relation to faith can be a resource in, but may also be threatened by, engagement with religion and with communities and people of faith. Either way, the research identifies a number of potential challenges, benefits and conflicts of interest and expectation across a range of situations. The research finds evidence that suggests that officers from a particular faith community are sometimes expected to be experts in or used as the medium of contact for that faith community in the locality. That is not always unwelcome or inappropriate, though sometimes it is. It is, however, work that is not always well supported, and the challenges and demands that the expectation that officers utilise their faith location or background can place on them are easily underestimated.

Although Police Associations within the MPS do provide support for people of faith in the police, and also provide a source of knowledge on the traditions they represent for the entire service, it appears difficult to avoid the construction of a 'normative' picture of religion, which both makes demands on individuals of faith and also limits the ability to deal with local complexity and diversity.

***It is therefore recommended that continuing consideration be given to how best to manage and support people of faith in the police service when they are seen as the local expert in their religious tradition and to engage faith associations within the service constructively and creatively.***

## 3.2. Theory and Research

As a result of this research, we outline below a number of recommendations concerning theory and research in the fields both of criminology and the academic study of religion. We set these first in the context of the available literature in the field.

### 3.2.1. Faith and Religion in the Literature

The growing awareness of the significance of religion and of faith communities in the policing context, and the increasing attention paid to them in policy documents, has not been matched by corresponding increase in scholarly attention. With the notable exception of studies of the impact of Al Qa'ida inspired terrorism and of the counter-terrorist response on Muslim communities (see, e.g., Choudhury 2010; Spalek, Awa, and McDonald 2009; Spalek and Lambert 2007), hardly any attention has been paid to religion as an explicit theme in policing in the academic disciplines of criminology or sociology (an almost unique exception is the collection of studies in Spalek 2002, which also focuses on Islam and the Muslim community); even less in Theology & Religious Studies.

We suggest three conclusions might be drawn from this:

- police engagement with religious and faith communities is under-reported in the literature;
- is being undertaken without significant support from academic engagement in either of the relevant disciplines;
- operational policing enjoys little sustained academic support to assist in understanding the way in which religion and faith, and membership of a faith community, might shape and be a resource in the experience of crime, victimisation, policing or engagement in relation to officers, victims, offenders.

*Religion may significantly influence perceptions and experiences of crime and criminal justice and, as such, should be carefully considered by policy-makers and criminal justice and voluntary agencies when responding to both the perpetrators and victims of crime. For people who work for the criminal justice system, as prison officers, police officers, probation officers and so forth, their religious beliefs may also influence their working practices or may act as a point of discrimination and abuse. (Spalek 2002, p.6)*

### 3.2.2. Opportunities for Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration

The academic discipline of Theology and Religious Studies has developed sophisticated approaches to and understanding of the multi-faceted and complex field of faith and religion within the secular and religiously plural context of contemporary Britain. This includes the nature of religion, of faith and faith communities; the engagement of faith communities in politics, public life and civil society; government policy in relation to faith, religion and faith communities; the complex relationship between race, ethnicity and faith identities; the history of diaspora faith communities; the self-understanding of faith communities. Yet there has been very little attempt to engage this expertise in criminology more broadly or in policing studies specifically more specifically when attending to faith, religion or faith communities; neither has there been any significant attempt to extend theological or religious scholarship in this direction.<sup>2</sup> Most of the work that has appeared on issues of faith or religion in relation to criminal justice more broadly, or on specific aspects of police encounter and engagement, have focussed on Islam (e.g., Choudhury 2010; Spalek, Awa, and McDonald 2009; Spalek and Lambert 2007; Spalek 2002). Not only to broaden the range of attention to include other faith communities, but also in order to enrich and strengthen the growing literature on Islam, we encourage greater engagement between academics working in the field of Theology & Religious Studies and those working within criminology and sociology addressing issues relating to faith, faith communities and religion.

***More immediately, we therefore recommended that this project be used as the basis for a further, more substantial piece of research based on multi-disciplinary collaboration.***

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<sup>2</sup> Theological engagement with criminal justice tends to be limited to issues of punishment and associated conceptions of justice.

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### 3.2.3. Religion as a Category in Policing Practice and Research

It is clear from the findings of this research project that there are significant issues in how religion as a category is understood and utilised in both policing practice and policing research. In particular, we find that religion and faith are underexplored, and easily submerged into or conflated with other categories, especially those of ethnicity and race.

***It is therefore recommended that both policing practice and policing research, when engaging with religious issues and faith communities, treat religion as an independent category and that more sustained attention be given to religion and its significance, drawing on the resources of academic scholarship in the field of Theology and Religious Studies.***

More specifically, we find that insufficient attention has been given to religion as an independent category in the existing scholarship on neighbourhood policing. Very few examples can be given of studies which look at the role religion and faith plays in policing outside of the anti-terror context (Spalek 2002, is virtually alone in this), which partly accounts we suspect for the focus on Islam in the literature that does attend to religion in this way. However, this study clearly demonstrates the potential and actual significance of religion for policing practice and research. This significance can only be expected to increase as newer communities reach 'institutional completeness' and become both more visible and more engaged.

***It is therefore recommended that the outcomes of this project be disseminated widely among relevant academic communities, policy makers, and within the police service, in order to provoke debate about the significance of religion in policing and therefore in policing research.***

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### 3.2.4. Areas for Further Research

As a small-scale and locally-specific project, this research has generated more questions than the data can answer; and more questions than the present literature in Theology & Religious Studies, Criminology or Sociology can help us answer. Areas for further research include: the role of personal religiosity in policing; the use of the category 'religion' in policing and policy making; the mapping and recording of religious change; the specific demands of engaging *faith* communities in a policing context. Although some studies relevant to these issues exist in Theology & Religious Studies literature, their findings are not correlated with the specific context of policing or the criminological literature. In our view, this is an urgent need, which could yield significant gains in understanding, reflecting on and supporting police practice and the engagement of faith communities themselves.

***It is therefore recommended that this project report be forwarded to relevant funding bodies to encourage awareness of the potential scope for further research in this area.***



## 4. The Context of the Research: The New Place of Religion in British Policing

### 4. 1. Interwoven Strands of a Story

This research was developed in response to an evolving and challenging arena of public policy which concerns 'religion', both personal and communal, in relation to policing. Although the most high-profile policy agenda, raising the significance of religion and encouraging engagement with faith communities, has undoubtedly been that surrounding the response to terrorism, this is but one aspect of a story that has several overlapping strands.<sup>3</sup> Significant though it is, the counter-terror agenda is only one aspect of the story of British policing's new willingness to engage faith communities and religious identities as *religious* communities and identities. Moreover, we would argue that counter-terror is neither the primary nor the most important policing context in which religion has achieved acknowledged significance in policing. Certainly, the research reported here further suggests that it is also not the most significant context for officers in which faith and religion are (or should be) considerations and in which engagement with faith, religion and faith communities occurs and is sought.

We conclude that there are significant dangers in allowing discussion of religion in the policing sphere to be completely taken over by considerations related to terrorism or by seeing the renewed activity around faith and religion as set in the context of the counter-terror agenda as though that were its primary and controlling context. Specifically, that would lead to marked under-appreciation of the trajectory that concern with faith and religion has achieved independently of the counter-terror agenda in the following strands:

- the broad and rich set of **diversity** agendas operating through all aspects of British policing after the Macpherson enquiry and into which faith and religion have now been explicitly introduced (See, e.g., Metropolitan Police Service 2006; Metropolitan Police Authority 2010; New Scotland Yard Specialist Crime Directorate 2004);
- the appearance of faith and religion in the sphere of criminal legislation and hence the operational policing environment that has raised awareness of faith as a component of identity vulnerable to attack (specifically, recognition of **religious aggravation** for some offences **and faith-hate** as a form of hate crime in the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, 2001, respectively);
- and, most important, the comprehensive organisational, structural and cultural shift throughout British policing to a **Neighbourhood Policing** model, which emphasises community accessibility, engagement, responsiveness, partnership working

We suggest rather that the place of religion in police Prevent work, and especially engagement with faith communities, be understood as shaped by institutional learning and associated developments concerning faith and religion in policy and practice achieved in relation to these three areas.

Indeed, recent advice from the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) on police engaging faith communities is written entirely within the trajectory of the Neighbourhood Policing agenda, with no overt

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<sup>3</sup> Following the two Al Qa'ida inspired attacks on London in 2005, the UK government developed a National counter-terrorist strategy (Contest), comprising four strands or workflows: Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare (HM Government 2009), the first iteration of which was in 2003, though it was only published in 2006 (HM Government 2006). For some further details, see also (Bettison 2009).

reference to counter-terror until the end of the document, where the concern is entirely with the utilisation of counter-terrorist officers' skills in enhancing Neighbourhood Police teams' engagement with faith communities (NPIA 2010, p.23). This suggests that what we find in the operational environment is mirrored in the policy environment too: that counter-terror is not, in fact, a context isolated from others nor may it be regarded as the dominant strand in the story of police engagement with faith communities; it is intertwined with others. Any narration of the place of religion in contemporary British policing that is adequate and accurate to the reality cannot assume that the context of religiously inspired terrorism is either the sole or the overriding strand of the story. It cannot be recounted in isolation from other strands of the narrative.

## 4.2. Religion in New Structures: Neighbourhood Policing

The last decade has seen an immense structural and cultural shift towards Neighbourhood Policing. This emphasises a proactive, problem-solving approach to crime and anti-social behaviour using the National Intelligence Model (NIM), requiring new forms of community engagement and partnership working, focussed on the key outcomes of public reassurance, confidence and satisfaction (Maguire and John 2006; Metropolitan Police Service and Metropolitan Police Authority 2010), culminating in the Safe and Confident Neighbourhoods Strategy (HM Government 2010). Neighbourhood Policing represents a significant structural and cultural change throughout British policing in terms of staffing, accessibility in, accountability to and involvement of local communities, responsiveness to community concerns, ways of working with and engaging partners in and from local communities, and – combined with the NIM – new forms of strategic direction and monitoring of performance.

What has this to do with religion and faith communities? The answer to that is twofold.

### 4.2.1. Social Cohesion and Religious Identities

First, the origins of this structural and cultural shift can be traced back to concerns that the police were in serious danger of losing effective contact with the communities they served. These concerns have a longer history (going back at least to the Scarman Report on the Brixton riots of 1981), but they became crystallised into a specific agenda around issues of social cohesion following the wave of disturbances in Northern British towns and cities in 2001. Significantly, this concern is coincident with recognition of the significance of religious identities in those disturbances (Bagguley and Hussain 2005; Burlet and Reid 1998). Hence, the broadest context of the move towards Neighbourhood Policing is an agenda of social cohesion within which an earlier, policing-specific, agenda of community engagement and community and faith relations are placed; an agenda which for the first time in broader public and police-specific policy recognises the contribution of faith and religious identities as independent variables, overlapping the identities more conventionally addressed in terms of race and ethnicity (See, for example, H M Inspectorate of Constabulary 1995), and the need for them to be engaged in the processes of policing.

### 4.2.2 Neighbourhood Working and Religious Communities

Second, engaging with faith communities is unavoidable in the community engagement, consultation and partnership work now enjoined on all Neighbourhood Policing Teams (Safer Neighbourhood Teams in the MPS) if that work is to be done with some sense of completeness and to achieve its full potential. In part, that is because all neighbourhoods will contain people who self-identify at least partly in terms of faith; formal and informal religious groups meeting, worshipping, educating, organising in service of the community or engaging in civic and political responsibility; buildings in which meetings, worship and education take place; possibly also other sites of religious significance or use (such as cemeteries or Kosher food stores). Not only will

engagement with the way in which a community is actually structured and structures its self-understanding be incomplete if there is no attentiveness to faith identities and faith communities, a significant resource for community engagement, consultation and partnership would also be missed. For that reason, faith communities are identified as “key contacts” in the National Policing Improvement Agency’s latest guidance document for engaging faith communities (NPIA 2010, pp.4ff.).

What makes them “key contacts”? In part, it seems, because they are functioning identifiable, structured and formally organised groups (often with buildings for community use), meeting regularly and sharing a common identity around shaping values that sometimes express themselves in community service. Significantly, perhaps, the identified potential benefit to Safer Neighbourhood Teams of, not just engaging, but working with faith communities is the possibility of “reaching” individuals and communities who would not otherwise be included in or include themselves in engagement, consultation or approach the police directly. That is followed closely by their potential to add capacity to broader engagement work. In part, this capacity refers to resource: organisational structure, including mechanisms of communication and dissemination; personnel and skills; knowledge and understanding of the community, and possibly a history of working in it; buildings. In addition, though, the specifically religious nature of the community is also identified as a resource for fuller understanding and development of “faith-sensitive approaches to common issues”. At the same time, faith communities become part of the community consultation, whereby specific issues and priorities are identified and addressed (NPIA 2010, pp.4ff.). The advice specifically envisages that a Safer Neighbourhood Team might “bring faith communities together to address common issues and problems”, presumably as faith communities, though also recognises that there may be resistance within the Service to working with people of faith – the specific issue mentioned is proselytisation (NPIA 2010, pp.6, 10), which our research also finds to be a fear amongst some officers.

In its own documentation, the MPS sees faith community engagement as set within the context of the ordinary realities of providing a Neighbourhood Policing service:

*The proactive harnessing of the energies, knowledge and skills of communities and partners not merely to identify problems but also to negotiate priorities for action and shape and deliver solutions. (Metropolitan Police Service and Metropolitan Police Authority 2010, p.5)*

### 4.3. Prevent

Broadly speaking, it is the Prevent strand of the Contest strategy that is the more likely to involve partnership work with other statutory and non-statutory organisations, formal and informal groups, including faith communities. Prevent is specifically aimed at intervening in and disrupting the processes of radicalisation towards involvement in or support of ‘violent extremism’. Given the level of concern regarding Islamist terror networks and their potential to recruit British Muslims or UK-resident Muslims, a good deal of this work has been oriented towards understanding of and engaging with British Islam (including its self-understanding in a global context) (HM Government 2009, 5.20f., 5.23, 9.14). The government’s Prevent strategy also aims to “increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism” (HM Government 2009, 0.33, 9.11). Police strategy in this regard does not only involve an increase in the capacity of designated counter-terror units, but also an integration of the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda into the routine work of policing, especially that of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (HM Government 2009, 0.09; 9.16). Community engagement, partnership and empowerment was envisaged, working with and within communities perceived to be at risk of

being targeted by agents of radicalisation towards violent extremism (and of being attacked in light of the perceived terrorist threat), and Muslim communities are specifically mentioned in this regard as receiving much of the support and attention on offer (HM Government 2009, 0.36). Significantly, 'empowerment' has included working with communities to find and utilise non-violent and democratic means for expressing grievances and contesting mainstream views in the public domain (Spalek, Awa, and McDonald 2009, pp.36ff.; Pickerill, Webster, and Gillan 2007). However, it would appear that this work has been done in parallel, rather than by working with and through, Neighbourhood Policing Teams (either by the MPS' Muslim Contact Unit or Community Engagement Officers working with a Prevent-specific remit).

## 5. Methodology of the Research Project

### 5.1. Research Process and Management

Unlike many studies in the field of policing, this research project took advantage of the short time scale and limited resources to explore a 'richer picture' method of data collection. Rather than a large survey approach, gathering quantitative data with some limited qualitative responses, the approach adopted in this project was wholly qualitative. In keeping with this qualitative and broadly ethnographic approach, the nature of the project evolved during the period of planning and data gathering, moving in response to developing theoretical and practical questions as well as opportunities for research assistance from the MPS. Detailed semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to explore key issues with interviewees and to explore new issues and directions as they emerged. This approach has yielded a body of data which has depth and complexity, broadly indicative of a series of questions and issues rather than providing definitive answers to a series of set questions. Consequently, the research findings should be read as dynamic, providing a basis for new research and suggesting a variety of future directions for research, policy and practice (as shown in the Recommendations).

As a partnership between a police service on the one hand and academic researchers and institutions on the other, this project benefitted from both 'insider' interest, knowledge and the orientation of practitioners, as well as 'outsider' research expertise and analysis from a broader academic discipline not ordinarily attentive to issues in policing. The development of partnership research between police and academics has been discussed in a series of articles in a recent issue of *Policing*, providing examples of case studies as well as a critique of some of the key challenges and benefits to both police and academic perspectives (Fleming 2010). This project has drawn benefits from being time-limited and locally specific, yet has gained also from our coming to see it as both a pilot and initial phase of a longer-term project, extended into other Force areas so that a local differentiated but national perspective might be developed. This will afford the opportunity to review and develop the methodology employed here, and to develop academic-police partnership in future research. Critical issues included the insider/outsider status of the researchers and the sampling process.

#### 5.1.1. Insider/Outsider

In the field of Religious Studies (Knott 2005) and beyond (Pike 1967) the role of the researcher as 'inside' or 'outside' the communities and practices they observe is much discussed and analysed. The issues identified in these discussions surfaced in this project in unique ways, especially in respect of our fieldwork researchers, who, as MPS employees with responsibilities as externally supervised researchers to an independent research project, were both insiders and outsiders. The researchers are both members of MPS staff and brought a combination of operational policy and administrative experience, knowledge and understanding, as well as

research skills, to the project. Meanwhile, project participants from the University of Leeds were responsible for the training and management of the MPS researchers and supervised them during the course of the fieldwork. The insider status was of immense benefit in terms of the researchers' ability to locate responses and follow up key points. There were, however; challenges, the most unexpected of which being managerial rather than methodological: not being formally seconded to the role, they faced competing demands on their time, and restrictions on their availability. In particular, this had the consequence of limiting the time-frame for conducting interviews and restricting the flexibility with which they could respond to the demands of the project.

Whilst there are tremendous potential gains in an insider researcher not having to delay interviews with constant requests for clarification of terminology, acronyms or processes and procedures, there are potential losses to. Sometimes the missing clarifications that helped the interview progress smoothly presented difficulties when outsiders came to interpret and analyse the interview transcripts. By dint of the very virtue of being 'insiders', it is difficult to judge when something will not be understood by someone either outside the police community of practice altogether, or where something is actually Force-specific and so the boundaries of the community of practice prove to be more tightly drawn than one might have supposed. These challenges are not, however, unusual and provide useful experience for the planning of a further research phase.

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### 5.1.2. Sampling

Interviews with thirty-nine police officers and police community support officers were conducted during March 2010 in two London Boroughs (MPS policing divisions mapped onto local authority boundaries). In each Borough interviews were sought with police officers of different ranks across a range of dispositions, including representatives from the senior management team, and with police community support officers (PCSOs).

Safer Neighbourhood Teams work within the territorial boundaries of local authority wards. Within each borough, care was taken to include interviewees from a variety of wards so results were not skewed by overexposure to what might have proved to be idiosyncrasies of one or two ward teams, and a flavour of the borough as a whole could be built up. Interviews were conducted with inspectors, sergeants, PCs and PCSOs across different wards within the borough. Detective Inspectors, sergeants and constables were interviewed from Criminal Investigation Departments (CID). Inspectors, sergeants and PCs from a range of Response teams were also interviewed. Interviews were conducted within 'office hours'. No interviews were conducted with Special Constables.

Although a relatively diverse pool of interviewees was recruited this was done via the Borough command structure rather than through voluntary or snowball selection. Interviewees were required to attend, although all were given the opportunity to decline participation. This ensured that interviewees were released from their responsibilities and secured an appropriate range of interviewees for the project. However, the lack of inevitable distance from the management structures of a disciplined organisation was probably one factor in generating anxiety amongst some interviewees about the use to which their responses would be put. Other factors may have been the level of anxiety around the diversity agenda more generally, and the difficulty of distinguishing this research from the astonishing number of audits and inspections to which these MPS boroughs have recently been subject. Evidently, some interviewees approached the interview suspecting it to be some form of 'test' or inspection, which appeared to account for an occasional reticence about participation. This created occasional difficulty for the interviewers in trying to unpack information in interviews without causing greater anxiety on the part of the interviewee. This can be observed in the following exchange from one of the interviews:

R *I think it's . . . I think little, well what we say little things but aren't little things, big things to other faiths, is like shaking hands with females and taking your shoes off when you go to certain houses. Things like that really.*

I *Okay, that's great . . .*

I2 *. . . Can you tell me a little bit about shaking hands with females. Are you saying that with certain females you don't shake hands with, or . . . ?*

R *Yeah. You are going to catch me out now and . . .*

I2 *No, I am not going to catch you out . . .*

I2 *Honestly, I am not going to catch you at all. I was just*

R *There is certain religions that . . . they won't shake your hand.*

I2 *Okay.*

R *And don't even talk to you sometimes unless the male of the house is there.*

I2 *Really? Oh, so you say the female within the household will not shake . . . Is that always with female officers, or both male and female, they would not shake their hands?*

R *I don't know to be honest. Don't know.*

I2 *Okay. So you probably err on the side of caution, so you just don't do it just to . . . just probably not to cause offence. Okay. Thank you.*

Again, these challenges provide useful experience for the crafting of subsequent research.

### 5.1.3. Other Data Gathering

The researchers also arranged some informal observations and interviews with representatives of local faith communities. Approaches were made to police associations and other groups and individuals but, given the limited research period, very little supporting information was gathered. Although providing some insight, and suggesting some categories for analysing the interview data, it was decided not to incorporate this data. Future research may benefit from comparative data gathered in local communities. However, the data gathered from the interviews with police was wide ranging, complex and detailed and, within the time constraints of the project, there was a wealth of data for analysis.

## 5.2. Research Questions

The broad sweep of concerns identified in the introduction to this report were the basis for the interview schedule, which can be found in Appendix 4. Key themes included:

- mapping and knowledge of the local community, including faith communities
- understanding of the relevance of religion in police work and in the local community
- examples of good practice in training, professional development and community engagement
- the influence of the Prevent agenda

Key demographic data was collected including age, religious background, years in service and current role, though we have not included this in the report.

Interview questions evolved from initial theoretical and practical issues identified by project consultant, Dr Al McFadyen, and were developed by the Project Manager, Dr Mel Prideaux, and the researchers, Katie Miller and Chandra Jangbahadoor. As a pilot period did not prove possible, the questions did not formally develop in the light of their early use. However, the researchers were proactive in using the semi-structured interview setting to pursue key lines of enquiry.

## 6. Local Mapping

Two Boroughs were selected for study. Although relatively close to one another, Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham nevertheless provided contrasting experiences. As will be seen from the statistics below, although having very similar levels of socio-economic deprivation, the Boroughs are markedly different in their religious and ethnic minority profiles. It should also be noted that Tower Hamlets is a heavily researched area of London.

The following material is principally drawn from official Borough websites, with some reference to 2001 census data. This attention to the Borough descriptions has been used because, despite giving detailed information about the Boroughs, neither authority refers to the religious make-up of the area.

### 6.1. Barking and Dagenham

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is located east of Central London on the north bank of the River Thames. Drawing from the 2001 census and other office of National Statistics sources, the Borough website (<http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/3-info/demographic-main.html>) highlights the following key demographics:

- In 2004 the resident population estimate was 164,572
- In 2004 the percentage of the resident population aged under 16 was 23. 3%
- The percentage of the resident population aged 60 or over in mid 2004 was one of the highest in London at 17. 2%

- The white British population made up 80.9% of the borough's population in 2001
- The largest minority ethnic group in 2001 was black African representing 4.4% of the population
- In 2001 39.5% of the population aged 16 to 74 has no qualifications, being the highest rate in England and Wales (the 2001 census also showed that Barking and Dagenham had the lowest proportion of graduates in England and Wales)

The London Council's website (<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk>) gives further local information, including:

- Unemployment claimants at 5.7% of the population<sup>4</sup>
- 32% of housing is provided by the public sector
- Following the 2010 election, the composition of the council is 100% Labour, having at the 2006 election returned 11 councillors from the British National Party. Both Members of Parliament for the area represent the Labour party

The 2001 census summary (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00ab.asp#ethnic>) shows that:

- 76% of the population at that time identified themselves as having a religion
- The proportion of the population who described themselves as Christian<sup>5</sup> was 69% (which equates to 90% of those identifying as of a religious community)
- The second largest group was Muslim, recorded as 4.4% of the population.

## 6.2. Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is also, like Barking and Dagenham, located east of Central London on the north bank of the River Thames. The Borough contains much of what is traditionally known as the 'east end' of London. The local authority website ([http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/901-950/916\\_borough\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/901-950/916_borough_statistics.aspx)), drawing on Office for National Statistics figures, highlights the following statistics:

- The percentage of 20 to 34 year olds is third largest in the country (37%)
- The proportion of 45-79 year olds is 20%, the lowest in the country (8% retirement age)
- 56% of the population belong to an ethnic group other than white British
- 30% are Bangladeshi

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<sup>4</sup> The 2001 census (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles>) shows that other economically inactive categories were also very high. For instance, the proportion recorded as permanently sick or disabled is the second highest in England and Wales, and the proportion recorded as looking after home/family is the third highest in England and Wales.

<sup>5</sup> As well as now being dated, it is also worth noting arguments from some academics that the relatively high proportion of those identifying as Christian is likely to be about national identity rather than religion (Voas and Bruce 2004). Certainly church attendance seems unlikely to bear out this proportion as 'practising' Christians.



- 8% are from other white backgrounds
- The 2001 census population total was 196,106 (between 1991 and 2001 Tower Hamlets was the second fastest growing authority in England and Wales)
- The estimated 2007 population was 215,300, and the population is expected to grow faster than any in London until 2026

The London Council's website (<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk>), highlights that:

- The population is (at 2008 estimate) approximately 220,500
- Unemployment benefit claimants at 6.7% of the population
- Proportion of housing in the public sector was 41%
- From 2010 both Members of Parliament represent the Labour party, and the composition of the council is 80% Labour, up from just over 50% in 2006

The 2001 census summary for Tower Hamlets (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00bg.asp>) shows that like Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets has a very high proportion of the population with no qualifications, coming second overall in the rankings. The 2001 census also shows that:

- 78% of the population in 2001 identified themselves as having a religion
- The proportion of the population who described themselves as Christian in 2001 was 39%
- The proportion of the population who described themselves as Muslim in 2001 was 36%. This is the highest proportion in England and Wales

## 7. Research Findings

Having provided an outline of the background, location and methodology of this research project, the following sections now provide the 'richer picture' analysis which leads us from the background data to our recommendations.

### 7.1. The Place of Religion in Operational Policing

#### 7.1.1. Religion, Faith and Identity

A recent Institute for Public Policy Research report, *Identity, Politics and Public Policy* (Muir and Wetherell 2010), argues that the complexity and variation of identity-making is a challenge for policy makers. Though the report does not specifically discuss the particularities of religion as a social or personal identity (although it does make passing references to Muslim communities in the post 9/11 context and to faith communities' involvement in the London Citizens group), it nevertheless comes to conclusions which are echoed in this report's findings, particularly its call 'for a public discourse around identity that is more nuanced' (Muir and Wetherell 2010, p.12). As this report finds, many of the issues around police engagement with communities and individuals of faith were at heart issues around whether and how religion and religious identities were recognised, and how they were understood, constructed, engaged, validated or problematised; how they are

performatively shaped by patterns of local and non-local participation, agency and relationships. The IPPR report emphasises the significance of local action that is highly suggestive for the community engagement work of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and which bears further research into whether and how police engage with specific faith identities, and what effects police engagement activity has on those identities.

### 7.1.2. Prevent and the Counter-Terror Agenda

As we have anticipated already in our discussion of the context of this research in Section 4 above, we found very little evidence in our interviews with members of Borough-level policing units of a significant consciousness of Prevent. We conclude from this that Prevent is not the context in which most Borough officers operate in either deliberate, structured or occasional, ad hoc encounters or engagement with faith communities or persons of faith. Instead, insofar as faith and religion have a place at all in the work of the Borough, it is primarily in the ordinary processes and structures of routine, community-based policing. Prevent appears to play very little role in the operational consciousness of Borough-based officers. It has not served to flag the importance of faith and religion, or of faith community engagement. It is nowhere near the primary rationale for any such engagement taking place. It is not the primary context for interpretation or action in relation to work in this area that is undertaken. Overwhelmingly, interest in faith and religious identities and engaging with them is seen as belonging to the work of Safer Neighbourhood Teams as building up knowledge and understanding of, responsiveness to, and engaging with the communities that comprise the neighbourhood. The emphasis is accented heavily towards the impetus to provide a policing service to diverse communities, some of which may be identified on the basis of faith and religion.

Correspondingly, we found significant evidence that attention to faith and religion in response teams was judged to be of little relevance.

### 7.1.3. Safer Neighbourhood Teams

#### 7.1.3.1 Dynamic Operational Knowledge and Operational Effectiveness

In comparison with other teams, members of safer neighbourhood teams who were interviewed demonstrated markedly higher knowledge of and interest in religion and faith within the communities which they served, combined with a greater awareness of the potential significance of religious factors to the core policing function and role – although this was neither uniform nor evenly distributed.

Moreover, for many interviewees from safer neighbourhood policing teams, local knowledge of faith communities is seen as a significant field of operational knowledge, both acquired through operational experience and practice and contributing towards operational effectiveness in helping officers provide a policing service focussed on and responsive to the needs of local communities. The facilitation of communication and networking were frequently identified as the key benefits, making it easier for communities and their members to contact a local policing service and for police to distribute key messages. The underlying sub-text of several interviews was the assumption that these contacts were beneficial because some faith communities and their members might otherwise experience difficulties in effectively contacting or being contacted by police. Local relationships with faith communities were seen as empowering community members to contact the police.

*It's built up some really good relationships with people. They know who to contact, they've got a good point of contact if anything's going wrong. If we've got a message that we need to give out to the community we've already got*

*that, you know if incidents happen we'll quite often get people to phone us, 'Who do you know at the Mosque? Who do you know at the Temple?' 'Oh, I know so and so, go and speak to them'. So it's really useful that way. Yeah. It's just a good sort of contact points. (B&D1)*

The local knowledge evidenced in interviews with safer neighbourhood teams was both specific and current, demonstrating awareness of small and recent changes in the local community. For example, one interviewee disputed, on the basis of their experience, the statistical information provided about the Borough, showing a dynamic operational knowledge more immediately responsive to change than any officially published research or statistical information could hope to be.

*According to the latest figures there is supposed to be predominantly . . . the biggest influx at the moment is African, although I dispute that. I would probably say my biggest influx at the moment is Eastern European, particularly Lithuanian, Romanian. (B&D 13)*

Alongside this detailed local knowledge there was, as might be expected, considerable awareness of the religious diversity found in local neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood policing officers were also more likely to observe the significance of religion in policing practice, primarily because their own experience had demonstrated the situations in which religion could be especially significant.

#### 7.1.4. The Diversity Agenda and Operational Understanding

However, there was also evidence of a policy-based understanding of the significance of religion. This often showed an embedded consciousness of the diversity strand, which has developed out of a concern for police relations with ethnic minority communities and with confronting racism, into a broad and positively nuanced diversity agenda, now incorporating faith and religion.<sup>6</sup> Awareness was shown that the agenda is expressed principally in terms of fairness construed in light of the particularities of identity, rather than equality.

*Ever since the Martin [sic] Lawrence thing, and I think several other incidents, it's just hammered into you about, you know, being aware of other people's religious backgrounds and what they can and cannot do, as well as their ethnic background, religious background. And it's something that you will find most Met officers are very, very aware of. (B&D5)*

*. . . because we have to treat people according to their needs and abilities, and being from a different faith background, some people might require . . . different services from us than someone from another faith background. So having some prior knowledge about a particular faith group, or particular faith groups, helps us interact with them, make . . . it helps them pass on knowledge to us as well. You know, stuff that we might not know what's going on within a certain community. (B&D15)*

<sup>6</sup> The 'Respect for Race and Diversity' competency forms part of the competency framework which must be evidenced in Personal Development Reviews and for career development.

### 7.1.5. Race, Ethnicity and Religion Elided and Conflated

Across the range of teams, it was notable that most interviewees found it much easier to map ethnic, economic and social diversity than religious diversity. In addition, we noted a recurrent tendency to elide the distinction between ethnic/racial and religious identity. This tendency is not unique to policing or to other contexts of practice, but may be observed in other contexts as well, including the academic. In part, this reflects a broader, genuine difficulty in identifying which of several overlapping strands of identity are significant in a specific encounter for an individual or community; in part, the way in which interest in religious identities in the diversity agenda in British policing (and also in broader public discourse) has developed in an arena initially oriented towards the interests of minorities and constructed along the lines of race and ethnicity. At times, though, it reflects assumptions concerning the coincidence of ethnic/racial with religious identities, conflating them together.

Hence, in our interviews, we find some evidence of slippage in language between reference to religion and ethnicity. This was sometimes in situations where it might be expected (and could be defended on the basis of local specificity of the comment); for instance, when attempting to describe the local community and describing Muslims and Sikhs as parts of the Asian community.

*What you would describe I suppose as original East End people, who have been in the area for years. Then you've got a huge transient population, East Europeans, and that will be a mixture of anything from Polish, Russians, Lithuanians, Romas. And also we have quite a large Asian community. All Asian communities, Muslims, Sikhs, a huge variety of residents on our ward. (B&D1)*

The interviews also evidence of an unintended slippage in language in unexpected contexts.

*I'm not part of it anymore, but I was, I was part of an inter-racial forum, interfaith forum, sorry. (TH19)*

Although clearly only a slip of the tongue, quickly recovered, it could be argued that such slips are revealing of an underlying lack of firmness in the perceived boundaries between different aspects of identity and therefore in the significance of a particular set of relationships, encounters and agendas. Again, this conflation and confusion might be due in some part to the coincidence in the locality of ethnic/racial and religious identities, which builds up an expectation that the two generally coincide, or that they generally do so in the context of the specific group referred to. The slip above is noteworthy because it comes from and arises out of specific local experience and commitments and suggests that the distinctions between race and faith groups and agendas might be blurred in practice as well as in perception.

The tendency to equate 'Muslim' with 'Asian', and vice versa, was especially marked in the interviews. was also noted in the responses of individuals who themselves were part of the community they were trying to describe:

*Being Asian myself, so I know a bit about Muslims and how their culture is. (BD11)*

The tendency to describe Asian communities as Muslim (and Muslim communities as Asian) was marked in both Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham, though was unsurprisingly less evident in Barking and Dagenham where there is a substantial Sikh minority. There are particular potential implications of this

slippage of language and elision of categories in the context of the recording of faith-hate and race-hate crime, where an ability to distinguish the two may be important, but where the boundary may be particularly blurred. Yet, where identities overlay one another, it might equally prove both impossible and untrue to experience to force an analytical distinction choosing between identities. A hate crime might be experienced (and intended) as simultaneously an attack on ethnic/racial and religious aspects of what is, after all, a single identity for the individual.

#### 7.1.6. Religion as Voluntary Identity

Some interviews demonstrated an expectation that religion could be used pragmatically and selectively by individuals. So, for example, a person might leave their religion outside a meeting in a way that they could not leave their ethnicity:

*Other, like such as Pakistani people may attend the ward panel, but I don't . . . I don't think they bring their religion base into the meeting itself. (B&D11)*

This could be indicative of varied intensity of religious identities – that it is not a strong feature of identity for some, and so rarely features in participation in the Ward panel. Equally, it might represent what is being screened out of engagement because the context makes it experienced as irrelevant or unwelcome. But it is hard in any case to avoid the interpretation that religious identities are ‘voluntary’ in a way that ethnic and racial identities are not. And where religion is seen as a matter of choice it can, by extension, come to be seen as disposable or occasional, adopted only where it has utility (rather than being identity being constant and its explicit articulation being the variable). One interviewee drew on the operational experience of religious identity being asserted as a (in this case, devious) means of averting suspicion. Here, the assertion of religious identity is experienced as a (false) assertion of piety and innocence and a means perhaps of objecting to police attention.

*People often suggest to me ‘I am a Muslim, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do this’, and yet they smell of intoxicating liquor. So they use them being Muslim as an excuse for them having not done something wrong when clearly they have. (TH1)*

This observation opens up some interesting issues about the nature of religious identity, the way it is publicly presented, used and experienced in a policing context.

#### 7.1.7. Religion as Ephemeral: Rapid Response Teams

The possibility of seeing religion as a voluntary aspect of identity we suggest might partly explain the strong sense of its irrelevance to the work of rapid response teams, tasked with answering immediate and urgent calls for service from the public and covering the whole borough, rather than more localised council wards. Members of response teams were the least likely to perceive religion as holding any potential relevance in and to the core policing function delivered by the teams of which they were members – though there was often ready acceptance by response officers that attentiveness to and engagement with religion had a place in the work of Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

*I think the Safer Neighbourhood teams, they probably tend to deal with more. We are more focused on an individual victim, perhaps an ongoing problem that*

*they may be facing within their neighbours or disputes. Not an ongoing community tension. I would say that's more of a Safer Neighbourhood team they deal with and things like that. (B&D10)*

The distinction drawn here between the individual as the immediate victim of an incident requiring immediate or urgent response and negotiation of longer-term difficulties, possibly perceived as 'knotty' and complex, is marked. This is not necessarily disavowal of the significance of religious factors in either the underlying causes of the incident or the experience of the offence by victim or perpetrator. Rather, these 'human' interpretive, experiential and motivational elements are not seen as relevant to the much more urgent task of immediate securing and preserving of evidence, investigation, prevention of harm, preservation of life, and – above all – the arrest of suspects. It is tempting to see this as a body-'soul' distinction, where religion belongs to aspects of personal identity, selfhood and soul, whilst in an immediate response to an emergency, response officers see themselves as dealing with physical – and often bodily – necessities: preservation of life, prevention of injury, securing a prisoner and bringing offenders to justice.

#### 7.1.8. Religion As Irrelevant In Emergency Situations

Hence, amongst response officers, there was a (less than universal, though marked) tendency to see religion as on the whole an unnecessary complication, only significant in avoiding giving unwitting offence to victims, witnesses (and offenders?) on account of their religious or cultural sensibilities (removal of shoes, cross-gender issues were mentioned several times), with the one marked exception of identifiable hate crime or religiously or racially aggravated offences.

*Only what may insult them I'll kind of pick up on, just so I don't offend. But, as for religion in itself, it's a case of it's got nothing to do with what I am dealing with unless it's like a neighbour dispute, or based racial or religious motives. But no, religion plays very little in my thoughts about how I deal with stuff. (B&D5)*

*Quite a lot of time you go into disputes, you know, where an offence has been committed, or you go into arrest people and I think the bottom line is that, you know, always that you are going to arrest those people it doesn't really, it doesn't matter what they say to a certain extent because, you know, you are there to do that job, so perhaps that sort of overrides everything anyway. (TH17)*

*. . . especially if you are going to a hate crime. If you are going there ignorant of their values, their faith, how can you then perceive how they feel if someone is being hateful or racial towards them? You know, if you haven't got that in-depth knowledge, or if you think 'Well, why would that affect them so badly when I don't feel it was that bad?'. It is bad, but you think 'Well, why is it so bad for Jews, or Muslims, or Hindus, or Sikhs?' (TH5)*

Our overwhelming sense from the interviews with response officers is that they work with high levels of commitment to 'getting the job done', with responding to the need for speedy action and resolution, and the need to work effectively and efficiently in order to meet the level of demand for emergency and urgent service. Their focus thus tends to be on what it takes in order to take whatever immediate action is necessary. Religion is often scripted into this narrative as unnecessary; a distracting luxury, part of the larger context that has receded into the background as matters escalate to the point where emergency or urgent police response is needed. And awareness of this larger human context is construed as the business of Safer Neighbourhood Teams. With the exception of hate-crimes, where religion was conceded to be of direct relevance to police

action, religion featured (and was accepted) as an area of risk, where offence might be given, to be navigated carefully, drawing on general background knowledge of potential issues as appropriate.

#### 7.1.9. Religion, Operational Effectiveness and Confidence, even in Emergency Response

Notwithstanding the general sense of religion's relative irrelevance to the work of immediate incident response, two response team interviewees suggested awareness that knowledge of religion might form part of the portable operational wisdom that could, in some incidents, not only ameliorate the effects of the incident on victims and witnesses, but contribute to the effectiveness of police response and to the levels of confidence and satisfaction experienced by those in receipt of a policing service.

*Not in any way to disregard people's religious backgrounds. I think primarily in our role that that shouldn't be our first concern. You know, if we are dealing with crime and disorder that should be the most important thing. If it can then help to, you know, ease the situation or if it would help them to engage, to get more information to help people out, then obviously then that can be important. (TH18)*

*Even if you do spend a short time your interaction with the person or people could be the first time that person or group has ever dealt with police. Or it might not be the first time but within a very short sort of space of time you could radically sort of alter their perception of police, if you don't deal with them the right way they could walk away with a very bad impression. Or if you could you know . . . if you attend a situation you could potentially sort of escalate things, or not handle things correctly because you haven't got the right sort of background information. So I personally, from my experience, I think it would be a good thing if people had the . . . a knowledge of what the . . . the sort of issues are in their borough, and what the local sort of demographics are, what the . . . you know, the make-up of the population whether it is religious race or whatever, I think if . . . even if you are a response officer I think it would definitely help. (TH13)*

Religion becomes potentially significant to response policing, it would seem, where there is an attentiveness to the whole human context of the incident, including the way in which those affected experience and interpret the incident and the police response to it; where, in other words, attentiveness to religion is seen as potentially part of the incident and its satisfactory resolution – in both policing terms and the experience of those caught up in it, rather than an add-on luxury.

In one of the above interviews this openness to the potential significance of religion was connected to a high level of active commitment to understand the broad context of human communities inhabiting the area receiving the policing service.

*To be honest I really got more information from interacting with people around here and just talking to them, and also reading a bit on the net, you know, newspapers, the local newspapers, I think there is a Tower Hamlets Recorder or Messenger, there is some other local ones, if you sort of read that for a little while you tend to pick up the local issues with communities here, and that sort of thing. To be honest, I would say one of the drawbacks of response team is that*

*you are kind of thrown in at the deep end, you are not really given much information about the people you are dealing with or the borough, it is very much up to you to take initiative and sort of find out yourself really. You are not really, there is no structured sort of method that I am aware of where you are actually told that this is your community, this is the make-up of the community, these are the issues, it is, it is more like a day to day thing. You would have a briefing in the mornings, and they will say like you know, these incidents have occurred. Sometimes it might be community tension sort of related incidents, and then you will be told what the background is behind it, but there is no specific sort of method to actually sort of introduce you to the borough if you like, as far as I am aware. (TH13)*

In our interviews, we found this level of proactive seeking of community information far more characteristic of members of Safer Neighbourhood teams; it is the more impressive, since this response officer is seeking an understanding of the communities of the whole borough, not just one ward.

What also stands out from this response is that the officer is both reflecting on operational experience and preparing for it by taking the initiative to find information about the area, which is then correlated with police-specific information contained in operational briefings prior to deployment. But this is presented as all on the officer's initiative and is experienced as an activity unsupported through training or formal processes (nor, one would suspect, from the general culture of the response team as a community of practice). Neither knowledge, nor the way of gathering this kind of background operational understanding of the area, nor yet the means of reflection on operational experience in the way described draw on formal preparation, training or development. We draw out some of the implications of this in the section 7.6 below.

#### 7.1.10. Sudden Deaths

By contrast to other classes of incident, the unavoidable human element of sudden deaths impinged on members of all teams. The responses to the interview question concerning sudden death yielded many examples of good practice of engaging with and sensitivity towards the faith of people involved and of religious issues that might potentially surface.<sup>7</sup> This was distributed fairly evenly across all teams.

*And more often than not, I will actually involve a faith leader to help me explain that to the family and show that we work together, and we do observe their differences and their needs and wants. But we've also got to find that balance between an investigation and, you know, it's sometimes very traumatic for a family to hear you 'Sorry, there will have to be a post-mortem'. And it's trying to explain that and be a human being, I've always found, just put your book down and just try and explain it in words that they will understand. Because we've all got different expectations and different learning. And, more often than not, you can actually get the family engaged with you. (B&D7)*

<sup>7</sup> In some religious traditions there is a requirement to bury the deceased as quickly as possible, and for nobody but family to touch the body. This can conflict with investigative demands of scene preservation, lines of investigation or the need for a post-mortem examination.



## 7.2. Engaging Religion

### 7.2.1. Religious Tensions

There was a marked difference among interviewees in the level of awareness of inter-religious and intra-religious tension. There was limited evidence of awareness of inter-religious tensions in either borough. This may indicate that there is indeed a very low level of inter-religious tension or that any existing tension has not reached the attention of the police. This could only be explored with more detailed analysis and observation, and through interviews with members of the local community.

Awareness of intra-religious tension was, however, more marked, and was most notable in relation to the Sikh and Muslim communities. This was in part because of specific events within the locality which had come to the attention of Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and in some instances other teams.

*I understand there is a bit of a power struggle within the Muslim community and that the mosque won't say what it is . . . It is mostly Pakistani run and there is some conflict . . . They have a problem with the Bangladeshi people attending that mosque. (B&D3)*

Among those interviewees who did demonstrate an awareness of intra-religious tensions, these tensions were considered to not be the concern of the police, unless specific challenges such as public disorder arose from them.

*So if it means that the Bangladeshis have to set up their own little prayer meeting in the school, and they invite us to go along as well, we would be delighted to do so. And if they . . . and if the main Mosque wants to go there we will do that. But I am not going to get involved in the internal politics of it, at all. No. (B&D3)*

### 7.2.2. Inter-Religious Relations and Faith Fora

Some officers demonstrated awareness of systems of single and multi-faith representation, e.g., faith forums. In one instance, the interviewee was able to note, from experience, some of the challenges in working with or organising such a body:

*We had a faith forum, and to be honest I don't . . . because I am not involved in it I don't know if it is still running. But what we did was, when I was on Safer Neighbourhoods here a couple of years ago, what we did was we were down in the [R hall] down the road, we basically invited every faith leader that we knew about, on the borough, we got together. That was the first one. We made a big mistake on that one, because what we did was we let people sit where they like. Of course what do you get, Christians sit with Christians . . . That is what happens, yeah? What we did . . . it was run again, led by the council, and then what we did, we mixed everyone up so that you got sort of . . . And we had all different foods laid on from the different communities and things like that. I think*

*it has been done a couple of times, I think they are still running it. But again, I don't get involved in it, because my job has changed. (B&D18)*

In general, however, there was little evidence that interviewees were aware of these representative bodies, but there was evidence of a suspicion about how effective these groups were in representing the diversity of the local community.

*And they have regular public meetings, and you know, we go along and talk about crime, and policing issues, and take questions. And that's a very good way to sort of meet . . . Well, hopefully to meet with all sections of the community. But the difficulty that we are having is trying to get the sort of non-White population to attend. Tried all sorts of ways. I mean one of the obvious ones was that the Baptist church had, from the word go, said you know you're very welcome to hold the meetings in our church, and of course we have got to charge, and some public meetings were held there . . . it occurred to me actually, you know we were talking . . . we were sitting at one of these meetings saying how can we increase attendance? I mean it was very well attended, but how could we broaden the attendance, and you know they said well perhaps non-Christian people don't actually like coming into a Christian church. So we then . . . We then alternate and we hold every other meeting in the [school], who again are very good, and they give us the hall free of charge, and all the rest of it . . . It's still difficult to sort of break down and to encourage people to come along. And you go and speak to them in their houses, you know knock on their doors and sit down, and they are very welcoming and you say, look you know, we really are trying to get you all to come along to these public meetings. 'Oh yes, we will. We will. We will'. They won't tell you why . . . I don't know whether they're just too busy . . . But you know, it's difficult to get all sections represented. (B&D3)*

### 7.2.3. Targeted Engagement with and through Specific Faith Communities

Although the role of representative groups was limited, and seen as problematic, the role of the 'gate-keeper' who could open up access to communities through their religious role was notable throughout the interviews. In some instances, interviewees used and developed contacts with local religious leaders to make contact with a particular group of local residents. In one instance, this was clearly about increasing awareness of, and reducing suspicion of, the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team among the local Muslim residents.

*That was from the fact that we got the Chair and the Secretary from the Mosque to come out and patrol with us to see what we were like as a group. So they got first-hand experience of police and how we are dealing with guys on the street. And we asked them would you like to be involved and they said, 'yes'. (TH16)*

In some instances, interviewees shared examples of good practice in proactive engagement with religious groups, and particularly sections of the community that it may otherwise be difficult to contact even via a 'gate-keeper'. For example, contact with Muslim women was established through a meeting of a Bangladeshi Welfare Association.

*. . . we went to one of the Bangladeshi Welfare Association meetings . . . it was a very well attended meeting, and there was food laid on, and we had a nice chat afterwards, and it was noticeable that the Muslim ladies were all sort of sitting in a group at the back of the room. The men were all one side, and the women were all on one . . . all very happy talking amongst themselves. So I pushed one of my female PCSOs over there, 'Get in there', you know and 'Get talking to them', and 'What do they want? What can we do to help them?' And she came back and they said well what they would like is an opportunity, like we've got here now, for themselves just to meet and talk, without men present. And so she's actually working to try and set that up. I mean she hasn't been as successful as we had hoped, but we are going to keep on with that. But . . . You know, only by setting up such groups, and particularly perhaps talking to the Muslim ladies away from their men, could one really begin to understand exactly what their issues are, and what more they need from us. And then you could turn it round, you know what . . . What do they think that we need to know about them that we don't? (B&D3)*

The basis of the initial meeting was ethnic (Bangladeshi), but the interviewee identifies the intersection of religion and gender, particularly norms about engagement with men, as being the root of the need for engagement. Another interviewee used a contact within the Catholic church to build up links with the travelling community, where again the community is identified ethnically, but where religion is also a key feature of identity:

*We have got one other Catholic church in my ward as well, which I have got close ties to. And sometimes I use the connections with the parish priest there in order to liaise with some of the travelling community that we have got on my ward as well. I went to church on duty in plain clothes one Sunday, I knew there was tensions at the local traveller site, and all the travellers that were causing concerns were at church on the Sunday morning and I approached the parish priest and asked him could he help me? Could he mediate? Could we try and resolve the issue? And within twenty minutes I had a phone call back, and mediation was already started. I asked him what I wanted, and he got exactly what I wanted from them. He went in and explained the police's role. We then, myself and the priest, me in uniform and him in his, in his [tut], not uniform, walked, walked into the traveller's site, which has been unheard of for years, and we had a conversation regarding a petty incident which had blown out of all proportion. Something to do with a girlfriend or family in Ireland, or something like that, it just meant that one individual from the whole campsite had to leave the campsite, and that was what happened. And that solved all the problems, just that one single thing. (TH12)*

#### 7.2.4. Use of Buildings as Formal Partnership

The principal areas where there was evidence of engagement with religious groups were in youth work and community access for information sharing. This often involved the use of buildings as places to hold activities such as youth clubs, or events to make contact with members of a particular community. There were examples of regular meetings or engagement in mosques, churches and gurdwaras.

*But we do have . . . some youth clubs that run in the church halls that we try and go to. We have also got . . . a centre called the [D Centre], which is a Christian centre, and that runs a drop-in centre on a Friday, and we always try to have one member of the team there. And it's where anyone, regardless of their faith, can just go to this centre and have a cup of coffee and just chill out and we are there in case they want to talk to us. So we try and do that every Friday that we are on. (B&D12)*

*But equally, we engage a lot with the mosques as well and the Muslim community . . . every last Friday of the month we actually hold a resident surgery at the mosque. (TH18)*

Beyond this use of spaces belonging to religious groups there were very few examples given of specific instances of formal partnership working with faith communities, the focus tending to be on the use of venues or of attending events as invited. However, some organisations such as the Street Pastors in Barking and Dagenham were mentioned and there was clearly some informal partnership working with faith-based voluntary and community organisations.

In conclusion, it is evident that the level of knowledge about the role of religion was higher and more nuanced among those engaged in neighbourhood policing. Although instances of good practice and active engagement with the potential significance of religion was evidenced among other teams, there was a concentration of skills and knowledge among those who regularly interact with a local neighbourhood, most usually through informal contact and conversation, and occasionally through formal partnership, representation or use of buildings.

### 7.3. Religious Change

#### 7.3.1. Local Knowledge, and Religious Change

A feature of community mapping is that of change over time. In the terms of this research project, the changing religious profile in a borough such as Tower Hamlets, which has a dynamic population, pose a particular challenge to policing. Assumptions about religious identity based on ethnic or national identity are dangerous, and new religious expressions will be evident with each new community. Amongst Safer Neighbourhood Teams especially we found some evidence of a detailed sense of the way in which the 'map' of faith communities in the ward had changed over (especially recent) time and was still changing.

Interviewees noted the growth of African churches, and eastern European Catholicism. However, they tended to focus on the mainstream expressions of any faith group.

Those interviewees who had been working in a specific borough for some time often had a keener awareness of religious change and of the challenges such change could present.

*I've seen the borough change from predominantly a white Christian community to now a very multicultural, multi-racial, multi-faith community. And seeing how that has been accepted by some and not by others, and the learning that brings in everyday life of when you go to a scene. (B&D7)*

Some of this knowledge related to groups which are now relatively small, but which nonetheless had a significant historical impact on the area, the history of which is understood in the context of the movement of the religious community in the broader history of London.

*There is still a Jewish community living within the borough, and again, that is a significant dynamic change, whereas say forty, fifty years ago there was a very strong Jewish community here, now that is . . . it is almost a sort of remnant now . . . it has sort of got its roots here, but I think traditionally people now see the . . . the Jewish community sort of being North London now rather than East London. (TH15)*

One interviewee also demonstrated detailed awareness of a much longer view of the historical change apparent in Tower Hamlets.

*For example, the Mosque in [place BL] in its past life has been a Protestant church, a Huguenot church, a Jewish synagogue, and is now a Mosque. It is the same building. And that kind of reflects the movement of people in and out of the area. (TH14)*

### 7.3.2. Change, Nuances of Identity and Learning

The changing nature of faith communities seems to us to highlight some broader difficulties with how training and development are viewed, experienced and resourced and how appropriate knowledge and information is developed, stored and accessed. Not only the specific identities of faith communities, but also changes within them, and in all the inter-relationships that constitute the religious 'map' of a locality, may be highly localised as well as rapid.

This raises real difficulties in the applicability and accuracy in the local context of information or training that has been developed for use across a wide and unknown range of localities and situations. Such information is bound perhaps to be general, focussed on mainstream traditions and somewhat without nuance. Although using language relevant mainly to ethnicity rather than religion, one interviewee noted this tendency in the way communities are described through training.

*This information is not necessarily deemed accurate, that is my concern and you come away with a . . . 'this is the Bengali community' when really it is perhaps a Bengali community where some of them are westernised - for want of a better word. Some of them are different types of Shia Muslims or something like that. The way they come over 'this is the Bengali . . .' And people don't think in boxes do they? (TH 11)*

What is suggested here is an experience of conflict between the generalised information about the identities of minority communities as given in training material and the more nuanced sense of the specific and overlapping identities of particular communities, gained through operational exposure. In part, this is produced by the dynamic and changing nature of religious and ethnic identities, which produce highly specific local variation which general training designed to be applicable throughout the whole of London could not hope to convey. It is understandable that non-local training is abstracted from unknown, unpredictable and

changing operational contexts and concentrates on a 'mainstream' picture of diversity, identifying issues and sensitivities likely to be associated with specific communities.

However, the sense of conflict, of the training material being unhelpful in the local context suggests as well that it has not been experienced as helping to navigate the diversity, the nuance and the change encountered in operational practice. There is just a hint here and in other interviews that community-oriented diversity training is experienced as providing what is needed operationally in terms of a fixed content. Against that expectation, it is experienced as "inaccurate" and therefore as in conflict with new knowledge content gained through operational experience. Two related questions arise here, which we develop further in what follows. First, how MPS-wide training materials might themselves be delivered in ways that do not present themselves as a fixed knowledge content that suggests learning has been completed once acquired, but as preparatory initial guides for operational practice. Second, how the operational learning of individual officers might be preserved and disseminated locally or more widely as appropriate, nuancing the material that is prepared for use across the MPS. Both questions suggest a shift towards dynamic learning and the development of dynamic materials not so much portable knowledge content as portable operational wisdom for engaging people and communities of faith (but capable of wider application).

#### 7.4. Institutional Memory and Concentration of Knowledge

The above considerations already raise the issues of how that learned and understood through operational practice has some life in the institution beyond the individual in their current role.

##### 7.4.1. The Challenge of Staff and Role Changes

In a large, complex and dynamic organisation such as the Metropolitan Police Service, maintenance of institutional memory represents a significant challenge. Many interviewees, particularly those from Safer Neighbourhood Teams, recognised the risks of the loss of local knowledge consequent on changes of staff or role.

*I have probably been there the longest of any of the sergeants but if I was to leave, it would take an awful long time for someone to come into my shoes and try and build that trust again. And I see that as a problem in the police. Police officers are not left in post long enough to make the impact that they should or they could. Or they don't want to stay there. (TH12)*

##### 7.4.2. Faith Officers and a Faith SPOC

Where an individual has taken particular responsibility for an area, such as liaison with faith communities, this loss can be felt particularly keenly. This was particularly evidenced in Barking and Dagenham, where several interviewees identified the 'Faiths Officer' as the person they would contact, but then many noted that this position no longer exists.

*Have we got one at the moment, I'm . . . I think we've got one. There you go, I should know really whether we've got one or not. I think we have. (BD1)*

It was revealing that, first, some appeared unaware that this person was no longer in this post, but, second, that the significance of a 'go-to' person was underlined.

*The faith officer . . . at the time when it was put forward I'm not sure if it was the 'Faith officer', but it was someone of a similar role. I don't think the role had been created at the time, but since then it has been created and that person takes an interest in getting us to take a bit of interest in religious groups. That said, he tends, or tended to do his own to make that contact on our behalf. So we kind of let him run with it, but now, as far as I'm aware, that role's now been abandoned. Which was a shame, because he had only really just started to get . . . started to get going and started to make a bit of progress. You know, linking up with SNTs and Safer Neighbourhood teams and he just disappeared, which was a bit of a shame. Obviously, the hierarchy had their reasons for that, but I just think it was a wasted opportunity really. Because it would be ideal if someone like a faith officer actually did that work, did the regular contacts and then having built up that confidence with them, alerted us to any problems. Which would free us up to carry on, be invisible and getting out on the streets. So I do think it is a wasted opportunity. It was a good idea, a good inception, but it's been wasted. (B&D14)*

For many interviewees a desire was noted to have a single point of contact on faith issues, and a wide spectrum of possible individuals and organisations was identified, including family liaison officers and police associations, as potential sources of support and assistance on matters regarding religion. The police associations are a particularly interesting group of organisations, bridging as they do between an inwards facing aspect engaging with human resources issues in representing and supporting officers of faith, and the outward facing aspect of supporting police in their engagements with faith communities. This is an area where further research could be profitable as it would be valuable to map the different levels of engagement of the associations, and their representative capacity.

The 'go-to' person was often an individual of a particular faith from within a team (an informal SPOC for the tradition they were seen to represent), and in general there was a sense that the concentration of knowledge was among those who shared a particular religious affiliation.

*Oh God, I don't have to go very far, we have got officers on my team, we have got quite a large team, we have got a massive . . . not massive, but you know, it is quite a . . . I hate to mention the word diverse, but the diversity of my team is . . . all of my information is there. (TH1)*

However, this focus on individual religiosity could be seen to be problematic, as will be discussed further below.

#### 7.4.3. The Institutional Memory of Sergeants

An unexpected outcome in terms of issues around institutional memory was the perceived and actual concentration of knowledge at sergeant level and above. Two interviewees from one Borough particularly answered many questions by indicating that they would seek advice or information from a supervisor.

*To be honest, I'll probably go and ask my sergeant because he will probably know everything about what to do. And from there, if there's anything that he would like us to do, I will just go and do that. So really I would just inform my*

*sergeant and give him all the information I have got, and just follow his instructions from there. (BD11)*

*It would just be the knowledge of knowing who to contact and they would hopefully have that from the sergeant, they ask their sergeant. (BD2)*

It would be interesting to further explore this theme with more detailed interviews and observations to find whether this was a result of a particular form of management structure, team culture, the significant expertise and experience of the sergeant's concerned or other factors that might encourage the view that it was the sergeant's role to know and understand the community, rather than it being the role of PCs and PCSOs to develop that knowledge, understanding and intelligence.

In general, it was repeatedly evident throughout the interviews that this confidence in the level of sergeants' knowledge and understanding, their institutional memory, was well-founded. Those at sergeant level and above showed significantly better working knowledge of initiatives such as 'Prevent', and a broader awareness of issues affecting the local community and the wider borough.

In conclusion, the research suggests that there are key issues concerning institutional memory and concentration of knowledge which suggest a need for further research. It is clear that, where there is a concentration of knowledge and a failure of institutional memory concerning religion, this may disempower individuals who assume their own ability to deal with issues is limited. Equally, the lack of a shared skills base and awareness concerning religion and the relationship between religion and other policing policies and practice may limit the success of policing in religiously diverse neighbourhoods.

## 7.5. The Prevent Agenda

In Section 7.1, we report our findings as to the 'place' of religion in operational policing. In the Introduction, however, we adverted also to the policy context as well. There are two key areas of policing policy which have impinged on this research project, which – unlike the policy of neighbourhood policing – have not featured in discussion of our findings concerning the place of religion in operational policing. The first of these is the general counter-terrorist agenda; the second, the broad policy strand of diversity running through all aspects of policing. We turn first to Prevent. We were especially interested in exploring the level of consciousness among Borough-based officers and the way in which this might elevate, direct and shape awareness of faith communities and the significance of engaging with them

### 7.5.1. Levels of Awareness of the Prevent Agenda

#### 7.5.1.1. Differences Between the Boroughs

Explicit awareness of the Prevent agenda was limited in our interviews; awareness of the specific relevance of religion and religious extremism even more limited. The two Boroughs have different approaches to this issue based on different levels of perceived vulnerability of communities to the threat of violent extremism in the two Boroughs. Tower Hamlets hosts its own Counter Terrorism Unit, and this appears to explain a greater general awareness there of the systems for reporting concerns than was evident amongst Barking and Dagenham officers.

The tendency not to recognise the term 'Prevent' was most notable in Barking and Dagenham. As well as a straightforward 'no' in answer to the question asking if they were aware of the Prevent Agenda, there was also an interviewee who replied, 'that is news to me', and one who answered, 'that is the first time I heard of this.'



It is quite possible that these responses show only ignorance of the brand name, Prevent, and not of the issues of violent extremism more broadly, nor of what action to take in encountering the issues operationally. Yet it is hard to avoid this inference altogether, especially in light of the confusion triggered by the question. On being asked about violent extremism in the context of Prevent, several interviewees referred to a much broader range of 'extreme' behaviours. For instance, one interviewee, when asked about violent extremism answered:

*When you say violent extremism, do you mean gang related? (B&D15)*

In another instance, a question about Prevent led to a description of an issue related to drug misuse.

*. . . we did have an occasion in which a Bangladeshi family approached us, but didn't feel confident in approaching us directly, so they did it through one of the elders from the Mosque, who in turn contacted the local councillor, and we all met together and the . . . in a sort of a address that wasn't connected to the family. And the bottom lines was that this Bangladeshi family were concerned that their son was dealing in drugs. So it wasn't terrorist or anything like that, it was drugs. And . . . you know, and they didn't feel confident to approach us directly. In fact they couldn't speak English. So I took along an Urdu speaking officer and we, you know established what the problem was, and we dealt with it with the help of the family, they told us when he was going to get his next consignment of drugs, and we arrested him away from the family home, and . . . and it was resolved. And everyone was very pleased in the way that we did that. (B&D3)*

Whilst this story shows elements of community engagement and cultural sensitivity, its narration in response to a question about Prevent also suggests that some officers are working with a confused picture about the specific concerns that constitute violent extremism. It seems reasonable to conclude that, in Barking and Dagenham, there is at least the suggestion, based on this small sample of interviews, that any engagement work that is being conducted with faith communities is disengaged from the Prevent agenda. We acknowledge that point might be applauded by some, whilst criticised by others.

#### 7.5.1.2. Specific Awareness in Tower Hamlets

In Tower Hamlets, one found rather more specific knowledge of Prevent, of how it related to and potentially impacted on local communities, and how awareness of Prevent might be integrated into routine police work.

*So definitely yeah, there is activity here, they are trying to recruit you know, people into their groups, but we are aware of it, and it does regularly come up in our briefing that these groups are operating, and we need to keep an eye on it, if you like. (TH13)*

Some awareness was also shown of the broader response to Prevent, as it affected local communities. For instance, two interviewees identified ways in which the Prevent agenda had become a concern and a challenge in some local neighbourhoods. Echoing a considerable amount of general discourse around Prevent, one interviewee identified a local concern about the way money has been targeted through the scheme.

*I think that probably the first thing is the large amount of funding that has gone through to Prevent, which is predominantly towards the Muslim faith, and a lot of the . . . Well, not . . . A wrong way to say it, some of the other faiths feel as though they have been missed out on funding opportunities. (TH18)*

Another interviewee, significantly again in Tower Hamlets, identifying another widespread concern about Prevent – the way in which it is seen to target the Muslim community in particular – identified ways of engaging these concerns through community engagement.

*. . . from a governmental strategic level is looked at violent extremism within the Islamic community. Now of course the community themselves will see the Prevent aspect as being very targeted because they feel that it is spies, that they want the police to be looking at their community, or they want the community to be looking on at each other and reporting intelligence back to us that goes to the security services, and they think it is this big kind of grey cloud that looks over them. To go down into a . . . onto a community level and speak to these people in their own community, in their own homes or religious areas, and break down those barriers is something quite unique and as an achievement has actually been so well received, and that comes from an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of . . . of the cans and can'ts, how to engage with the community leaders, how to link in with the right people, how to show some sensitivity to their religion as well, whether that be going to Mosques on a Friday, you know, simple things like removing shoes and engaging with people and eating with people. Those kind of low level things . . . and not going in at the level of this is what we want, but this is how we can work with you, and that response has been quite amazing really. (TH3)*

### 7.5.2. Dealing with Concerns

Whilst this might suggest that Barking & Dagenham officers do not see their routine work as related to the Prevent agenda, we found no evidence of corresponding uncertainty or hesitancy about what action to take once they became aware of concerns they became aware of concerning violent extremism. An interview question about who within the Borough they would report concerns about behaviour which might indicate violent extremism, garnered a variety of responses. Most of these showed officers making use of the conventional means for submitting intelligence related to other aspects of police work. Some interviewees in both boroughs, however, were able to identify an individual or a team to whom they would take their concerns, and consult.

*I would take it straight away to our SO15 liaison officer. It's something I have not dealt with. I wouldn't want to get it wrong. It would go straight up. (B&D19)*

*So we have dedicated people who deal with it so I have had no real input into the strategy of dealing with it. But I am aware of it, I know what they do and when you talk about community contacts, we have some of those contacts, I have no doubt that if I needed certain people I could go to them and say 'What do you think?' So I know how to access all of that, you know, but we have got a dedicated team who deal with that side of it. (TH19)*

## 7.6. Training

### 7.6.1. Learning through Personal Contact and Experience

A key intended output from this research is a toolkit to support police engagement with faith communities in London. As such, it was valuable to note the attitudes of interviewees to the training available to them, and their perceived training needs.

Many interviewees, particularly those with longer, in-service experience, noted the benefit of learning about faith communities through personal contact with people of faith. Among those who demonstrated awareness of, and engagement with, faith communities this personal experience was often not limited to the policing context.

Interviewees from safer neighbourhood teams often alluded to the learning benefits of speaking to people whilst walking the local neighbourhood. Similarly, interviewees from other teams also identified their learning through experience when facing new and unknown situations. For some interviewees, formal MPS training in diversity had included meeting with representatives of faith communities. This was very favourably reviewed, with none of the interviewees showing concern about the potential for a normative model of religion based on the experience of one representative.

### 7.6.2. Borough Inductions: Community Mapping

Some interviewees had been taken to visit, or had on their own initiative visited, local places of worship when being inducted into a new Borough. Borough inductions which included some community (as well as crime) mapping, including faith community mapping, were valued positively, either on the basis of experience or as prospectively recommended.

*If you are going to be sent to a borough then I think it's important that when before you come, or when you arrive, you find out what the borough mix is like, what sort of things you are going to deal with. Because it's a lot easier to deal with a call where you have got prior knowledge (B&D17)*

Unsurprisingly, we found a link in the interviews between a willingness to take religion seriously and to engage faith communities and the level of knowledge and understanding concerning the local community 'map', locations of religious buildings and places of worship, religious issues in the community, and an understanding of religious artefacts.

### 7.6.3. Saris, Samosas and Taking off your Shoes

Some of the more senior and experienced interviewees, alongside those with their own personal faith commitment – in other words, those with higher levels of religious literacy – expressed concerns about what is known to some as the 'sari and samosas' approach. This is seen as a form of diversity training which focuses on the exotic and aesthetic – dress and food particularly – with the intention of positive affirmation of community particularities, but potentially at the expense of the skills and insight which may be of particular benefit in policing practice.

There was some suggestion in the interviews that this was associated with training inputs that emphasised a single account of a religious tradition and of customs and practices associated with it, given as a set of rules.

The impression created on interviewees appears to be that these rules were presented as universally applicable across the faith tradition, and also as non-negotiable. A recurrent example of this mentioned in the interviews was the removal of shoes when entering homes or places of worship. Almost always, this was cited as a rule that would apply in all cases. There were exceptions, though. The following is interesting for a number of reasons.

*. . . we had a speaker who was an Asian lady and she . . . she was from Muslim background. She said 'When you go to a Muslim house you should take your shoes off', okay and I kind of disagree with that because every Muslim family is different. Every Christian family is different. Everybody has got their own rules in the house. So if this . . . If this room is meant to be your house when I come in you would tell me what the rules are. So if you wanted me to take my shoes off you would tell me. 'Oh everybody takes their shoes off. Would you mind taking your shoes off.' That is not because . . . Maybe that might not be a rule because you are from a certain faith that might just be your . . . your rule of the house. This is where I think officers confuse themselves because you tell them one thing in training and they stereotype to every . . . every certain family of that faith and . . . the best thing is to . . . when you go . . . When you deal with somebody they will actually tell you exactly what they want from you, exactly how they want to be dealt with and the things that you should do, that you shouldn't do that are going to affect their religion for example or their family culture or whatever you . . . call it. But people will actually tell you exactly how they want to be dealt with. (B&D20)*

There are several interesting things here. First, the critique of a single, undifferentiated account of Islam is made on the basis, not only of experience but is itself an appeal to diversity values. One might say that experience of the actual internal diversity of Muslim communities encountered in policing allows this officer to critique the account of that community presented in training through a representative of that community as insufficiently diverse to be adequate for what will be (and has been) encountered across the borough in practice. In a way, this highlights the danger that training that prepares for encountering diversity is experienced as consumption of chunks of knowledge can substitute for or inhibit engagement that is open to the actual diversity and the particularity of individuals being dealt with; in particular, in raising the significance of one aspect of identity over others with which it may interact and by which it might be modified.

We cite here an example we have already given that can be read as an awareness of this overlapping of identities in the construction of the specific identity of individuals.

*This information is not necessarily deemed accurate, that is my concern and you come away with a . . . 'this is the Bengali community' when really it is perhaps a Bengali community where some of them are westernised - for want of a better word. Some of them are different types of Shia Muslims or something like that. The way they come over 'this is the Bengali . . . ' And people don't think in boxes do they? (TH 11)*

We found very little direct and explicit resistance to the idea that faith community sensitivities expressed as rules (thou shalt not keep shoes on) should be treated as non-negotiable, except the sense amongst response team interviewees that the demands for immediate action overrode the demands of attentiveness to human particularities. Despite the evidence of the quote immediately above, then, there is some suggestion from the

interviews that religion is experienced either as a rule-bound sphere of sensitivity, which is non-negotiable, or as not impinging on specific aspects of police work because of the immediate demands for action. It either applies or does not apply. For some officers, current training appears, therefore, not to foster a sense of religion as an arena for wise human negotiations which cannot be scripted precisely in advance (though there are exceptions to this, indicated below).

However, we also found evidence of religious knowledge of this kind of rule being used as skilful cross-cultural communication which enabled effective police engagement and action. One interviewee noted that although removal of shoes may appear trifling, it is an act of respect which can help to diffuse potentially difficult situations.

*It all depends what sort of incident I'm dealing with, I mean if . . . if people are very irate, then I tend to try and think of something that might calm them down a little bit. Say, for example, on a couple of occasions I've been to the Muslim person's house, very irate about a couple of incidents that have happened. I'd forgot and so did my colleague to take our shoes off, so they asked . . . that immediately calmed one gentleman down when we took our shoes off in his house. I don't normally do that in cases . . . in case someone gets violent, but I thought it's a way to get him talking and it helped . . . it helped us engage with this particular gentleman about finding out where his missing child was. (B&D15)*

#### 7.6.4. Web-Based Packages

Although many interviewees had recently completed national diversity training regarding religion (the N-Calt package), there were several concerns voiced over the shortcomings of current training provision, especially where this training is computer-based and involved answering multiple choice questions. Although some regarded the nature and range of information covered by the package positively, questions were raised concerning its delivery. Several issues seem to be significant here, especially when found in combination.

The first is the medium itself: a web-based package, which officers go through alone, assessed through multiple choice questions, giving instant feedback on whether the right or wrong option has been clicked. Several interviewees recounted the view that some officers rapidly completed the package without engaging with the content, by repeatedly clicking options until the right one was flagged.

*If you actually look at the time most people spend on a learning package it is literally click, click, click, click, click [etc. ], and if you actually said to them, 'What have you learnt from that?' they go, 'I don't know, but I did it in fifteen minutes', an hour package . . . Here is your learning programme, click on, log in, you know . . . there is nothing like sitting in a classroom and having a debate amongst people, and picking up somebody else's argument and think oh, I didn't think I could do that, but I can do that. (TH10)*

That rapid completion is possible does not of itself account for this disengaged approach. Whilst there was no direct indication of this in the interviews, we suspect that its being completed at all – at least by those who approached it in this way – ironically reflects the seriousness and priority given to diversity training, which requires, not only completion, but achievement of a high standard.

What the interviews did evidence as justification for not taking the training package seriously were variations on the theme of the abstraction of the learning environment (and content?) from the operational environment.

*I mean they love computer packages, but what's on a computer? I mean I rush through those computer packages as quick as I can, because of the waste of my time; I'm paid to be on the street. You know, I want to be out there talking to the public because that's what I am paid to do, that's what I am good at. Not sitting there looking at a computer screen (B&D13)*

#### 7.6.5. Skills-Based and Experiential Learning

This might be read as a preference for a skills-based rather than knowledge-based approach, and one that is either not too removed from the operational context, and/or is interactive (including meeting with faith representatives, the potential difficulties with which we have already discussed).

*. . . that is how you learn really, through interaction with people. As opposed to just getting a book out and going 'Very good', and putting it away. I think most people would learn a lot more if they were actually interacting with the community a lot more. If there were an opportunity to go to a family who are quite religious, and you could learn from them I think. (TH5)*

*Have a seminar type thing where you have got someone from, you know, a wide diverse range of different religions come in and just speak to the officers, 'This is what I would . . . This is what I would expect. This is what I . . . how I would like to be treated. This is what I would not tolerate and this is what I find offensive'. You know, one-on-one with the person in front of you, because you take more notice rather than click 'Next. Next. Next'. (B&D5)*

As has already been noted, in a situation where religious identity and local community profile are dynamic, a knowledge-based approach potentially leaves police underequipped to deal with minority traditions, new forms of religiosity, or non-normative patterns of belief and practice.

The importance of human understanding and communications skills was constantly reiterated by many interviewees, especially those with seniority or extended experience, but also notably among those who demonstrated sustained engagement with the significance of religion in policing practice.

*You see, I don't find engagement comes from training, engagement comes from your own personal experiences with different people, and how well you can talk to people. Although, training would be good for people that don't know about other people's backgrounds, religions and faith groups, etc. But engaging with people is something that can't be taught, it's something you either have, or you don't have. Well I can stand and talk to people in the street 24/7. Some people in other jobs will just find it hard to speak to people, just in general, whether it's because they're afraid, whether they're nervous, or whether they just don't want to. But, in my opinion, I don't think it's something that gets taught, it's something you have. (B&D15)*

This response raises the interesting question of the extent to which this innate ability to engage could be tested or observed, and also raises related managerial issues about how police selection and recruitment is organised.

The ability to ask about appropriate etiquette or to note that in an emergency situation religious issues may be significant, that an unexpected response may be religiously motivated, or that it may be appropriate to get support from a chaplain or religious leader were all considered examples of good practice that were based on experience and skills rather than straightforward knowledge.

*The way I look at the religious and community aspect is, if you don't know something you ask them, how you want them to be dealt with. And I have never had any problems dealing with different communities, because if I don't know anything I can read only as much about something or a religion or a community. But it is quite different when you actually go and deal with a person or that one individual from that community, or community as a whole. And if you don't know anything I just tend to ask them how they wish to be dealt with and what the police . . . How they want the police to . . . to represent them, really. (B&D20)*

*But sometimes you've just got to ask, sometimes you've got to be upfront with people and say 'I don't understand your religion, can you please explain why that particular issue is so important to you?' And, you know, most people actually respect that, I think, than rather the steamroller then I'm thinking that they observe the same rules you do, you know? 'And help me understand your culture' is sort of the message I want to give is 'I'm really interested why that particular part of it is upsetting you so much. Perhaps if you explain and I'll be able to understand it more'. (B&D7)*

Notably, among those interviewees who expressed a concern for experience and engagement over knowledge-based training there was also awareness that the complexity and diversity within religious traditions would be better understood through this approach.

*. . . all these things, it is not black and white, though, you know, a particular community in my area could be slightly different to one somewhere else, and so you can't have kind of blanket training. The best thing to do is get out there and speak to the people themselves and try and find out what . . . what's going on in their . . . in their particular world. (TH8)*

*Yeah, communication. We are very good at giving people training courses in that, and a training course in that. Actually, it is your ability to converse and not be confrontational about it. We don't teach people how to speak to people, and actually that's critical. Because it doesn't really matter what your background is, if you're able to ask somebody the question without being offensive, that's actually going to produce the right result than a handbook. A handbook is giving you the very rigid lines of 'That religion says this . . .', but that's not about that individual. And within . . . within any religious group there is a wide range and we're expecting people to understand that wide range. And I've been on courses where we've had different leaders come in from different communities and talk about the religion. But, again, they're making an assumption one size fits*

*everybody and, for me, it would be if we're going to give any training, it's recognise that there are completely opposing ends of the scale when it comes to any kind of faith group. And it's . . . for me, it's about asking the question, you know, 'What does your faith mean to you and how does that impact on what I'm doing?' and 'I don't want to offend you in any way, so please help me understand it'. And if we had our people doing that on the street, I think we'd have far less problem. It's we make assumptions and we shouldn't. (B&D7)*

As will be discussed below in relation to personal religiosity, for two interviewees there was a perception that a knowledge-based training scheme might be considered a form of religious proselytisation.

Even among those interviewees who considered training to be primarily concerned with the acquisition of knowledge specific to each religious tradition, there was also a focus on the person-centred dimension of this knowledge. For example:

*You could say, you know, the faith, what they worship. Not to mention what is insulting to Muslims, what is insulting to Jews, to Hindus. For Muslims, you know, obviously take your shoes off when you go into someone's house. Little things that, you know, obviously a female Muslim, or a Jewish female might not want to speak to a male officer, she might want a female officer. She might want someone of the same faith being present. So it's little things like that would come in handy, it's not that in-depth knowledge of any religion, it is just little pick up points when you go . . . Especially within Tower Hamlets you could steer it towards the majority of the population being Muslim. (TH5)*

Although the ubiquitous issues of gender and removal of shoes are again seen as significant, the emphasis here is clearly on avoiding giving offence, and this can be seen as a more skills-based orientation to knowledge acquisition. Another interviewee also offered a more nuanced understanding of the types of knowledge that would be valuable to the police:

*I think perhaps if you . . . sort of the structure of the religions and how . . . For example, if it is a particular Imam of a mosque where they fit within their . . . within . . . with society. Is their role purely as religious leader, or influential on a daily . . . daily basis, and how they sort of interact with the community on a daily basis would be quite interesting. But the same would apply, for example, with a Rabbi are they purely religious where the person comes to them, or does . . . they have an effect in that community where they are seen as a . . . sort of a moral compass, as well as a . . . as a religious aspect. Those sort of things would probably be sort of quite useful to know, to where do they . . . where they would sit. For example, if we are dealing with an incident that might be sensitive, do we need to engage with the . . . the religious leaders as well to sort of mitigate any white community influence, or that sort of thing. (TH6)*

Although a more nuanced understanding of the role of religion in community and personal life is evident here, it could be argued that there is also a focus on an expected normative model of religion, and specifically an expectation that leadership models will be shared across traditions or even congregations of the same religion.



### 7.6.6. Information Sources of Reference

Although the focus of interviewee responses concerning training tended to be towards experience and local awareness rather than generic religious knowledge, there was nevertheless a perception that it was useful to have a source of information for reference. As has already been identified in section 9 when discussing concentration of knowledge, many interviewees valued the presence of a single point of contact, such as a Faith Officer to whom they could refer for specific guidance. Interviewees also mentioned a range of information sources including:

- individuals of faith within teams,
- friends and family,
- family liaison officers,
- Police Associations,
- MPS Diversity Directorate,
- MPS Chaplains,
- local contacts,
- the MPS intranet, and
- the internet.

Interestingly for this research and potential toolkit outcomes, several interviewees also specifically referred to a Diversity handbook which tended to be known as ‘the little blue book’.

*Yeah. They did produce a bit of a booklet several years ago . . . And you will probably find it in the Met. Police, there is cupboards where things are sort of stored. That was quite an old . . . It was . . . I think it was called the Diversity . . . Yeah, it was a little folder. It wasn't just faiths, but that was the main crux of it. And in the . . . Again, I remember that, and I . . . you know, that was in my previous role, so we are going back at least four or five years. And I found it very useful, because you . . . You know, it was one of them things you would pick up and put back down again, you would pick a little bit at a time, and it did cover probably most of the faiths across [city L]. So that was useful, yeah. (B&D19)*

*they had that blue, little blue books, I don't know if you have been told about those that had quite a bit of stuff in . . . Everyone got given one of those and most people threw them in the bin but there are still a few floating around. (TH16)*

*There was a very, very useful little A5 ring binder, and I am just looking around to see if there is one in this office. Which is produced by the Met police and just gives three or four sides on the basic precepts of most of the major faiths in London. Just to give you a beginning insight. (TH7)*

This A5 binder contains a range of information related to each religion, and with some contact information. Although now dated, and though interviewees did note that many will have been discarded, this was a resource which many did think of as a 'go-to' source for relevant information. Indeed, this handbook first came to the attention of the research team in a preparatory meeting with a Borough Commander who mentioned that it had been invaluable in a recent incident. Other interviewees also suggested flashcards or small reference cards which could be carried around and contain specific data for dealing with faith communities.

*I think a little handbook so that if you are going somewhere and you want to quickly flick, because you can't remember. I think definitely some sort of book like that, especially that size, you can chuck it in your Met vest. (B&D8)*

*Obviously, we have in our initial training we have diversity handbooks, and obviously most of . . . the majority of us don't take our big diversity handbook out with us. So I feel like a flashcard might help us, even if it's just one of the little ones you can fold over so it fits in your pocket. Over six little pages would be ideal. (TH5)*

This type of resource is easily problematised as encouraging a normative perspective on religious traditions, and over-simplifying the diversity which is likely to be present in any multi-religious neighbourhood. One interviewee also pointed out that there is a large body of printed material already available to police in London:

*You'll lose that immediately. Leaflets, handbooks, they are . . . we have got rooms and store cupboards full of these things, and they get looked at for a week and then they disappear. (B&D14)*

However, these responses also suggest a desire for a readily available resource to deal with immediate and specific knowledge requirements.

## 7.7. Personal Religiosity and Policing Practice

Finally, an unexpected and revealing body of information emerged in interviews concerning the significance of personal religiosity in policing practice.

There is very limited academic literature concerning the religious identity of police officers, most likely because it is often difficult, as Sharp notes, to 'disentangle issues of race, culture and religion' (Sharp 2002, p.78). The only other study of which we are aware is a U.S. study almost certainly not directly relevant to the UK context (McNamara and Tempenis 1999).

Indeed, we had not identified this as an area of concern for this research project. For that reason, individuals were not specifically asked about their religiosity and few interviewees volunteered any information about their level of personal religious commitment. Some responses, though, incidentally opened up a series of interesting philosophical issues about both the nature of religion and the role of the police and community support officer. These warrant further investigation which might test and develop the insights incidentally gained here.

During the course of interviews various issues and attitudes concerning religion in the public sphere were raised. Some interviewees expressed resistance to the focus on religion.

*. . . perhaps I am atheist because I don't feel the need to band with other people around a common belief. But I do think that, as an organisation, we run the risk of offending the secular community and the non-faith element in community by appearing to offer a different service to people just because they follow a faith. Now it is a really difficult one, because you have got to treat everyone with respect and all the rest of it, but just because somebody doesn't have a faith doesn't mean they don't deserve the same level of respect. And there is perhaps a tendency almost for a . . . a sigh of relief and a bit of a blasé attitude when people are realised not to be religious, and people are walking on eggshells when they realise that they are dealing with someone with a devout faith. (TH7)*

Here, there is a hint of weariness in having to engage with religious sensitivities and sensibilities, coupled with a note of resistance to any suggestion that those outwith a faith location, and without therefore an obvious carrier for their sensitivities, are left out of the diversity and respect agenda. In some interviews, this could be combined with concern about the threat to personal religious belief involved in engaging with the religiously 'other'. This can be seen in the way some interviewees clearly felt that to have training about religion in policing practice was equivalent to accepting the truth claims of religion in general or in particular form.

*And just seeing all the stuff on TV I just thought religion is pretty much the root of all evil in this world. So, no, I don't want to align myself with anything like that at all. (BD5)*

*I think that a member of a faith group or whatever your beliefs are will think you are starting from a position that is correct. You will want to project that onto other people, or other people to join you. Not necessarily convert other people, but want other people to want to be converted. (TH7)*

*I don't think I need . . . want to go for training, you know because at the moment you can't be a Christian and be a Muslim. (BD2)*

For one interviewee, this took the form of not understanding the basis for religion, and feeling the need to justify this in the interview:

*it's terrible to say, but religion I don't understand, I'm not a religious person. So, to me, I can't say it's not important, but people have their beliefs in it and good luck to them, you know? But at the end of the day I sort of . . . is the term practiced, but if there's a God, there's a God. But whatever you . . . whatever title, name you want to call him or how you wish to worship him, if you like. It's your belief there is a God, at the end of the day. (B&D13)*

More positively, it was noted that individuals of a particular faith community are often called upon to deal with policing issues specifically related to that community.

*We have got Muslim officers, Sikh officers, and even officers from India on different parts around the Punjab and stuff like that, so . . . Jewish officers, gay officers . . . who are always prepared, and they are a real rich source of information. (TH1)*

Although this was on occasion because of particular language skills it was also often because of a perception that an individual who shared a religious commitment would be more likely to understand the situation, and would be more likely to be trusted and engaged with.

*Then obviously I have got two Muslim PCSOs who go . . . who I go insist to their morning prayers especially on a Friday so they are seen in there, in uniform and people will approach them in the mosque saying 'I have got this small problem here. Or this big problem there'. And then the PCSOs will come back to me and I will deal with it. (TH12)*

Although some positive outcomes of this approach could be seen, there were also several implied and overt problematisations of this approach. Firstly, the assumption that an individual's faith commitment could be equated to that of another individual.

*No, I think that for me there is a danger about assumption. Assuming because somebody is of a visible group can be a dangerous assumption. And it is about actually trying to find out how far they take their religion? How seriously they observe, you know, the rules of their religion? You know, my Jewish neighbour when I lived at [Borough BP] used to eat bacon sandwiches on a Sunday. Yet, my neighbour the other side was very Orthodox with two sinks and two sets of crockery. (B&D7)*

Secondly, that officers and PCSOs may be inappropriately or excessively used.

*Only because I know that . . . from experience of like when you are dealing with something and they don't speak very good English, and you know that your colleague is on . . . It's . . . Sometimes it's . . . I know it's a drain on them if they are . . . they are doing a job as well, you know they are dealing with another call which is in depth or they have just nicked someone or something, to ring them and up and say oh, can you just speak to this lady and find out what is going on and whatnot, sometimes that is a bit draining on them because they are doing their job as well. And I know, like I say, they are as good . . . We have got two gents on our . . . on our team and they are as good as gold, they will always help, but at the same time I am mindful that they are doing their job as well. So if it was something that I did need to know right that minute then yeah, I would come back and look myself. (TH9)*

Thirdly, there is also an implication that shared religiosity is required for competent policing. Although the drive towards neighbourhood policing has increased the extent to which policing teams reflect the diversity of the local community, it is not necessarily the case, or even appropriate, that an incident concerning a particular faith will be dealt with by officers or PCSOs from that faith. Indeed, one would expect that in general the response to a situation would be governed firstly by the professional standards of the individual, and only secondarily by their religious background. As one interviewee commented:

*And although you do think 'Well, any other officer would have done exactly the same I did', it's just . . . it shows that some people are far more comfortable*

*talking to some of their own background, a bit of their own culture and that they feel they have far more of an understanding with it. (B&D10)*

It is also possible that, where a focus on religion is employed in order to support a community, then an inappropriate level of engagement may occur between the police officer or PCSO and the community. This is evidenced in the interview with one PCSO who is a very committed Christian and who described sharing the language of faith in helping a Christian congregation in dealing with fear of crime:

*And as a Christian I must share my views with them, telling them what our Bible said, you know because I have got knowledge since I was born and brought up in the Christian way. So I know how it works. I know our faith. So I told them what, in the Scriptures what the Bible said, about protection, that . . . And after . . . end of the meeting they all agree with me. I said what you have said is nice, that issue has been ri- . . . that's fear has been erased from them, because they are afraid . . . I just will tell you what happened, they are afraid of being on the street, being hurt, being . . . you know. And I said to them there, the 'Bible tells us that no weapon fashioned against us against us shall prosper . . . So that means nothing can happen to us because we know we are serving a living God, someone that protect us physically, spiritually, that . . . you know, and I told them a lot of things that . . . What the scripture said. If they are pastors they would have it in mind that they would step on a serpent it will not bite them, because they have got power . . . they've got spiritual powers, which they now agreed. I said 'Yeah, that's true, we are . . . we don't need protection because . . . ' So I believe that being a Christian, and they are also a Christian, so I throw more light into Christianity and they accepted it. (B&D2)*

There seems to be scope for confusion between a policing role and membership of a faith community that corresponds to the anxiety of some that such confusion might indeed be instantiated or even encouraged through engagement with faith and religion.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. MPS Structures and Opportunities for Engagement with Faith Communities

#### 1. Faith Engagement on a Borough Level

##### 1.1 Faith Liaison Officers:

- 1.1.1 A handful of boroughs have a dedicated Faith Liaison Officer as a full-time role, usually a PC, but the role profile is not consistent across the MPS.
- 1.1.2 Faith Liaison as a nominal responsibility is carried out by various ranks, some as high as Superintendent who may get involved when an incident has happened.
- 1.1.3 Longer term relationship building is more likely to be done by Borough Partnership Teams and Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) as part of their daily duties.
- 1.1.4 Often individual Safer Neighbourhood Teams have one officer who has responsibility for liaising with faith groups on the ward.

##### 1.2 Critical Friends:

- 1.2.1 Faith representatives are invited on to Borough forums such as SNT Ward Panels, Stop and Search Forum and Hate Crime Scrutiny to name but a few, all of which will have a borough-wide out-look.
  - 1.2.1.1 Multi Faith Police Reassurance Group was a group piloted in Southwark to look at community tensions within and between faith groups on a local level, as well as how national events might affect borough communities, to gauge levels of risk.
- 1.2.2 Every Borough has an Independent Advisory Group (IAG), which is made up of community members who are representative of the borough. This group of people volunteer to advise police on local policy and action.
- 1.2.3 The MPA run a Community and Police Engagement Group (CPEG) in each borough to assist in a scrutiny role. <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/cpeg/>

##### 1.3 Internal Diversity Considerations:

- 1.3.1 Every Borough or Operational Command Unit (OCU) should have its own Diversity Forum and Diversity Action Plan to lead on internal diversity issues on a local level. The Diversity Forum will have a Strand Lead, often from the Senior Management Team, for each Diversity Strand.
- 1.3.2 Some boroughs offer local Diversity Awareness courses to complement and enhance the current central diversity training. An example of best practice is organised tours of local places of worship to increase engagement as well as knowledge and understanding between police and faith groups.

## 1.4 Partnership Working

- 1.4.1 Many Local Authorities will have their own Multi Faith Forums, either set up and managed by themselves, or set up by the community. This may be housed in Social Inclusion or Community Development Units. Community engagement relating to the Prevent agenda may also be dealt with by Community Safety Units.
- 1.4.2 Community Organised networks and Voluntary sector organisations, such as Voluntary Action Groups are a useful local resource. Faith Groups have their own fantastic community networks. There may also be some faith or culturally specific Forums where a number of groups within a specific community come together e. g. Southwark Muslim Forum, Southwark for Jesus and culturally focussed women's groups etc, such as Sierra-Leonean Women's Association or the Bengali Women's Group.

## 2. Faith Engagement on a Strategic Level

### 2.1 Over-Riding MPS Themes and Priorities:

- 2.1.1 The over-riding performance measure for the MPS is Confidence. Research into responses in the Public Attitude Survey reveals that perceptions of disorder, police effectiveness, police treatment and police community engagement all feed into confidence. Police community engagement holds the largest influence. <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/sop/2009/090205/12/>
- 2.1.2 The new Commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson, introduced the 5 Ps: Presence, Pride, Productivity, Performance and Professionalism which are leading themes throughout the organisational culture currently. <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/committees/mpa/2009/090924/06/>
- 2.1.3 The recently launched MPS Diversity Strategy 2009-2013 has 4 main themes: Fair and responsive policing services, Community engagement, Workforce and working culture and Governance and performance management. [http://www.met.police.uk/dcf/diversity\\_s.htm](http://www.met.police.uk/dcf/diversity_s.htm)
- 2.1.4 Linking in with the Diversity Strategy is the new Equality Standard for policing. [http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/equality\\_standard\\_for\\_police\\_service\\_-\\_overview.pdf](http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/equality_standard_for_police_service_-_overview.pdf)
- 2.1.5 MPA Race and Faith Inquiry is looking into race and faith at the MPS in relation to employment. It will examine the current position of the organisation in order to establish what has changed as a result of lessons learnt from the past, identifying success and good practice and further opportunities to build upon this. The Inquiry is also an opportunity for the MPA to review its own oversight role and make recommendations for improvement. An emerging findings paper was published in September 2009. <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/scrutinies/racefaith/>
- 2.1.6 Prevent, part of CONTEST, the Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Prevent comes under SO15, as does CTSET.
  - 2.1.6.1 SO15 are currently placing Prevent Engagement Officers in each borough to lead on community engagement according to the Prevent objectives.
  - 2.1.6.2 SO15 also organise Operation Nicole and Act Now events, where members of the community and police work through a counter terrorism exercise. Act Now is particularly for young people.

## 2. 2 Diversity And Citizen Focus Directorate (DCFD):

- 2. 2. 1 Religion and Belief Strand offers specific resources and advice throughout the organisation.
- 2. 2. 2 Diversity and Citizen Focus Advisors offer advice on Diversity policy and procedure throughout the organisation on a strategic level as well as advising on borough level delivery.
- 2. 2. 3 Internal resources for information on all diversity strands are held on the intranet. Policing Diversity Online also gives practical advice to officers and staff, drilling down into specific faith requirements and considerations.

## 2. 3 Met-Wide Advisory Groups:

- 2. 3. 1 Corporate Independent Advisory Groups have recently been through a process of review. As on borough, Corporate IAGs are made up of community members who offer advice to the MPS on issues of policy and procedure, particularly in terms of diverse groups.
- 2. 3. 2 Territorial Police HQ Safer Neighbourhoods (TPHQ SN) coordinate a Multi Faith Forum specifically to advise on Safer Neighbourhood policy and procedures from a faith perspective.
- 2. 3. 3 The Hindu Consultation Forum was also set up recently to promote positive relations and engagement between the MPS and London's Hindu Communities at corporate and Safer Neighbourhoods panel level. It is joint chaired by DCFD Director and a Hindu community member.
- 2. 3. 4 The Muslim Safety Forum (MSF) is the key advisory body for the Metropolitan Police Service and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) on issues concerning British Muslims. <http://www.muslim-safetyforum.org/>

## 2. 4 Communities Together Strategic Engagement Team (CTSET)

- 2. 4. 1 CTSET is a London wide community engagement team, monitoring international and local tensions, including tensions within and between London's communities, by collating weekly community tensions information from Boroughs. Community Tensions Monitoring happens on every borough every Wednesday when a weekly return, including a specific question on faith groups, is completed, usually by the borough Partnership Team or equivalent. These returns are then sent through to CTSET who collate and distribute a London wide report. CTSET may also task individual boroughs to monitor tensions concerning a particular incident, e. g. Gaza.
- 2. 4. 2 CTSET employ a team community outreach workers who work with specific communities.

## 2. 5 Staff Associations, Chaplains and External Groups:

The MPS have many faith based Staff Associations, representative of majority faiths of MPS staff. They can offer advice and support on internal staffing issues and can be a useful resource for engagement questions. These include:

JPA - Jewish Police Association

AMP - Association of Muslim Police

CPA - Christian Police Association



MPHA - Met Police Hindu Association

MPSA - Met Police Sikh Association

Catholic Police Guild

- 2.5.1 The MPS has a Police Chaplain who has corporate responsibility for Chaplaincy, from a multi faith perspective, and reviewing the current situation at a local, Borough level. This is a new full time role.
- 2.5.2 The MPS attends the nationwide Sikh Security Forum, co-ordinated through the National Community Tensions Team, run by Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)

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## 2. 6 London-Wide Engagement Opportunities (e.g.):

- 2. 6. 1 Faith Festivals and cultural dates throughout the year
- 2. 6. 2 London Week of Peace (Sept) <http://www.weekofpeace.org.uk/> is supported by the Commissioner and SNTs are expected to organise and participate in community events at this time.
- 2. 6. 3 InterFaith Week <http://www.interfaithweek.org/>
- 2. 6. 4 Muslim Awareness Week <http://www.iaw.org.uk/>

## Appendix 2. Interview Schedule

### Section 1: Background

Purpose is to capture personal variables in case they prove to be associated with differences in understanding, knowledge, experience, etc.

- a. Age?
- b. Gender?
- c. Ethnic background?
- d. Faith background?
- e. How do you define your role and specific responsibilities?
- f. How long have you been in this role?
- g. How long in the police?

### Section 2: Religious Awareness and Understanding

This set of questions is designed first to capture information about the locality, but also to capture the dominant ways in which officers identify and define the various communities that inhabit the neighbourhood for which they have responsibility. Is faith a significant feature of identification? Are officers more cognisant of some communities than others; are some communities seen as more relevant than others to identify? How quickly is there recourse to faith and religious identities/categories? How do identities such as economic or social class, race & ethnicity feature and how are they correlated together and with faith/religious identities? Is the orientation mostly towards those domiciled in the area or those who visit it, say for work, to eat or shop, to worship?

- a. How would you describe the various communities that live, work and visit the area for which your team has responsibility?
- b. How significant is religion in these communities (identified above), and which religions specifically are relevant?

### Section 3: Navigating Religion

This set of questions moves from the locality/communities themselves to officer experience and action, to explore the experience of explicit engagement with faith communities, how that is assessed by officers, what has helped prepare them for it or they have found helpful in the conduct of it, where they would have appreciated more support/information. The questions then move on to specific issues relating to conflict and sensitivity in order to identify how (and whether) officers identify and then navigate potential religious sensitivities, whilst touching on their awareness of the Prevent agenda and Challenge, and resources they may be aware of to draw on. This section overall will assist in the building of a tool and in undertaking a training needs analysis as well, potentially, as the identification of useful resources.

- a. What opportunities do you have to engage with faith groups in your present role?
- b. In working with members of different religious communities/community groups, can you give some examples where your knowledge or understanding of religion has helped you?
- c. Can you give examples of where you wished you knew and understood a little more?
- d. Do you ever feel hesitant or uncertain about engaging with people from specific faith communities? (which ones? Why? What might help?)
- e. What resources are you aware of/have assisted you previously in engagement with faith communities?
- f. How do you feel you use your own background/skills/previous knowledge and experience to benefit your team's ability to engage with the community in your area?
- g. How useful do you feel knowledge of religions and faith communities is to your role?
- h. Thinking of the communities present in your area, can you think of any issues that might arise in the conduct of a stop and search due to religious identity/adherence? [follow-on? Entering a home; entering a religious building ]
- i. Thinking of some of the communities in your area, what religious sensibilities would you anticipate having to consider on attending a sudden death?
- j. Have you any experience of community members identifying concerns about individuals in their community who may be at risk of radicalisation (e. g. Islamic extremism, Christian based right wing extremism)? How have you responded/might you respond? What resources did you or could you use in this situation?

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#### Section 4: Engaging Communities

This sequence of questions tries to establish the range of activities by which faith communities are presently engaged, first by probing the forms and range of partnerships being used in neighbourhood policing in the borough for operational, consultative or other purposes, and especially whether (and if so which and how) faith communities or inter-faith groups are involved. It then moves on to a set of questions that are designed to establish the experience of faith communities as a source of conflict or tension that have required police engagement. Beyond the basic data gathered, we are interested here in identifying how faith communities are accessed, how officers work to build up contacts and effectively communicate with communities, and what understanding this suggests of how they are structured and function.

- a. Have you any experience of partnership and consultative working with statutory (e. g. local authority, health services) and non-statutory (e. g. community organisations, voluntary sector groups) bodies?
- b. Have you any experience of working with inter-faith groups and/or local faith forums?
- c. How do you currently measure/monitor community tensions? (e. g. following CTU investigations). Can you provide examples of situations where tensions have occurred?

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### Scenario

The regional Counter Terror Unit has identified a house in your NPT where terror suspects may have lived in the past. It is considered still of possible forensic value and a decision has been made to conduct a full forensic investigation, which it is anticipated will take several days. Your unit have been asked to assist in community reassurance, tension reduction and tension monitoring.

What steps might you take [what might you do; who might you speak to; where might you go?] to assist in assessing the potential impact on local communities, to monitor and reduce tensions and to provide reassurance to the community?

- d. Who on Borough do you feed information about these tensions to?
- e. What steps have been/could be taken to reduce tension?
- f. Have any tensions or distinctions within any of the communities you have listed caused concern for the police, or come to police attention?
- g. Have the police had cause to be concerned about tensions between any of these groups?

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### Section 5: Meeting Communities

This set of questions is intended to identify a range of activities that follow on from and deepen episodic reactive or initial engagement to build relations and social cohesion, emphasising the building of relations through collaboration; and to establish officers' awareness of funding sources and experiences of accessing these (for wider dissemination). As part of that, these questions elicit responses that allow the officer to identify what faith communities see as their needs in relation to policing.

a. Your Divisional Training Officer has told you she can be available to meet with faith community groups. What subjects/inputs related to policing would you:

- i) anticipate that various faith community groups might wish to have input on?
- ii) think they would most benefit from having input on initially?

b. In what areas of diversity and other training do you think local religions would suggest to your Divisional Training Officer that your NPT needs further training?

c. What do you think are the current concerns of faith communities in your area?

d. Are the concerns of faith communities different to your ward priorities? If so, why?

[Might not be relevant if scenario suggested above is used]

e. Can you give an example of when you have (or could have) used funding for, or organised a particular community event to foster relations with any one faith community?

f. Which funding streams did you use (or could you have used) to help fund this event?

g. Why did you (or would you) choose this particular event?

h. How did you (or would you) involve the faith community in the planning of this event?

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## Section 6: Supporting your work with communities

These questions are mainly designed to establish officer awareness of funding opportunities and sources of advice and support, and their experience of accessing them, whilst asking them at the end of the interview to reflect on what they consider they might find helpful beyond what they presently have.

- a. What sources of guidance, information, support or funding are you aware of for help helping you engage with religious communities?
- b. Which sources have you made use of, and how helpful were they?
- c. What further training or resourcing would help you engage with the full range of religious and community groups in your area?
- d. In your operational work so far have you passed on experiences, information or advice to others to help them develop their own work in this area? How did you do so?

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## Section 7: The Prevent Strand

These questions are straightforwardly designed to establish officer awareness of the PVE agenda at a local level.

- a. What input/involvement do you personally have around the preventing violent extremism (PVE) agenda?
- b. What challenges are you aware of within your community concerning the PVE agenda?

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