

NSPCC inform

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NSPCC  TM
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

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Introduction and Background

In Britain today, faith and religious organisations play an important role in supporting children and families. But how often are children and young people in faith groups listened to and involved in making decisions which affect them?

In planning a conference aimed at supporting the work of protecting and promoting the welfare of black and minority ethnic children and young people in faith-based settings (*Building on Strengths*), the NSPCC, working in collaboration with partner organisations, felt it was important that young people from faith communities were given the opportunity to express their views. *Have Your Say* provided the platform for this. Nineteen young people from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist backgrounds were involved in the process.

The event, held in August 2007, was intended to offer a space for young people from different religious groups to explore issues around safety and their wellbeing. This report contains highlights of *Have Your Say* and key messages from the young people. Although many of the messages will not come as a surprise to those reading the report, the fact that they come directly from young people does emphasise its importance to them. The report also outlines the process that was used to prepare for this event. This can be used as a learning tool for those who want to engage with young people.

Shirley Maginley
Link Officer,
BME Faith & Religious Groups

Serena deCordova
Children & Young People's
Participation Officer

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the young people who helped with the planning for *Have You Say* and all those who took part on the day. Special thanks to Hibah and Safa from Wembley, London.

We would also like to thank members of the *Building on Strengths* Conference Planning Group for their support; NSPCC colleagues Rita Charalambides and Bandana Thakur for their part in organising all the events with the young people; and Emily Hodder-Williams for her assistance in producing this report.

Executive Summary

Young people from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds took part in an event, *Have Your Say*, which explored issues of keeping children and young people safe.

From the event, the following recommendations provide a summary of the session:

Top Tips for Religious Organisations to Keep Children Safe

- Provide community-based activities
- Support parents in their role
- Provide child friendly spaces and activities for children and young people
- Educate children and young people about religious messages
- Provide positive role models
- Be someone and somewhere to turn to for children and young people when they are worried

Consultation with young people

The lack of communication between children and parents was a real concern. When children and young people are not consulted they often decide to rebel.

Communication between children and parents

Religious organisations could play an important part in helping parents, children and young people to have better relationships.

Views on abuse

Children and young people had varying views and understandings of what constitutes neglect and abuse, and so need more accurate information about their rights.

Tackling bullying

Children and young people are aware of bullying and the effects of it, but they talk about the lack of trust they place in adults. Religious organisations are well placed to work within schools, building trust to help tackle bullying behaviour and to support those being bullied.

The impact of terrorism

Children and young people are significantly concerned about terrorism and expressed fear of it occurring and the negative impact of discrimination which results from trying to tackling it. They feel religious organisations have a clear role to educate all children and young people about all religious beliefs to dispel myths and prejudices.

Challenging violence and gun crime

Young people are reporting that gun and knife crime is becoming part of everyday life. They feel the role of religious organisations could be to provide diversionary activities and community leadership in speaking out about gun and knife crime.

Challenging negative images of children and young people

Children and young people are portrayed very negatively in the media. The young people felt that religious organisations have a responsibility to tackle negative images of children and young people and to help promote positive messages in the media.

Children and young people from *Have Your Say* will be presenting their recommendations to the national conference “*Building on Strengths: protecting and promoting the welfare of children and young people in faith-based settings*”, on 16 October 2007. This conference is organised by the NSPCC and partner organisations.

Process and Purpose

The purpose of the Have your Say event was to:

...offer an opportunity for BME young people from different ethnic backgrounds and religious groups to explore issues around safety and their well being.

The NSPCC believes that enabling children and young people to participate will create more effective services and activities, and will contribute to our aim of ending cruelty to children.

Children and young people have a right to have a say about decisions which affect their life, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12, the cornerstone of the convention, places a duty on all decision-makers to enable children and young people to have their say. All of the NSPCC's participation work with children and young people is underpinned by the UNCRC.

Throughout the report we will be highlighting the experience of children and young people who participated in *Have Your Say*. There were a number of levels of participation happening throughout the process and therefore some degree of defining this is necessary.

Participation

Participation is the process of involving children and young people in decision making. The young people involved in the planning groups for the *Have Your Say* event were actively participating in making decisions.

Consultation

Consultation is the process of listening to and gathering children and young people's views. At the *Have Your Say* event we consulted with a wide number of children and young people to gather their views.

The process and approach we took to enabling children and young people to participate was threefold:

1. **Initial Consultation & Engagement:** Young People were invited to attend a 'Youth Summit' on 2 August 2007. The purpose of this Summit was for young people to help organise the *Have Your Say* event. Their input was used to plan the publicity, programme, exercises, activities and items for discussion.
2. **Participation in Planning:** After the Youth Summit a Young People's Planning Group was established, which met on 22 August to continue planning the *Have Your Say* event. The Group will meet again to plan their involvement in feeding back to the Adult conference *Building on Strengths*.
3. **Event Participation:** Young people from the Planning Group were involved in running and facilitating the *Have Your Say* event.

Throughout the process we have sought full participation of children and have applied some basic principles in our work:

Involve Children and Young People at the Earliest Opportunity

- Young people were invited at the start of the process and invited to take a lead role in planning and developing the programme.

Ensure Young People's Involvement is Safeguarded

- In all of our work, safeguarding young people is paramount. We make sure that for all our events, young people are aware of child protection procedures, and we seek informed consent for their attendance (see Appendix 2). We make sure young people are fully aware of their right to participate, or not; it is their choice and we respect that right.

Clear Aims and Objectives

- Young people were involved in setting the aims and objectives for the event, but were clear about the extent to which they could participate, where their views would go, and what feedback they would receive.

Time to Build Group Dynamics

- New groups of young people go through stages of 'storming, norming and forming', and this needs time to develop. Building in time for ice-breakers, regular breaks, and a balance of fun activities supports their development as a group. The establishment and reinforcement of 'Ground Rules' for the group are imperative to building their ability to work together.

Use of Participatory Tools

- Throughout the sessions we used appropriate tools to engage children and young people. These include: ice-breakers; facilitated discussion groups; small group work; using statements to begin discussions; role-play; flip charts and post-its; scenario discussion; and DVD clips.

Build in Rewards for Children and Young People

- We take a consistent approach to rewarding young people for participation. All young people involved in participation receive certificates and an outline of the skills they have developed throughout the experience. We further reward young people for their time with a mixture of fun activities and gift vouchers. Young people attending the event received a 'goodie bag'.

Value Diversity

- We value children and young people from all backgrounds and circumstances and we seek to ensure that their views are heard and that they fulfil their potential at the event. With the participation of young people this was achieved by establishing a high standard of respect which values everyone's opinion and background.

Build in Evaluation, Review and Feedback Mechanisms

- We too need to learn from participation experiences, and young people's contribution to evaluation is a valuable tool in developing practice. The young people involved were asked to feed back at each stage of the process.
- Feedback is an integral part of the participation process and should be undertaken within an appropriate timescale so that young people continue to feel valued for their input. The young people involved were asked to feed back at each stage of the process.

What They Said on the Day



Photo: NSPCC

The young people's views were recorded throughout the *Have Your Say* event held at the offices of 11Million on 30 August. Thirteen young people aged 13 to 18 years old attended. In each session the direct responses from young people were recorded.

Session One: Bullying and Peer Pressure

This session began with the group writing down what they think bullying is on a small piece of card and sticking it on flip chart paper:

- *Mistreating people*
- *We should not do bully because it causes trouble to other people*
- *Bullying is making fun of or treating someone differently abusing them because they may be different e.g. age, size, religion or disabled*
- *Ill treating*
- *Bullying is when someone or a group of friends pick on somebody all the time and makes them feel down*
- *Misery*
- *Beaten up*
- *Emotional abuse*
- *Bullying is mistreating someone emotionally and physically*
- *Constant and conscious abuse, emotionally, physically, mentally*
- *Taking advantage of someone's weaknesses – can be physical and emotional*

- *Bullying is when a certain person gets provoked by several people*
- *Bullying is physical and emotional abuse that causes negative effects. It may be for no reason*
- *Physical and emotional abuse*

The group then divided into smaller groups to do a role play exercise which involved exploring either being bullied at school or being bullied outside of school. The cartoon characters Bart and Lisa Simpson were used as victims of bullying. Groups were asked to imagine that Bart and Lisa were their age and to discuss and feed back on the following three questions:

1. What Bart/Lisa could do about the bullying?
2. Who Bart/Lisa could go to for help/support?
3. What help/support Bart/Lisa would want in place?

Group 1 addressed the issue of bullying in school:

What Bart/Lisa could do about the bullying?

- Fight back
- Avoid contact with bully
- Go to someone for help
- Get friends bigger than the bully

Who Bart/Lisa could go to for help/support?

- Go and speak to a teacher
- Tell a friend
- Welfare / Connexions etc / head of year
- Parents / school nurse etc – physical

What help/support Bart/Lisa would want in place?

- Confidentiality
- Solutions from trustworthy people
- Reassurance
- Safety from bully

Group 2 addressed the issue of bullying in school:

1. What Bart/Lisa could do about the bullying?
 - Keep it to himself
 - Tell a teacher
 - Tell a police officer
 - Tell a friend
 - Stand up for himself
 - Tell his parents
2. Who Bart/Lisa could go to for help/support?
 - Tell a teacher/friend you can trust
 - Go to a counsellor in school
 - Call the NSPCC helpline when you get home - confidential
3. What help/support Bart/Lisa would want in place?
 - Trustworthy and loyal
 - Someone who will support him till the problems solved
 - Honest and sincere advice
 - Good listener

A general discussion was held after each group presented their work. It seemed that everyone had similar views but they were expressed differently. The group spoke about the differences between girls and boys and their experiences of bullying. It was noted that with boys bullying tends to be about size whereas with girls it is more about emotional issues.

There were mixed views about whether schools do enough to address bullying:

- *Not doing enough*
- *They do, do enough but don't have all the information*
- *Kids at school don't cooperate – bad relationships between teachers and students.*
- *Teachers are there to teach not to deal with bullying*
- *No solution – you have to go through it*

- *Solution – peer support – get advice / talk to someone your own age someone who has experienced bullying*
- *Getting worse now – everyone is protecting themselves – no one wants to be chased want to be the chaser*
- *Will try and sort it out themselves*
- *Digging in minds – feel so low / silly / fool*

Session Two: Family

Groups divided back into smaller groups and brainstormed on the question, 'what are the problems that occur in the family?'

Group 1:

- *Financial problems → haven't got basic needs → cant do things that other kids can do e.g. family trips, shopping*
- *Weak relationships → arguments*
- *Alcoholic and drug users → not responsible adults*
- *Moving house and environments → adapt to new lifestyle*
- *One minded → lack of communication. Don't listen to child*
- *If someone had a disability.*

Group 2:

- *Drink and drug abuse*
- *Teenage pregnancy*
- *Further education*
- *Divorce*
- *Financial problems*
- *Alcoholic problems*
- *Mobile phone bills*
- *Exam results*



Photo: NSPCC

- *Clothing issues*
- *Gay and bisexual issues*
- *Friends issues*
- *Boyfriend and girlfriend*
- *Regretting child (teenagers)*
- *Other family issues*
- *Parent fights*
- *Parents trying to be controlling*
- *Curfews*
- *Partying – going out.*

Group 3:

- *Siblings bullying*
- *Fighting / arguments*
- *Abuse*
- *Influence (smoke / drugs)*
- *Divorce*
- *Step family*
- *Money*
- *Exam expectations*
- *Forced to do things*
- *Comparing children*
- *Wages*

After this exercise the groups were asked to choose one problem and come up with possible solutions.

There was a large group discussion on the topics that were presented.

Group 1:

Problem – Finances

Solutions: speak to children properly – get their views on how to raise / manage money – over 16 could go and get a job to help – explain nicely what is going on – communication between parents and children is important.

Group 2:

Problem – Teenage Pregnancy

Solutions: can't let children have too much freedom but can't keep them locked up – parents should trust young people so that they can tell them the truth and that parents be ok with the truth – can't do much about being pregnant parents have to accept it and calm down.

Group 3:

Problem – Lack of Communication

Solutions: family therapy, counsellor will allow all members to have their turn to speak – nominate a time and day for family to meet and each to take their turn to speak and listen to each other. When children aren't consulted, they will rebel. Religion plays an important part in the relationship between parents and children.

Session Three: Racism, Terrorism and Religious Discrimination
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Young people were split up into three groups and each was given a scenario which they had to solve. Each group gave feedback on their scenario.

Group 1 – Racism at school

Solutions: *Private tutoring – find confidence within themselves*

Group 2 – Religious worship at school

Solutions: *confront teacher on a respectable level along with signed signatures of everyone else who does not agree.*

Have a petition.

Take it to Gordon Brown

Why we think it happens:

Too many different cultures, may cause too much conflict

To keep schools less religious

Good thing as it helps other people to learn about their different cultures which are right in front of them

Group 3 – Prayer room facilities

Solutions: *Speak to a teacher (pref. Muslim or religious studies) → head teacher → government (use law on religious equality) → protest → petition → Muslim Council of Britain.*

The group were then shown an image of the bus bombing from 7 July. The young people wrote down on a piece of card what the image means to them.



Photo: NSPCC

Bus Bombing picture – what does this image mean to you?

'I see a bus crash has happened, a very severe crash as the roof has been ripped away. I can see that if anybody was on the bus, they will have been badly hurt.'

'Unfair'

'Issues?'

'Unfair'

'Blast'

'Terrorist attack'

'Hate anger argh'

'Hatred – advanced levels of hatred towards others. No conscience.'

'Bus explosion. Bombing – Terrorist attack'

'Disaster! Terrorist attack!'

'Terrorism'

'Bomb death'

'7/7 bombing death, devastation, sadness'

A general discussion then followed:

What impact does terrorism have on young people?

- *Causes discrimination against people*
- *Fear*
- *Separation*
- *Causes fear – trains, buses, people*
- *Eye opener – England unsafe*
- *Makes you think twice about where you go and what you do*

What support could your religious organisation put in place?

- *Somewhere for young people to go to do community things*
- *Educate young Muslim men and also converts*
- *Young people want to believe in something and have their views heard*
- *Young people need to be educated properly on what Islam is – need to be clear – what these boys do is not Islam – this message needs to be clearer.*

Session Four: Violence, Gun and Knife Crime

The group were shown a Met Police DVD on gun crime. A large group discussion followed.

Is gun and knife crime becoming out of control?

- *Easier to buy guns and knives*
- *TV*
- *Cool to have a gun*
- *Freedom kids have – parents need to know what to do with kids*
- *Young people growing up faster*
- *More normal – at a certain age young people are expected to have a gun. It's not shocking anymore.*
- *My friends have one, I should have one*
- *To show off*
- *Easy to get - £15 pistol being sold at school*
- *Not strangers – people you've grown up with are carrying guns and knives*
- *Peer pressure*
- *Different people are influenced differently*
- *Protection – everyone else has one so they only way to protect yourself is to get a weapon too.*
- *Cultural thing*

Why do children and young people feel the need to carry a knife or a gun?

- *Make a name for themselves*
- *Street 'cred'*

How can the community and religious groups help children and young people to stop the violence?

- *Not really*
- *Follow whatever community and religious groups do – like the family you do whatever your brother or sister does*
- *Activities, youth groups (ethnic and religious) – keeps young people busy rather than hanging around on streets.*

Session Five: Young People's Messages to Religious Groups

Group were asked to collate top tips to religious groups which could keep children and young people safe.

Top tips to religious groups that could keep children and young people safe:

Group 1:

1. More youth centres
2. Religious camps / schemes
3. Encourage family bonding time
4. Day trips with your community
5. Organise monthly events i.e. quiz night
6. Religious youth leaders for children to go to
7. An annual parenting session
8. Encourage and make child friendly religious places

Group 2:

1. Give clear message to young people about their specific religions
2. Young adults who can relate to young people more
3. Religious events
4. Retreats focused on different topics
5. Youth forums on internet etc
6. Create advice groups for parents
7. Talk to people who are being bullied
8. Develop advice groups concerning sexual abuse.



Photo: NSPCC

Conclusions and Recommendations

This consultation was the start of a dialogue with children and young people about the role of faith and religious organisations in keeping them safe. We recognise the range of issues that affect children and young people. Children and young people have mixed views about physical abuse and neglect and therefore need more information about their rights and what is and is not abuse. We hope that this dialogue continues between young people about organisations beyond the *Have your Say* and *Building on Strengths* events.

The recommendations that the young people propose, alongside those already in the Executive Summary, are:

Bullying

Children and young people are concerned about bullying both inside and outside of school and suggest the following should be done to address it:

- Peer support
- Trustworthy support for children and young people
- Confidentiality

“Someone who will support him till the problem solved”

Family

Family is very important to children and young people and they are concerned about their relationships with their parents and carers and suggest the following should be done to address it:

- Children and young people value and respect their religious organisations and groups and recognise the positive contribution that they can make in supporting families
- Include children and young people in decision making processes
- Give children and young people information about ways they can help with problems in the family

- Build trust in families
- Informal family therapy

“Parents should trust young people so that they can tell them the truth and that parents be ok with the truth”

Discrimination

Children and young people are concerned about racism and religious discrimination and feel that:

- Terrorism breeds fear and discrimination, and religious organisations have a role in educating people on real messages
- Religious organisations should provide activities for children and young people to do things in their communities.

“Young people need to be educated properly on what Islam is – need to be clear – what these boys do is not Islam – this message needs to be clearer”

“Follow whatever community and religious groups do – like in the family you do whatever your brother or sister does”

Image of Children and Young People

Religious groups and organisations have a responsibility to do more to tackle negative images in the media.

Appendix 1 – Sample letter



Dear friend,

**Planning Group Meeting
for Black & Minority Ethnic Youth Faith Summit
Thursday 2nd August 2007 at the NSPCC Fresh Start Project in Camden**

We thank for your interest in the young people's planning group meeting. Please note that there has been a change in venue and date. I am pleased to confirm the meeting will now take place on **Thursday 2nd August 2007** at the NSPCC Fresh Start Project in Camden (travel directions enclosed). We aim to start at 10am and finish by 4pm.

On 2nd August, the young people will be invited to generate ideas for how to shape the Youth Faith Summit and give their views on the ideas that have developed so far. They will give their views on how to format the day, how to make the event child / young person friendly and develop activities and exercises. This project will **NOT** encourage young people to talk about their own personal experiences.

The young people on the planning group will be from different faith communities, and they will help us to ensure that the Faith Youth Summit meets and addresses the needs of children and young people. We also hope that being a part of the planning group will be a positive learning experience for the young people.

I have enclosed travel directions to NSPCC Fresh Start project and a parental consent form which has to be completed, signed and returned by **Wednesday 25th July**. Travel expenses for young people and supporting adults will be reimbursed and refreshments will be provided on the day.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the enclosed please contact me on 0207 8251331 or e-mail: sdecordova@nspcc.org.uk.

I look forward to seeing you on the 2nd August.

Best wishes,

Serena deCordova
Children and Young People's Participation Officer

Appendix 2 – Consent form

NSPCC PUBLIC POLICY

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

As part of the NSPCC Public Policy work in relation to involving children and young people, you have been invited to attend the ***Have Your Say*** event at 11 Million, 1 London Bridge, London SE1 9BG. We will be legally responsible for your care whilst you are away, we therefore need you to carefully read and complete this form with your parents/carers.

You will be supported to participate in this meeting by the NSPCC Children and Young People's Participation Officer **Serena deCordova**. Telephone: 0207 825 1331 or 07773 768664.

Email: sdecordova@nspcc.org.uk

You will travel to London Bridge on 30th August

The NSPCC will pay for travel and food costs.

Section to be completed by child/young person

I confirm that I want to attend the event at the NSPCC. I understand that the NSPCC member of staff is responsible for my safety and welfare and agree to co-operate fully with them. I understand that if I do not co-operate with the NSPCC member of staff that this may result in returning home early and a discontinuation of my involvement in this piece of work.

I can attend ***Have Your Say*** event on 30 August 2007 Yes No

Signed (child/young person): _____

Date: _____

Name:(child/young person): _____

Please pass the next page on to your parent or carer to complete, and return both pages IMMEDIATELY to Serena de Cordova in your envelope or the stamped addressed envelope provided.

**Post to: Serena de Cordova
 NSPCC
 Weston House
 42 Curtain Road
 London EC2A 3NH**

**Parents/Carers please complete the information below
should you wish your child to attend**

I give consent for _____ (full name of child), date of birth
_____ to attend the *Have Your Say* event on 30 August 2007.

Address:

Contact No:

E-mail:

Permission to photograph and video tape

We will be photographing and video taping parts of the day. Your child may be included in these photographs either intentionally as part of a posed picture or unintentionally in the background of another photograph. Please indicate below whether you do or do not consent to your child's participating in this activity.

[] Yes, I consent

[] No, I do not consent

Medical Information

Give details of ANY medical condition of which the organisers have to be aware. Include details of any medication that has to be taken. (This information will be treated as confidential).

Special Dietary Information

Please give details of any special dietary requirements or food allergies which we should be aware of for catering purposes:

I understand that I will be immediately contacted about any matters relating to my children's care or welfare.

I understand that photographs may be taken of my child at the event.

I give my consent for any emergency medical treatment. I have discussed this form with the young person concerned, and they know what I have written

Signature (parent/carer): _____

Date: _____

Name:(parent/carer):

Please return completed form immediately to Serena deCordova, NSPCC, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH

Appendix 3 – Invitation



Have your say

Thursday, 30 August 2007
10.00am-4.00pm
Children's Commissioner Office
11 MILLION
1 London Bridge
LONDON
SE1 9BG

Black and minority ethnic young people, 13-18 years, from different religious backgrounds are invited to this event to share your views on matters relating to your well being and safety.

Activities, meet other young people, eat and have fun.
To book your place phone: 07773 768 664 or 020 7825 2736
Email: sdecordova@nspcc.org.uk or smaginley@nspcc.org.uk

Please respond as soon as possible as spaces are limited.
What you say at this event will be fed into a national NSPCC conference in October. Travel expenses will be reimbursed.



Appendix 4 - Programme

Have your say

Programme

Thursday 30th August 2007

Morning

9.30	Arrival and Registration Refreshments Human Bingo – Prizes to be won	
10.15	Welcome and introductions What we are doing today? Getting to know each other Working together	
11.00	Session 1 – About the NSPCC and children	helping
11.30	BREAK	
11.45	Session 2 – Bullying	
12.15	Session 3 – Family	
12.55	Morning recap	
1.00	LUNCH	

Have your say

Programme

Thursday 30th August 2007

Afternoon

1.45	Group game
2.00	Session 4 – Religious Discrimination & Racism
2.40	Session 5 – Street Violence
3.00	BREAK
3.15	Session 6 – Young People's message
3.45	Evaluation
4.00	FINISH

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www.nspcc.org.uk/inform

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has a vision – a society where all children are loved, valued and able to fulfil their potential.

Our mission is to end cruelty to children.

The NSPCC is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. For over 100 years it has been protecting children from cruelty and is the only children's charity with statutory powers, enabling it to act to safeguard children at risk.

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