Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): I now come to the main item on the agenda today, a discussion on preventing extremism.

I welcome our guests to our meeting about this topic: Sara Sutton, Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council; Clair McGarry, Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley; Martin Esom, Chair of the London Prevent Board; Robin Merrett, Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC); and Ghaffar Hussain, Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham.

We have a number of questions to ask you about four themes. The first theme is the challenges to preventing extremism and I will start off. This is a question specifically to Ms Sutton, Ms McGarry and Mr Hussain. How has the scale of the challenge to preventing extremism changed over the past 12 months? Has it got better or worse? If you could, answer the question with reference to the key challenges in your borough. Do you want to start off, Ms Sutton?

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Absolutely.

Thank you for having me today.

For us, we are seeing a changing dynamic with regards to more references coming through some of the existing processes and channels and so there are an increased number of referrals. One of the challenges for us is in understanding the level of risk in the local area and how we therefore respond to that with limited resources and how we focus on meeting some of those demands.

One of the most significant challenges for us is delays in funding opportunities and decisions that mean some of the programmes and activity are subsequently delayed by way of how the funding flows. We are seeing that this year was around a delay of six months and so that is a key challenge that we recognise and need to look to address.

There are some of the aspects and some views around the narratives around Prevent that I am aware are largely critical and we need to look to how we address those. How we have done that is through our local networks and community engagement. We are at the point now, where we have had the programme in Westminster for a number of years, that we have a really established community network that works and responds locally.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): Similarly, in a funny way, to Westminster, the resourcing is a real issue for us. We are a non-priority borough and one of the challenges we have is assessing our risk.

We do not have particularly strong community networks or relationships with our community leaders, which is an area that has been tasked to one of our directors most recently, and so that is a challenge. We have to rely on our partners to help us with our tension monitoring and we have not yet seen the most recent Counter-Terrorism Local Profile. I am not sure when that is due, but we have not seen the most recent one yet to help us ford a way forward.
One of the things that we think about is engaging with our general public without increasing the fear about extremism and having the skills and the resources to do that effectively.

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** In scale of the threat, I would not say whether it has gone up or down necessarily. What I will say is that the dynamics are changing.

A couple of years ago, foreign travel was a big issue when the Islamic State in Iran and Syria (ISIS) was at its peak and there were concerns with individuals going to Syria to join that organisation. We have seen less of that now for geopolitical reasons as well, but also there is a lot more awareness of individuals who may be seeking to do that. That has certainly changed.

The other thing that we have seen change as well is that there has certainly been a decrease in overt activity, whether it is street stalls in the borough or events being hosted promoting extremist narratives. There seems to have been a definite decrease in that.

We have seen an increase in younger referrals coming through and that is because, once the Prevent duty kicked in in July 2015 we have done a lot more work with the primary sector in primary schools. We have a number of reports coming forward of individuals who are being exposed to inappropriate materials or coming to school saying inappropriate things and, obviously, that raises quite serious safeguarding issues. We have seen, probably, an increase in that. That is what I will say would have changed probably in the last 12 months or so.

In terms of challenges, there is a broader London-wide challenge around quality training for teachers, for public-sector workers and for statutory bodies in general, rather than just short online courses. Proper, more detailed training is needed and there is a requirement for that to be rolled out in a more comprehensive way.

There is also the anti-Prevent narrative that has already been referenced by my colleagues, which I am sure is shared by some of the Members as well. That is something that we need to be more vocal in challenging and correcting in some cases.

**Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair):** Thank you. If I could ask you, Mr Esom, you previously described the rise in London radicalisation as “a very big change in risk”. How are local authorities dealing with communications and social media issues associated with tackling extremism? Is this something that can be effectively tackled at a local authority level?

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** I think so in Waltham Forest. As well as being the Chair of the London Prevent Board, I am also Chief Executive of the London Borough of Waltham Forest and we are one of the higher priority areas.

One of the big issues is that the media, local and national, would prefer to publish bad stories about Prevent rather than good stories about Prevent and the good work of Prevent like saving children being taken off to Syria. They will pick up on the negative stories and promote those. A key role is for local authorities to get out the positive stories about Prevent and the really important role that it plays in communities.

We still publish *Waltham Forest News*, our fortnightly publication, and in there we carry regular articles on Prevent. I have brought some copies along for the Committee to see.

**Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair):** Great. That will be very helpful.
Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Two weeks ago we published a two-page spread on Prevent and its role in terms of keeping our community safe. Really, at a local authority level, we are looking to address the media deficit at a national and at a borough level in terms of the private press.

The London Prevent Board recently held an event with all of the communications staff across London for the London boroughs and also for the central Government departments. We went through the support that can be given to those agencies concerned and so getting those positive messages out about Prevent. It is really important in terms of the role that the local authority can play.

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): To you, Ms Sutton and Mr Hussain, with issues like online radicalisation making it harder to identify and monitor individuals at risk, how confident can you be that you know who and how many people are vulnerable to radicalisation in your borough?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): The truth is we do not know the exact numbers of people being radicalised. The nature of online extremism is such that you can be sitting in your bedroom in Lincolnshire and having conversations with individuals in Russia or other parts of the world.

I do not think anyone knows who is accessing what Twitter handles or making friends with whom on Facebook. It is an issue. It is more of a national issue, really. The Government is having conversations with social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and is seeking to bring them into the fold. The problem is that some of the changes that are required conflict with their business model. That is where the sticking point is.

However, it is important that we all recognise that young people are increasingly living their social lives online and making friends online and having relationships online. A lot of the social interactions online and a lot of the information that they are getting about the world is from the people they follow on Twitter and Facebook.

What we can do as local authorities - and a number of local authorities including Waltham Forest and Newham are doing this – is to seek to raise digital literacy within schools and trying to incorporate this into the curriculum so that young people grow up with an understanding of how to be safe online and how to be critical consumers of online content. That is the role we can play.

Len Duvall AM: Just to continue the theme of challenges, Chair, look, we have the figures before us for the national referrals and I just want to get the extent of the types of challenges and numbers of referrals you are trying to deal with. What are they for London? For 2015, there were, nationally, 3955 referrals. What percentage or numbers are we dealing with here in London so that we understand about the capacity and some of the issues between non-priority boroughs and others? There will be questions later on about that. What figures are we dealing with on referrals?

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): There are probably two separate things there around local authority activity and resources because a percentage of it will be to work with referrals. In 2015, in terms of the number of referrals in Westminster, we had 66, which was a significant increase from previous years. However, a lot of the work and the activity we do is with the commissioning of projects and work and so the resources are also focused on that in addition to their work with communities.

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): It is worth adding on that point that, in terms of the scale of the problem nationally and London-wide, over 50% of all individuals who have been convicted of a terrorist-related offence are from London. London represents 50% of national convictions for terrorism.
Len Duvall AM: Do we have a figure? Robin? Martin? What is the figure in London?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): No, we have not and one theme that was drawn out in your last report and in other people’s conversations is the need for greater transparency on data.

Len Duvall AM: We could, then, taking that point, assume roughly that a major proportion of this national figure that we have is from London. We should not assume, I presume - and I hope you are going to say to me - that it does not really matter whether it is a priority borough or a non-priority borough because referrals could still be quite high in a non-priority borough. Is that correct?

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): From a non-priority borough’s point of view we had about 20 in 2015. It has slowed down a little bit this year and our last three Channel Panels have had no new referrals in for discussion.

Len Duvall AM: That must be quite heavy for a borough like Bexley in terms of capacity to deal with that, but we will ask you questions further on that. That will come later. We will not leave that.

Can I just ask, following up, Chair, about the future challenges? It is really about new and emerging challenges: the issue of parents taking their children outside of the mainstream education system and home-schooling; the issue of after-school clubs and the registering awareness of those. When I say “after-school clubs”, some of those could be very informal and not necessarily run by the council. There has been a lot of work with church groups on safeguarding children generally and risks of abuse.

The question: is that an unmet challenge or are you on top of that challenge in terms of your Prevent work of how we keep track of that and what is your plan of action? Maybe it is not an issue. It just seems to me that it could be an emerging issue. Is there any work going on in boroughs or does anyone have any thoughts about this particular aspect that I have raised?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): It is certainly an issue that is on our radar and it is certainly an issue that is real. The problem is that it is a largely unmapped sector and I do not think anyone knows the exact number of what are called “supplementary schools” that exist. The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) does not regulate all of them, is not aware of all of them and does not have the power to necessarily regulate all of them, either, although there are changes within Ofsted.

The problem we have as a local authority is that the elective home education (EHE) legislation is so weak that we have very few powers for people who not only choose to take their kids out of school but do not even register their kids at all and so we do not know where those kids are being schooled.

What we are trying to do locally is to establish an independent school board and we are trying to incentivise these schools to come and join so that they can get advice and support from us as the local authority. Through that, we can start reaching out to those organisations and trying to work with them on safeguarding issues.

The other challenge there is that some of them want to stay below the radar and they deliberately do not want to be part of this. This applies to Jewish schools in north London and Islamic schools in east London as well. They do want to preach their very particular conservative brand of religion and they do not necessarily want
Ofsted marching in and objecting to certain elements of that. That is the real challenge: people who do not want to be on the radar at all.

**Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime):** Just to add to that, it is certainly on our radar and is certainly on the Government’s radar. I am aware that there are measures being drawn up in a Counter-Extremism Safeguarding Bill, which will focus on that unregulated sector of education.

**Len Duvall AM:** It is not just Prevent legislation that could help here. There must be an issue around children at risk and we could use that legislation to try to get into this unmapped area or at least put the call out to try to understand where it is. I am aware of some boroughs doing work with churches emerging and anyone working with young people so that they have the safeguarding procedures and an emerging awareness of those and they are trying to get access into these areas. Clearly, if people do not want authorities to know what they are doing, then that is a different issue, but by and large we should get the message out that if you are working with young people in a voluntary capacity, there is a safeguarding issue. If that bit has registered, then the next bit comes. Part of the safeguarding issue is the Prevent strategy, is it not? Does it logically fall like that?

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** You are absolutely right. “Prevent” is the term used, but this is just a different form of vulnerability.

**Len Duvall AM:** Thank you.

**Sian Berry AM:** I just wanted to come in while we were on broad themes and the challenges of online radicalisation.

One of the things that came out of the last Assembly investigation into this was a need for a strong counter-narrative and the idea that the people promoting radical ideas online have the better story and that we need a strong counter-narrative to that. I know that Martin [Esom] a moment ago talked about the counter-narrative to bad publicity about Prevent, but I just wanted to ask each of you what role local authorities and London government can have in developing that counter-narrative that we have seen is being needed. I know it was a rejected recommendation by the London Contest Board and it did not think it had agency to do that, but it seems to me that schools and things that local authorities control could be a really good source for that counter-narrative.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** From a Westminster perspective, we absolutely do commission projects on that basis, whether it be around critical thinking in schools, parenting programmes and similar, and in addition to that we have a Creating Stronger Communities project. As you may be aware, we have also embarked on a significant piece of work, which is a Community Cohesion Commission, from which there will be a report within the next couple of months with the findings from that. Whilst it is not intrinsically linked to Prevent, it is a much wider piece there around local authority’s role in terms of community cohesion.

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** Most priority boroughs will do counter-narrative work. One of the things that struck me - and I have had various presentations to the London Prevent Board on this counter-narrative - is the sophistication of the Daesh message. When you watch the videos that they produce, they are captivating. I know that the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) is looking at producing media that is equally as captivating, but it is very difficult. The sophistication of the messages that are being sent out there is very high. At a local authority level, there are things that you can do in your local authority,
but it actually requires a national response in terms of a counter-narrative that then can be tailored to a local level.

Sian Berry AM: Do you think that the best way to counter the online messages is also to do that online rather than in schools and in the real world?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): You have to use every form of communication that kids actually access and, as we know, they increase day by day. It is being up to speed because you can bet your life that the others will be up to speed and using those communication channels.

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): The real solution to this is to galvanise civil society organisations into taking on that challenge themselves so that it is not necessarily seen as top-down and coming from the Government. However, central Government and local government as well have a role in supporting civil society organisations that are keen to do work in this area. That is something that is already happening with the Home Office in particular and with the local authorities.

The other thing as well is going back to my earlier point about digital literacy. One of the things we do with schools is talk about conspiracy theories and talk about propaganda videos play them, for example, and how to unpick them and how to read between the lines when it comes to that kind of binary propaganda message. That is something that young people are actually very interested in. Schools are an incredibly powerful medium through which we can disseminate positive messages because people tend to have trust in their teachers, there tends to be a supportive learning environment and they are very switched on when they are in that environment and are there to learn, especially when the message is coming from the teachers themselves rather than third parties coming in. That is a very powerful way. We can build resilience in young people so that they are not necessarily attracted to those messages when they see them.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): From a Bexley point of view, we have not been presented so far with a narrative that we need to offer a counter-narrative to. We have done it in other forums recently when we have had some online feedback about disorder and that kind of thing and there has been an online response to that counter-narrative from the police about that, but we have not had it in a Prevent environment yet. We would respond online if there was a specific thing to respond to, but it has not presented as yet.

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I was just going to say that I do not think it is an easy thing to grapple with, for one thing. There are some real challenges in developing a counter-narrative. We would be clear the counter-narrative should be owned by agencies and the communities themselves. It is not something that could be imposed top-down. It has to be jointly owned and jointly delivered and it has to be jointly delivered through as many different mediums as possible. The point was made earlier about education being one of the key areas in that but also online is really important.

We have engaged with people from not only across Britain but across the world. There are things like the Strong Citizen Network and there are things like the European Forum for Urban Security, which are doing work programmes. I do not think anyone has come up with a really good solution as yet, but it is something we are keen to work with others on helping to develop.

Peter Whittle AM: Good morning. I would like to ask you all working in this area but to start perhaps with Martin.
You mentioned the idea of how vivid these packages were, how alluring and how movie-like. Could I just ask you to speculate? If the idea of a counter-narrative video or any counter-narrative has really been put in place, what should that counter-narrative be? You have just partly answered my question there about it not being top-down, but what should this counter-narrative be, in your opinion?

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** What it should not be is a Government information video. It needs to be something that is as appealing to kids and teenagers as a movie or a game or whatever. It just needs to be constructed in a way that gives messages about the way in which people are being exploited to the wrong aims and is very clear about those messages, but presented in a way that fits with the way in which kids get information and live their everyday lives.

**Peter Whittle AM:** When you are talking about “kids”, by the way, what sort of age are you talking about?

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** We start our work from five years up to 18 and out into university. It is that sort of age range.

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** In order to develop a counter-narrative or even to talk about a counter-narrative, we need to understand what the ISIS narrative or the Al Qaeda narrative is in the first place. They have a very binary narrative, as all extremist groups do, in which the world is divided into two warring factions, Muslims versus non-Muslims. They are encouraging British Muslims and European Muslims to join them, to not be loyal to the states they are living in, to treat the states they are living in as the enemy and to treat them as the salvation for that particular cause. It is a binary, divisive narrative that seeks to create a “them-and-us” mentality. We have to understand what the narrative is first.

We also have to understand how young people consume content these days. Young people do not read books, for example, anymore. People look at short videos, 30-second videos. Memes are shared online and short anime. Flashy, sharp, short content is how most young people learn and share content online. That is exactly what ISIS is doing. It is producing very short, sharp content. That is why it is so compelling.

We need to step into that space and do a similar thing: produce content that is as attractive as that in the way it is presented and also have a very positive message about Britishness, for example, about being British and about this being an inclusive society that embraces people from all backgrounds, specifically to make Muslims feel included and part and parcel of British society. Sadiq Khan being Mayor [of London] sends a strong message in itself. We need to know what our message is and we need to know how to communicate that message.

**Peter Whittle AM:** I am very encouraged that you said that, particularly the last bit, because I am thinking of the “war on drugs” and all the rest of it. Essentially, when you just put out – possibly – something saying, “This is terrible. Do not join it”, there is an impulse maybe to say, “I am not listening to that. I am going to go ahead”, or whatever. The idea is actually giving them a positive framework to say why this is better than that.

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** That is part of the reason why the whole “war on terror” thing was so off-putting because it is a negative. It sounds negative and people are not necessarily galvanised by something that has a negative connotation and is a “war” on something.

However, if something has a positive connotation and is bringing people together, bringing communities together and creating mutual understanding and mutual tolerance, it is a positive message and is something that young people are more likely to want to embrace. You are right. We need to have a positive message.
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I would certainly echo the necessity to put out a positive message here because we are facing the fact that this is not a simple problem. This is not just about Muslim extremism. It is not just about young people. It is about a whole range of extremism that drives people to violence. There are other factors apart from the Daesh factor that can drive people to commit heinous crimes. It is also not just about young people because we know that there are other groups and communities that are very vulnerable, particularly people suffering from mental illness, which we need to be able to communicate with and send a positive message to. Just a message that is focused on one driver causing extremism cannot be the whole solution.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): I would absolutely support that in terms of the whole cohesion piece and reflect on the fact that, actually, extremism takes a number of forms against a number and range of ideologies.

Peter Whittle AM: Yes, but the primary one we are talking about is radical Islamism, is it not? That is the main reason for Prevent.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): That is not a view that I share. Actually, it is extremism and the range of ways in which we see it, whether it be Islamic extremism or that from the far right. That would be my view.

Peter Whittle AM: Yes, I am not doubting that they exist, but this is the reality, is it not? Your work is mostly to stop people joining ISIS or whatever.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): That is not a view that I totally share because I see this as --

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): Just to clarify this, from our perspective as local Prevent practitioners, we are focused on all forms of extremism and we do come across many far-right cases. At the same time, you are right that the only reason Prevent exists is because of 7/7 [7 July 2005 terrorist attacks on London] and the vast majority of the cases we deal with in London are people who are trying to join jihadist organisations. You are right in that sense.

However, at the same time, we cannot have a message focused just on that crowd. We need a general message that says, “Extremism as a phenomenon is bad”, whether it is far left, far right, jihadist, environmental, animal rights or whatever it is. Anything that seeks to break the law or get young people to break the law is something that we as a local authority need to have an action plan about.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Just to return to the original question, which was about risk, you have heard today: how can you calculate this risk? What you have are people in their bedrooms watching online material or walking around receiving online media. The main risk tool for local authorities at the moment is the Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles. It is impossible for them to capture this type of information with the changing nature of Prevent and the risk. At one time, it used to be quite visible on your streets. You had individuals whom you knew were involved in this area and who used to have stalls or leaflets. Most of that has gone away. It has certainly gone away in Waltham Forest. The risk now is in people’s homes and on their mobiles. Probably, in terms of risk, we need to be far more sophisticated and try to work out how we deal with that.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): To follow on from that, something that represents a challenge for us is the current Channel Vulnerability Assessment
Framework and the fact that it has been in place for a number of years. The changing dynamic, I do not feel, is fully reflected sometimes in that Assessment Framework. I do not know if that is a view that is supported, but that is a consideration there.

Sian Berry AM: Just very quickly, we have seen a rise in hate crime in recent months, which seems to me to play into the divisive narrative and potentially strengthen the ISIS message. Also, potentially, this might have led to a rise in far-right radicalisation. Have you noticed any of that in your work? How has the rise in hate crime made a difference to what you do?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): There has been a widely reported post-Brexit spike in hate crime, particularly attacks on people from Eastern Europe. We have had a few cases locally as well of that. Whether that is a temporary spike that will cool down or whether it is here to stay we do not know and it is too early to say that yet. However, at the same time, it was always there; it is just that the media tends to focus on stories like that around the time of something like Brexit because it is more of a topical story. These kinds of attacks were happening before as well, but the media just was not picking them up.

Therefore, there is a challenge around broad hate crime targeting a range of different people. That is something that we as Prevent practitioners would also be concerned about because, like I said, our focus is broad in terms of extremism as a phenomenon. Anything that is hateful, that is bigoted and that is discriminatory against certain groups in society is something that we would have views on and would have an action plan around.

Also, the messaging that we are delivering through schools and through community groups to young people is a broad message that preaches broad tolerance and broad respect for people of different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different religious groups, etc. We are hoping that our work that we already do will impact attitudes towards that.

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): Just to add to that, we would always accept that there is probably a large amount, if not a massive amount, of under-reporting of hate crime anyway. It certainly has been a priority - and almost certainly will continue to be a priority - in the Police and Crime Plan to drive up the level of reporting so that we get a better impression. As soon as we get more knowledge about it, we will be able to put in more tactics and more strategies to reduce that. Examples such as the hate crime online app for reporting hate crime is an example of how we are trying to reach out to make sure that we get more information about the level of hate crime in society.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): I would say that in Bexley under-reporting is probably an issue. We certainly have not had evidence presented to us that we have had incidents reported post-Brexit, but I would suggest that it has gone on but is not reported to police and so we are not aware and cannot respond to that.

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Anyone else, before we move on to the next theme? Our next theme is on delivering Prevent at a local level.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you. I wanted to ask Sara and Ghaffar, because you are priority boroughs and we are going to explore this a bit.

What sort of activities do you undertake as part of your work to prevent extremism? We have had evidence in the past that there is a lack of uniformity in approach across London. Can you expand a bit on what you do as part of your work?
Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes. I can give some examples of some of the work that we are commissioning. I have touched on some of it.

We are working with a parenting programme, which is a 14-week programme based on equality, really, and strengthening families and communities. Within the context of that, there is an element for Prevent. We see that that improves engagement and dialogue.

We are also working on a Creating Stronger Communities session of workshops that specifically addresses the social needs of Muslim women. Again, there are a range of things within that, which include substance misuse, violence against women and girls and specifically, as we touched on earlier, internet and social media safety, in addition to radicalisation.

We are particularly working on a project at the moment that is focused on youth projects in conjunction with our Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Unit as well. That is a joint commissioned activity.

One of our main focuses continues to be youth mentoring projects that work in a range of different ways and with a range of different people, not just those who have been referred in terms of a threshold or a level. It is far more wide-ranging. That also works with institutions and schools.

Another area is focused on the family and we touched on that earlier. There is sometimes a family safeguarding and vulnerability approach that we need to take with younger brothers and sisters, potentially, as well. We have commissioned some materials and a play that focus on some of these aspects through the lens of a young person, as it were, who may be part of a family network.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What is the reach of some of your projects? What sort of numbers are you --

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Significant numbers in some cases. The schools project is hundreds and hundreds and we have a rolling programme that reports back regularly on volumes and numbers.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What about your parenting programme, for example? Just give a flavour of the sorts of numbers.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes. I do have the figures. I should have the figures here but, again, it is significant in terms of numbers. What I will have is some of the figures for the latest couple of quarters. In the latest quarter in terms of the parenting programme, it is about 100 parents who have engaged with that programme.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That is significant. That is really good. It is reaching a lot of people. Ghaffar, what about your borough?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): Our local work focuses on a framework. We look at it as the “three Is”, which are institutions, individuals and ideology. That is the work we do.

In terms of institutions, a lot of the time is spent giving training to public sector workers, whether it is teachers, probation officers, people who work in the healthcare profession; a wide range of public sector workers. We always make sure that that is one-to-one interactive training so that they have the opportunity ask lots of questions and really come to grips with the issues we ask them to be involved with.
We have also viewed the education system as an effective means to deliver a positive message through to young people. Last year we adopted a range of lesson plans from different providers and we approached schools with these lesson plans - some of them were just ordinary formatted lesson plans; some were a video they could watch and then have some activities afterwards - all of which cover or talk about extremism as a phenomenon. That is important to try to open up discussions within classrooms so that young people can be exposed to different points of view about these issues and also to encourage people to talk about what is on their minds and how they are interpreting things. Obviously young people are affected by events in Paris, for example, or events in Syria and they have questions. They have heard things from their peers and from parents. We are trying to create an environment within the classroom where they can bring those thoughts and concerns and have a discussion about them. We were very active in doing that last year and that activity reached over 2,000 pupils within the borough.

There is now a website that has been launched as well called Educate Against Hate, which is a central Government and Department for Education (DfE) website that has a lot of the lesson plans on it if you want to have a look at some of those.

This year, we are doing two new projects. We are working with a Lewisham-based company called Second Wave, which has a project called Shadow Games, which is a theatre play production. We hope to bring that into schools. Theatre is a very interesting means of delivering a message that is very engaging. It is delivered by young people as well from a similar background to those that they are interacting with. It is a play about young people who get radicalised by an individual and then the actors stay in character and the young people can question them about their motives. That is something that we are seeking to deliver to at least five or six in the boroughs with crowds of 50 to 60 people and so we have had a few hundred people through that.

The other project we are working on is a local community-based group called New Choices for Youth, which is running a leadership programme. It is going to have a recruitment process and recruit about 35 young people from the borough to undertake a 12-week leadership course, where it can give them training about public speaking and writing. Hopefully, through that, we can create young people who are confident and aware of these issues and can go back into the community and speak about these issues. We want to use that as well to create young leaders to talk about these issues amongst people of their age. Those are the projects we are involved with.

As well as that, there is Channel. There is the individual side with the individual referrals that we deal with through Channel and with Prevent Case Management (PCM).

Then there is the ideology side, which is about monitoring the borough and making sure individuals and organisations that seek to come into the borough to stir up tensions are given a hostile reception. It has been a problem historically in Newham. Individuals, many of whom are now in Syria with ISIS, were giving out leaflets and setting up street stalls outside Stratford Station, for example. The same people were frequenting Waltham Forest as well. There has been a decrease in that activity, but we are still aware that those people exist, are putting stickers up on lamp-posts, for example, and giving out leaflets. We are aware of that kind of activity and it is something that we are seeking to disrupt as much as we can with the limited powers that we have.

At the same time, there is a very positive story here as well. Newham is, I am told - and Unmesh [Desai AM] can correct me on this - the most diverse place on earth. Over 200 languages are spoken in Newham. Newham is 15% white British. It is an incredibly diverse place. According to the surveys that we have commissioned at the local authority, 86% of residents are quite satisfied with their lives and with the community cohesion in the borough. That is a real success story in integration, really, in the borough and that
is the story we should be speaking about. Because of that, we are so keen to make sure that that fragile
tapestry is not attacked or disturbed by organisations or individuals.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** Can I just add a
point of clarification?

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Yes.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** The figure of
100 that I gave is the target for this year and so far we have seen about 60 parents. Thank you.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Still, they are really significant numbers. It is really interesting work, very
diverse, trying to do all sorts of things in this area, but where does the accountability for this sit? Is it with the
local authority? Is it with the Home Office? How do you balance the differing requirements of both? You are
a democratically accountable local authority, yet this is Home Office-driven in some ways?

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** The projects are
only funded by the Home Office and so we are accountable to it in terms of delivery and meeting expectations
of targets. The Home Office also has a team that evaluates the projects as well, the Behavioural Insights Team,
and so we are independently evaluated by the Home Office but we are also accountable to the Home Office
for those projects.

For the broader work, we are accountable to our elected members within the local authority. We have scrutiny
meetings once a month and we have meetings with Children’s Services once a month as well and management
meetings internally. We have lots of meetings where we talk about our activity to our elected members, who
scrutinise our work.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** A very similar
response from me on that.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Technically, the accountability is with the Home Office because it pays for it
but --

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** For projects, yes.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** For projects.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** You engage your members wider?

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** Yes.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you.

**Florence Eshalomi AM:** Just on some of the examples that you gave, one of the realities is that when you
discuss this with schools, there could be some resistance. Again, when we were talking about violent youth
crime, we saw that a number of schools where, essentially, there was a problem did not want to admit it
because of the stigma.

Are you finding any resistance in terms of the schools that you have tried to work with or youth groups?
Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): I have heard about this resistance a lot in the media but I have not seen it locally. My team has trained over 4,000 public sector workers in the last two years. Most of those were teachers. Some of those may have some questions – and legitimate questions – about what we are doing, which I am happy to answer and happy to discuss but, in terms of this fierce mass resistance, I am just not seeing it. They have seen things and they have heard things in the classroom. They are aware that we are talking about a real issue and most of them understand that this needs to be incorporated into their standard safeguarding practices. They get that. We do not have to sell them that message. They get it when we turn up and so they already have questions about how they do that rather than whether they should do it.

Obviously, our work has been helped by Prevent being put on a statutory footing in 2015 and so they know that Ofsted is going to be asking questions about this as well. That makes our work a bit easier.

No, I do not see that resistance that I read about. I am aware that there are individuals within the community, for example, who have a negative perception of Prevent and that is fuelled by some very inaccurate reporting in some cases. There have been a number of cases of individuals who claim to have been referred to Prevent who were not actually referred to Prevent at all. There has been some quite blatant inaccurate reporting about Prevent.

Certain organisations and individuals find that Prevent clashes with their own personal ideological agenda and so they are blinded to the broader safeguarding message there. That is a challenge that we have to engage in as well and we are seeking to do that.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): In Waltham Forest, we have had some of that resistance. On occasion, with programmes that we have delivered in schools, pressure has been put on the governing body to stop that piece of work.

To be fair, this is an area where we are all experimenting. Some of our work was quite early on and we might have presented it in a different way to the way that we would present it now. As I say, we are all experimenting. There are different ways of doing this but, particularly in the school environment, you have to be very sensitive about how you present this work. We have learned from some of our early experiences and so we see less of that resistance.

The only problem is that, as soon as you start getting some of that resistance, you will find that people who are against Prevent will focus on your borough and will target schools to prevent that work taking place. We have to be quite proactive in communicating the positive Prevent messages all the time.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you. Mr Hussain, with Newham in particular, you talked about your work in schools and the difficulties with that. I wondered. What about the informal or possibly unregistered madrasas? What is your attitude and what is your approach there? I would assume that we do not quite know what children are being taught in those places and also, for that matter, possibly the teachers are not even formally Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked or whatever. This would seem to be the nub of the matter, it seems to me.

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): That is an issue. We do have good relationships with some of our madrasas and we have done training with some of them and so I do not want to demonise that entire sector.

However, at the same time, we are aware that there are madrasas - and these are very small organisations that are above shops on the street - that are quite hard to reach. We are not aware of what they are teaching. We
are aware that most of them do not have qualified teachers, do not have the right facilities to be schools and do not have the right resources. We are aware of a couple that have been preaching messages that we would object to quite strongly. Those we have referred to Ofsted and action is being taken through Ofsted and the DfE on those particular organisations. However, with the powers we have, we do not have strong powers to knock the door down and go in there and say, “Do this. Do that”. We have to be a bit more subtle in how we approach that with the powers that we have at the minute.

I accept that there could be schools we are not aware of at all. I accept that that could be the case. Those that we are aware of we are seeking to reach out to and bring into the fold so that we can talk to them and have conversations with them.

Peter Whittle AM: This is not a facetious question at all, but would you like to have those powers? Would you like to have stronger powers?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): Stronger powers? There does need to be stronger legislation around EHE. Local authorities should have more powers to ask parents questions about the kind of education their young children are receiving if it is not within a school and who is delivering that education and even probably to submit a report once a month on what exactly is being taught and by whom. Those powers would be useful.

Peter Whittle AM: That is very useful to know because it seems to me that you would not, as Prevent, be invited or allowed into a madrasa to talk, would you?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): I have been. I have delivered training in madrasas. Like I said, some of them are very good on safeguarding.

However, it is the smaller backstreet ones that I am aware of that exist both in London and elsewhere. I have concerns about people who want to stay below the radar. In many of those cases, the parents have taken the children out of school for sectarian reasons: they do not want them to be interacting with mainstream society and they think that it is a bad influence on their young people. They are the ones we are concerned about.

There was a widely reported case in Tower Hamlets where a school was being run by individuals who were linked to Anjem Choudary [Muslim social and political activist] and Al-Muhajiroun [banned terrorist organisation] called the Siddeeq Academy. It has now been closed down. That is what can happen. People can set up their schools and not talk about it and just start getting people to go there. There has to be stronger legislation around it centrally.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you.

Keith Prince AM: It is pretty much a fundamental question, really. Has Prevent been a success? Martin may like to kick off on that.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): The activities certainly have been a success. When I sat before this Committee - whenever it was - a year ago, the level of work was nowhere near the level of work that is taking place now. The projects that are taking place in London boroughs across London are imaginative, they have a lot of energy, they are working with partners, they are in schools and I am constantly impressed by the practitioners and the impact that they are having at a local level.

There is the whole thing about the name “Prevent” and it being attacked as a concept. If you gave it any name, it would be attacked as a concept because some people fundamentally disagree with it. I would mark its
success by the people that it is engaging at a local level. I am massively impressed with the people who do this day in and day out in very difficult circumstances.

**Keith Prince AM:** Can I just add a supplementary? You can all answer both at the same time. I should have said it first. What changes would you like to see?

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** It goes back to the answer that I gave to the previous Committee. This distinction between “priority” and “non-priority” boroughs is nonsense. You can have one family or one cell moving to a local authority, particularly with the transient nature of the population in London, and that borough could instantly become a priority borough but not be identified as such for some time.

What does that mean in practice? That means that the sort of work that takes place routinely in my borough - Waltham Forest - and in Newham just does not take place in those boroughs that might be the recipients of these cells. Clearly, that poses a massive risk. Within London, there needs to be equity in funding and equity in the projects that are taking place in London boroughs.

**Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime):** Chair, shall I just add to that point? Just to follow on from that pan-London approach, there has been a conversation going on about the whole issue of devolution to London. Part of that conversation about devolution is very much around how the Contest Board - or another body - could have a pan-London view on how Prevent operates.

**Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair):** Can I move on? We do have questions from some people on some of these things.

**Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime):** Yes. I am rushing ahead. Sorry.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** These are the issues I was going to come on to right now. May I start with Clair first? You have heard what Sara [Sutton] and Ghaffar [Hussein] have said about what they are doing as priority boroughs, but you are a non-priority borough.

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** I am a non-priority borough.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** In my constituency, I have one of each, Camden being a priority and Barnet a non-priority. What sort of activity can you do compared to what Sara and Ghaffar can do?

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** First of all, I would agree with Martin [Esom] that the “non-priority” label is quite unhelpful when we are talking to other boroughs across London.

Our activity is limited, really, to our Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent sessions that we run, trying to increase our resilience and bringing in new facilitators. That has its own challenges. As quickly as we can try to on-board somebody with that, we have somebody who leaves and we have lost one. Our numbers are remaining at half-a-dozen or eight that we are working on within the borough.

Our Channel programme is well established and we are happy with the way that that runs in Bexley, albeit the business of that meeting is quite slow. We do not have any funded projects. We do not commission any projects.
Our work within the community and understanding that and being able to monitor community tension is extremely difficult. We rely heavily on our partners. In terms of what we would like to see, it would be in that area in terms of increasing our resilience and embedding ourselves within the community. That is something we did years ago when we had funding under this agenda, but that has just gone now and it really weakens our position.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Do you consider yourself to be a typical, quote, “non-priority” borough?

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** Sorry, do I consider myself --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Would you consider your experience in Bexley to be typical of a non-priority borough? That is a question for Martin, really, I suppose.

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** That is the general picture for non-priority boroughs.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Yes, but from what you told us earlier on, the number of referrals you have had is about half of what they have had in the other two.

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** It is about a third compared to Westminster and they are often assessed as having no counter-terrorism vulnerability before they even get to the panel. They are assessed and, picking up the point of the Vulnerability Assessment Framework, we do not operate that. As a Community Safety Officer, it is not something that I complete. Our Prevent engagement officers do that.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** Police-led, yes, absolutely.

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** Yes, police-led. A lot of those referrals do not even make it through to the panel. When the duty came in before, we had a flurry of activity, which is perhaps why last year was our biggest number for referrals from schools. They were putting literally anything to police officers just to have it shared and checked with that “notice, check, share” thing that they are doing. That may be a reason it has slowed down now. People are a little bit more confident about what they put through. They are comfortable that they know who the people are and they can pick up the phone and have a conversation before they put the referral in. Now it is beginning to be embedded, maybe.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** That raises a really good point going back to the vulnerability assessment and the fact that there is a police-led approach. For us, sometimes we feel that there could be a different level of engagement and conversation if that was not necessary a police-led approach.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** With a police-led approach, presumably, it is slightly after the event and closing the stable door a little bit, perhaps, too late.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** It is just the impact of then that being a police-led approach and how the individual feels with that level of engagement because it can represent some challenge around how that individual feels and how they engage.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Getting back to the point, Martin, you mentioned the point about non-priority and priority boroughs not being particularly useful in this. Presumably, the priority and non-priority boroughs are known to people who may not have our best interests at heart.
Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Absolutely. What I was going to say is that numbers are obviously important, but it takes one individual.

Andrew Dismore AM: Exactly, yes. I was going to come to that.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): It takes one teenager. Just to give you a practical example of why this matters, we had an incident in Leytonstone in the Tube station. You probably read about it. We have the money to train at a high level, but that individual lived on an estate and our caretaker had spotted that person in a strange way. He had received training. What you need to be able to do is ensure that you have the money to train as many of your staff and as many of your partners as possible so they can pick up on that one individual who is acting in a very strange way and perhaps prevent a major incident.

Andrew Dismore AM: First of all, why did the Home Office get into the priority/non-priority and, secondly, how does it decide who is priority and non-priority?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): There is no one here from the OSCT and so --

Andrew Dismore AM: No, do the best you can, Martin and probably Robin [Merrett]. Do the best you can.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): With anything, you need to prioritise the money that is available. At the beginning, money for Prevent was fairly sparse and you have to cut your cloth. I suppose they decided to prioritise to make an impact in those really risky boroughs. Maybe, as more money is moving into Prevent, as I believe it is, some of these things will be addressed.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): That also goes back to some of the Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles as well and the information that is contained within them, which does represent some challenges, equally, sometimes. Going back to Martin’s point, this is not just a numbers game and it is important to remember that.

Andrew Dismore AM: This can be delivered through the boroughs, but there are different parts of boroughs that are at different risk. I could suggest the main parts of Barnet, for example, that could be riskier than parts of south Westminster.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes. Going back to that pan-London thing, is it is interesting in terms of some of those approaches. However, the reality is that, in the way in which we build resilience and cohesion and all of that within communities, we do have to look at this on a London level. Whatever comes out in terms of a way forward, it has to be mindful that it does not have a negative impact on local delivery.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): If I can just add into that, the Prevent Board has been drawing in areas just outside London. I live in High Wycombe. High Wycombe is an area that has been identified as having Prevent issues. I know that your Committee is looking at London, but those surrounding areas are really important – Luton, High Wycombe and ones to the south as well – because people move around and the threat moves around.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): We also do see joint commissioned activity in a number of areas and it is important to make that point. Whilst we deliver some of that locally, we work within the tri-borough arrangement, for example, and have commissioned work and activity with other boroughs as well.
Andrew Dismore AM: Just on the tri-borough activity, you have Kensington, you and Hammersmith. Are all three priority boroughs?

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes, I believe they are. What we have is some of our governance that supports that in a tri-borough arrangement and then we have subgroups underneath. We have a tri-borough Prevent steering board that acts as the overarching governance for some of that. As I said, we do commission joint activity where it is appropriate. It is not always in every scenario appropriate to do that and we manage the funding elements by selecting where it is needed most.

Andrew Dismore AM: I think I know the answer to the next question, Martin. Consistency across London, presumably, is non-existent?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): No, that is not true to say. In order to get that consistency --

Andrew Dismore AM: If you compare Clair’s [McGarry] experiences with Sara’s, it is not exactly consistent, is it?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): The practitioners have found ways around the current system. They can speak for themselves but, although they might not get the direct money for it, there is a lot of sharing amongst the practitioners. At the London Prevent Board, we try to give information to all boroughs equally. Although the cash is not fairly or equally distributed, what we are trying to do is share our knowledge and expertise.

Recently, the OSCT through the Home Office launched a peer review process where boroughs with a high level of experience can meet with those that are perhaps less fortunate in terms of being non-priority boroughs and share that learning.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes, absolutely.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): Just to come in on that, we benefit from attending the London Prevent Network and we benefit from the experience of others and the skills. That is quite helpful in terms of giving us a bit of confidence to deal with what we are dealing with.

I was going to go on to mention that peer review. We had the questionnaire and we responded to that. We would welcome somebody coming in to have a look at what we are doing and to see where we can improve upon what we currently deliver.

Andrew Dismore AM: You cannot possibility deliver what Sara delivers because you do not have the cash.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): No.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Back on the funding issue, though, is what we are delivering because there are delays with funding. It does have an impact on that. It is a one-year provision at the minute. One of the key challenges is that there is a need and these issues are not going away. We know that and we need to look at a much longer-term funding arrangement, whatever that means in terms of priority and non-priority.
Andrew Dismore AM: Going back to this pot of money, Sara, to what extent is that the limit to what you can spend in Westminster or are you also drawing on general council income and resources?

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): From a funding point of view, just going back to what we discussed earlier, they commission some of the projects but not some of the wider Prevent. That comes from core resources and core staff. Specifically around the projects, they are directly funded and commissioned via us from the Home Office funding.

Andrew Dismore AM: Moving on to Robin and trying to look at this more London-wide and the issue of devolution, I was struck when Len [Duvall AM] asked how many of these cases are in London and nobody knew what the answer was, although you knew by borough. I find it amazing that nobody has actually tried to pull that number together by asking each borough how many they have had.

Is that a problem with a lack of co-ordination or is it simply because nobody looks at it on a London-wide basis?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): We certainly recognise and much has been said this morning about the difference between priority and non-priority boroughs. We recognise one thing: the role of the Home Office and the OSCT in this to maintain national standards is really important. We also recognise that local delivery and the people who know what is happening in local communities are really important.

However, as has been the case in the work on gangs, there is a role for a pan-London organisation to take a wider look and make sure that some of the issues that can arise with a priority/non-priority borough-based model of delivery can be overcome in a better way.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am just looking at some of these points Martin mentioned earlier on the problem of priority and non-priority boroughs and people moving around because they do not respect borough boundaries. If somebody who was perhaps of dubious intent were to move out of north Westminster and move into Bexley, would you know?

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): We would not necessarily know. The Prevent engagement officers might know on a policing level. It is reflective of movement on other things like gang nominals being dropped into boroughs and that kind of thing. I like to think that our police Prevent engagement officers would know when there has been a move.

Andrew Dismore AM: Just to go on the issue of devolution, how are you getting on with the Home Office trying to give us more powers in London to try and deal with this on a strategic London-wide level?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I am probably not the best person to comment on that, I would have to say. One thing I would say, though, is that there was a devolution package that was of course being debated under the last administration and there is a devolution package being spoken about under this current administration. There has been a bit of a transition in both central Government and local government of late and so it probably has not progressed as much as we would like because of the natural consequences of transition. Certainly, conversations are going on.

My personal take on it at an officer level is that there may be a warming in the Home Office to that, but they may disagree with that.
Andrew Dismore AM: What sort of devolution would you like? Would you like to have control of the whole budget so that you - not you personally but MOPAC - can decide how it is divvied up amongst the boroughs? Would the boroughs like that? How would you see it progressing?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): There is certainly a role for a pan-London take on some of the funding issues, but I am very keen that also funding needs to be a tripartite relationship, really, here steered by the Home Office and looking to local authority level as well, but those key issues about non-priority and priority boroughs could be softened if we had more flexibility at a pan-London level.

Andrew Dismore AM: Martin, how do you think the boroughs would feel about more oversight or control - or whatever the word is - going to the centre?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): It is not where it sits; it is what needs to be fixed. What needs to be fixed is multiyear projects. At the moment, it is year-by-year and so boroughs have to run a project and then either go ahead at risk or stop the project. That needs to be fixed so that we have proper multiyear projects that could run for, say, five years and we could actually do some decent pieces of work.

The equity bit needs to be fixed with more cross-boundary projects. Our people do not recognise the division between Waltham Forest and Newham and probably about three or four other boroughs and so there is funding that could be put at a regional level --

Andrew Dismore AM: The sort of thing that Sara [Sutton] is doing a tri-borough basis could be done more widely?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Exactly. We need to look at it more logically so that it fits how people work and how the people that we are trying to combat work. They are the main issues.

Len Duvall AM: There is nothing stopping you doing some of that cross-borough work now, is there? The limitation on resources may stop you doing that, but if there is a big project that could go cross-borough, you could do it?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): We do that already. Our providers, ones that we have nurtured, work in other boroughs. I suppose it is for the funding to recognise that there could be a multi-borough bid.

Len Duvall AM: Just following on from non-priority boroughs and priority boroughs, we are focusing on the local authorities’ responsibilities today but of course one of your key partners is the police with the sharing of information that goes on. I suppose, if I drilled down deep enough, with a priority borough, there may well be some additional resources given to the police aspect because the Home Office, which is holding the ring, has decided that you are a priority or you are not a priority and, therefore, the police might allocate some resources around that.

Are there any implications for the future work with the joint borough commands and the merging of boroughs, particularly in the sense of over the years, in some of my experience, some borough police services have a different approach to child protection issues to other boroughs? As we talk about consistency and what can be done in boroughs, is there an issue around that? Would we not just have different boroughs doing different levels of Prevent work and their understanding in terms of consistency and what needs to take place? We might have different police services in borough commands operating to different regimes. Is there an implication in that that someone has to pick up if we are going to move towards mergers of boroughs?
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): My take on that is that the role of the Prevent officers, who are police officers, is much more centrally driven than some aspects of policing anyway because it is very much set by Home Office/OSCT rules as much as it is driven by the police themselves. There is probably more consistency in that work.

Also, regarding the merger of work around the basic command units and the changes in structure, they are being piloted shortly. Clearly, one of the key aspects of that work and how we evaluate that will be whether it really improves delivery.

Len Duvall AM: Is someone asking the question on the policing aspect of that that is happening? Based on the experience that I have, there are 57 different varieties of policing approaches in London to some aspects of missing persons.

Let us go back to childcare issues and prevention because that is the language that local commanders understand around safeguarding issues. The policing approach to that is still different and that is a centralised command. You still get different versions and different issues around risk to children. It comes up almost constantly. I talk to colleagues on safeguarding committees about policing approaches to these issues.

Is that going to be the same if there are mergers and who is asking the questions? I just want to flag that up. Are there implications with that? I am a great supporter of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). A bit of tough love sometimes is needed. We talk about inconsistency across local government, of which there is much. There is inconsistency in the MPS with a centrally command-driven unit. Hopefully, I just wanted to lob that because it may well be in the future and maybe it is something that we want to consider and make some comment on later on as an issue that we need to flag up.

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I can certainly take that issue away.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

Keith Prince AM: Most of the first part of the question has been answered, actually, in the process. We know that the Prevent duty has put quite a demand on a number of our partners and we have already discussed some of that in relation to teachers, but we have other partners.

I just wondered. In spite of the illusion that there is some resistance, has the feedback been relatively good? Are you getting feedback from outside? We have talked about education. Outside of that, are you getting feedback?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Generally, yes. The most difficult area is health. Quite a high proportion of people who get involved in these types of activities have some form of mental health issue and it is really difficult to properly engage with health. I am not saying they do not want to engage, but they are so challenged at the moment that I would say the dialogue is not what it should be.

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): Our experience has reflected that, certainly with mental health services in the borough. It has been a challenge to get them on board with high-risk community meetings as well as this. It is something we have overcome now and we are grateful that officers now attend our Channel and our community risk meetings. It is very useful. We have passed on our thanks and we make the most of it.
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): In terms of data, the police and the Home Office would point to the fact that there are more referrals into Prevent coming from different agencies and the community than there have been in the past and, in a very tangible way, there is more engagement.

The work of the Contest Board in bringing pan-London agencies together and gaining a better understanding at that strategic level of the task in hand is helping to improve relationships.

There is also recognition that things are not perfect. There are certainly reviews going on. There is a national review going on of Prevent at the moment. There are lots of people on the Home Affairs Select Committee who have reviewed Prevent. This is a moving and dynamic strategy, which will carry on and develop.

Keith Prince AM: You touched on this earlier and I was just interested. What impact do you think campaigns like those run by the National Union of Students (NUS) against the Prevent duty have? Do you think they have much impact, really?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): In terms of students, probably, they might be influencing the minds and views of younger people who are starting to become politically aware.

What I have found when interacting with students is that there is quite a backlash against some of that. There is a big NUS disaffiliation campaign going on now and last year four universities disaffiliated, partially because of these reasons, and that campaign will continue this year in many other universities. There are a lot of young people I have spoken to who are quite repulsed by what the NUS has become. Some of the statements that have come out from the leader have been questioned by various people and mocked as well by others. At the grassroots level, it will not have much of an impact outside of student circles.

Keith Prince AM: This is a question here really just to finish to Martin but, Robin [Merrett], you might be able to pick it up. MOPAC said that the London Prevent Board would carry out a review to assess the response to the duty of public bodies. Has that review been completed?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): No, it has not been completed. What has happened is that the OSCT through the Home Office carried out a review. That took place in June or July of this year to see the impact and how Prevent is actually being carried out. That is something that, clearly, I would like to do, but we need to be resourced to do it and so I am going to have a discussion about that.

Keith Prince AM: Are you citing lack of resources?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Yes. The London Prevent Board is basically me chairing it and a little bit of a secretariat. That is all it is.

Keith Prince AM: Yes, I understand that. Robin?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): Just to add to that, the national review of Prevent has not yet been published and is awaiting the full review of the Contest strategy, which is due sometime later on this year. Prevent is a major item for the next Contest Board, which is on 13 October 2016. Martin is coming along to that and so --

Keith Prince AM: It was MOPAC that made the commitment on behalf of the London Prevent Board and so maybe MOPAC should come up with the resources.
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I will take that away.

Len Duvall AM: Just following on from the comments that Assembly Member Prince made, I hope that you continue to resist the ill-informed when looking after our young people. That must be the priority for anything done on that. There is legitimate debate to make things better in a difficult situation and to make improvements. For those who just want to bury their heads in the sand and not recognise the threat, we have to resist.

Going on to the reviews that are done, it has just come to my mind. Do we do an evaluation of some of the work that we are doing in priority boroughs and non-priority boroughs about the role of the work and the impact of that work? I would imagine there is some added-value work going on, but in terms of targeting and whether it makes a difference and those issues, can you give us any evidence that that goes on about the expenditure that is given to priority boroughs or even evaluation of the non-priority boroughs and the activities they are doing when you share best practice?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): There is a pretty rigid framework in terms of the Home Office funding and so it will carry out evaluation on a project-by-project basis, but I do not think that that was what you were really asking. It is about the totality of those projects and whether they are making a difference in the locality. I do not really see that taking place and it is something that is worthwhile doing. Other people may be closer to it than I.

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): It is very hard to measure impacts across a borough on a whole range of people. Probably the most accurate way to do that is with genuine opinion polls, which are being conducted not by governments but by independent polling organisations.

Both nationally and globally, support for extremism has been going down for the past four or five years. That does not mean that those who remain do not become more hard-core and more ruthless, but overall support has been dropping, certainly since 2009/10. I do not necessarily mean that that is a result of Prevent activity, but it is the broader trend.

We can only really evaluate the specific work that we do. We evaluate our training sessions and see the feedback we get from them. We evaluate the projects we deliver and see if they have been effective. It is harder for us to evaluate anything beyond that, really, is it not?

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): I would agree.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

Sian Berry AM: I just wanted to go back to the negative publicity that we cannot ignore about Prevent. There was an Ofsted report this June that talked about many people regarding it as just doing referrals and that being the bare minimum.

I wondered if you could comment on that. It seems to me that simply doing referrals is possibly the least helpful thing you could do and that the more positive things involving discussions in classrooms and in universities are the things that we should be trying to make sure do happen. How can the negative publicity and the fact that people maybe see it as a dampener on free expression be worked into your programmes? It seems to me that only the priority boroughs may be able to do anything about that because they do not have
the resources to do anything other than refer in the non-priority boroughs. Can you possibly talk about that aspect of this?

**Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board):** You have picked the difference between priority and non-priority boroughs. Priority boroughs are generally funded to do that more detailed work. It is not just about teachers referring people whom they think exhibit behaviours but, even before that happens, it is about working with the classes at quite a young age through on packages to deliver those messages in a classroom setting. We can afford to do that and Newham can afford to do that, but that is where Bexley cannot afford to do that.

**Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley):** I would agree with that.

**Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham):** We make it clear as well in our training sessions to all schools that there is an expectation to be proactive as well as reactive. I would say that most of our schools do some proactive work around this area, whether it is themselves or some external party, but how we can scale that across London and across the country is a challenge that needs to be met.

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** Some of that goes back to the trust and the relationship that you have locally with those organisations, which will not just be around the Prevent agenda but will be around a whole host of things. You cannot underestimate the value of some of those relationships and how that influences and supports a more positive narrative.

**Sian Berry AM:** Can I ask maybe you, Sara, how useful the referral process is as part of that package of measures? Does it actually contribute?

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** That is a really interesting question. We have already touched on how this is not one thing in isolation and that the referrals process is part of this wider package and that, in isolation, its effectiveness is more around addressing some of that. That goes back to the point I made about that level of engagement and how that interaction is with the police primarily. All of that is feedback we have given throughout today, which is something that needs to be reflected upon.

**Sian Berry AM:** Is the Framework a set of signs that you look for? Is that what you are saying?

**Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council):** It is a questionnaire, basically. It is very specific questions and then the Framework provides a level of risk based on
Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): We will now move to the next item, which is on transparency and engagement. I believe, Assembly Member Eshalomi, you have a question.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Robin, you touched earlier on some of the meetings that the Contest Board has held. One of the things that we have established is the difficulties in some of the decisions that have been taken and the efforts to prevent extremism and what is discussed at those boards. We know that there was a Contest Board meeting in July, which was private and invite-only. You may recall that at a previous Committee MOPAC agreed to publish more information about the Contest Board. Do you know if this has taken place yet?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): No, it has not. The context here is that we have held four meetings of the London Contest Board so far and clearly in that time there has been again a transition and we have a new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. Some of the progress we could have made – and it is no criticism of anyone individually here but this is the reality of transition – has not been made.

We are having another meeting in October for the Contest Board and that issue around transparency is still, yes, being considered by the Contest Board, but we have to take it one step at a time. Part of that step is that we are bringing together a whole host of different individuals to talk about a subject that has not been spoken about before and so there is an element of building confidence between the partners and getting a shared understanding between the partners. Then that is something that we will be much more confident in making more transparent.

Florence Eshalomi AM: On that, would you not agree that in terms of some of that secrecy around that, some of the problem is when people do not trust what is going on?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): We would not use the word “secret” for the Contest Board. We do not publish its minutes at the moment and I accept that, but “secret” is probably putting the wrong stress on how the Contest Board operates. As I say, we are very much determined to take it in a more transparent way, but we are going to have to work with partners to make sure everyone agrees to that and to make sure everyone is comfortable with that. Actually, transparency, yes, is something to be aimed at.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Hopefully, we will see more publicity around that because currently on the MOPAC website there is no information about Contest. Going forward, to help in terms of, again, getting more people on board and raising the awareness, would you agree that that is a start?

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): Yes. At a personal level, I think that is a really good and laudable ambition. Obviously it is a matter for the whole Contest Board to decide, but I see no reason why it should not.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): An interesting thing there as well – and it is something we have not touched on – is that there are a number of other elements within Contest. Certainly, from a local authority we have a regime similar to some of the work that we are doing on Prevent around Protect and Prepare and all of those elements. From a local authority point of view, it would be good to see some increased profile of some of the other activity and work that is going on across the whole Contest agenda.
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): Yes.
Certainly the London At Critical event that was held during the summer was an attempt to broaden that out. It was very much focusing on the Prepare agenda.

Sian Berry AM: Following on from that, one of the other recommendations that the Committee made the last time we looked into this was that the Contest and Prevent Boards should be raising awareness of the work that they do. I wanted to ask how confident you are that local authorities, public services and other people involved in Prevent are aware of the Board and the work that it does.

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I cannot really speak for where local authorities are - that is a question that, hopefully, Martin [Esom] will be able to shed more light on - but certainly one of the key aspects will be, as I say, driving better understanding across pan-London agencies and then going out and doing things differently. The London At Critical event, when we had all local authorities in to talk about what London would look like and what London would feel like at critical, was a part of the Contest Board engagement activity. The work we have done on the Counter-Terrorism Local Profiles and trying to restructure those to make them more open to encourage police to share more information was on the basis that, if the police are sharing more information, other agencies and other communities will be more inclined to share information with them. Changing that is another visible demonstration of what the Contest Board is trying to do. Can we do more? We certainly can do, but we have had only four meetings so far.

Sian Berry AM: My next question written down here is: how could you be more transparent? Do you have any plans? Are you going to be --

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): As I say, certainly we reviewed the last Police and Crime Committee (PCC) report and so people on the Contest Board are aware of that agenda of transparency and we will move slowly towards that, but that is a decision for the Board as a whole.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): Just talking about the London Prevent Board, all local authorities receive the minutes of the Prevent Board and there is pretty wide attendance from London boroughs at that. In the three years that I have been chairing the board, I have never come across anything top secret, to be honest with you. It is an OSCT board, in effect, and so I would be more than happy for its work to be spread more broadly in the right sort of way. Anyway, amongst local authorities there is a lot of information, but probably not beyond that.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): The challenge there is about that narrative piece and any communication needs to be under the wider guise of a context that supports that. Sometimes there may well be a challenge to meeting minutes, etc, that do not actually give the full context. There will be some work to do on what that looks like. That would be my recommendation.

Sian Berry AM: Here we are being broadcast on the web right now, every word of what we are saying, and we are talking about the same kinds of issues you must be talking about in those meetings.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): Yes, exactly.

Sian Berry AM: It is not secret, is it?
Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): No, absolutely not, but it is just that the narrative behind some of it is important in the context of challenging and conflicting narratives on the subject.

Sian Berry AM: I wanted to expand on engagement, which is another theme, as well as transparency. Sorry. Is that OK?

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Yes. We have questions on that theme coming up.

Sian Berry AM: Really? Maybe it is the wrong time to do it. I wanted to ask about the parallels with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and how flat that is in comparison.

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Go on then.

Sian Berry AM: We have previously looked at Violence Against Women and Girls. There is a pan-London Strategy and there is a lot of engagement by voluntary and public sector groups working in this area. They seem very happy with the results and it is quite a simple and quite a flat structure. It seems that in this area there is a lot of complication and a lot of different boards. The Home Office’s Best Practice Catalogue of things that you can do, it seems to me, might not be something that came up from grass-roots organisations.

I just wanted to ask. Are there plans to make things more engaging or to devise more programmes with Londoners themselves? I noticed that the MPS has started talking to social media-savvy young Muslims in terms of developing things online. Is there more that can be done to engage young people in this in London within the framework that we currently have?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): There is a lot more that can be done and there is an argument to commission London-wide initiatives that are not focused on just one local authority. There is probably a role you could play in doing that, but with the resources we have at a local level and then the time restrictions, we have to deliver our projects and do all of the other things that we have spoken about. It is very difficult for us to then go out and seek to develop other initiatives from scratch. If we had more resources we could do that and there is a will to do that and there is a good argument to do that, but with the resource limitation it is very difficult.

Sian Berry AM: Is the Best Practice Catalogue useful?

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): It is very limited. The projects in it are good, but there could be a much wider range of projects and a wider range of partners.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): I see this as a process of maturity. I have seen things move on significantly in the time that I have chaired the London Prevent Board. There was extreme nervousness about everything at the time, particularly amongst the Home Office and OSCT. What I have seen over the past few years is a relaxation of that and more confidence in the way in which things are developed. The Best Practice Catalogue has come on a lot and there are more things in there and more providers, but it has some way to go.

It is this thing about trust and confidence. As trust and confidence builds and all of this is mainstreamed, which is the important thing, then we will make progress. I do see we are making progress, but we have some way to go.
Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): I would echo what Martin said and there are some other developments coming out. There is obviously the review of the Contest strategy, which I have already mentioned. There is the Louise Casey [Director General, Casey Review Team] work that is still to be published later this year. We have just had the appointment for a Deputy Mayor for Social Integration within the Greater London Authority (GLA), which is something that we intend to work very closely with in helping to develop a lot of this work.

Sian Berry AM: I had better stop.

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): That has covered it. Are there any further questions on this? If I move to the next one, our final theme of the morning is the priorities for the new Mayor or the not-so-new Mayor now. If I could ask each one of you, what one thing would you like to see the Mayor prioritise that would help you to support vulnerable individuals at risk of engaging in extremism?

Clair McGarry (Community Safety Officer, London Borough of Bexley): For us - and it is something that we have already touched on - our limited resources prevent us from doing a lot of that engagement work and so to look at that funding and making something accessible. For the longer term, the one-year stuff, regardless of what agenda you are working in, makes it really tricky to do anything effective and establish yourselves.

Ghaffar Hussain (Community Resilience Manager, London Borough of Newham): The London Mayor could be more vocal on Prevent and supportive of Prevent. That would certainly help. Also, if he was proactive in commissioning initiatives from City Hall, London-wide initiatives that focus on Londoners and not just on local authorities, it will also be useful, but also understanding who to work with and which organisations have the credibility to deliver that work and not conflate credibility with popularity as well.

Sara Sutton (Director of Public Protection and Licensing, Westminster City Council): I would support both of those items wholeheartedly. The longer-term aspects we have covered in detail today and so the thing I would just add is around the roles of local authorities and the police and how that works with Prevent at a local level and potentially a review on how that could be changed and addressed to be more dynamic.

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): I would say two things. There is something about the Contest Board maturing slightly more quickly and having more attention put on it.

The second thing is that in some local authorities there is a democratic deficit when talking about Prevent and people are still scared to talk about Prevent. There is something about a collective democratic voice in London with London boroughs and the Mayor speaking about Prevent and its importance.

Tony Arbour AM: Can I quickly intervene on that? Would you care to list those places?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): No, I will not do that.

Tony Arbour AM: All right. How many of them are there?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): I do not know how many, but I do know that in certain boroughs they are prepared to talk about Prevent and, when you have Prevent Watch in the area, local elected members are prepared to stand up to that type of force. There are other areas where perhaps it is less prominent and members are not that confident to take that head on.
Tony Arbour AM: Let me explore it a bit further, if I may, through you, Chair. Are any of those boroughs non-priority boroughs where the matter is not discussed?

Martin Esom (Chair, London Prevent Board): I would think so.

Tony Arbour AM: Really? Thank you, Chair.

Robin Merrett (Head of Operational Oversight, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime): The Mayor is already doing quite a lot in this area anyway and, pointing to one thing, there is the whole conversation with the Government that the Mayor is holding. There is the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, which is another important step in this work. There is the commitment to restore neighbourhood policing with the increase in ward officers. Ward officers play a fundamental role in linking communities and working with communities to help deal with this threat.

Unmesh Desai AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Are there any further questions? No. In that case, I will thank our guests for attending today and for your helpful contributions to this debate.