

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

APPG on Social Integration Minutes for Meeting on Monday, 23 May, 4-6pm, in Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House

Minutes taken by: Anna Kere, The Challenge

Meeting in private, 4 – 4:30pm

Present (Parliamentarians):

- Chuka Umunna MP, Chair (Labour)
- James Berry MP, Vice Chair (Conservative)
- Holly Lynch MP (Labour)
- Jim McMahon MP (Labour)
- Lord Lennie (Labour)
- Mark Durkan MP (SDLP)
- Nus Ghani MP (Conservative)
- Ruth Smeeth MP (Labour)

Present (Others):

- Anna Kere, The Challenge (Secretariat/minutes)
- Charlotte Baker, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Jon Yates, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Justin Meadows (Head of Office to Chuka Umunna MP)
- Kirsty O'Brien, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Nicholas Plumb, The Challenge (Secretariat/Twitter)
- Richard Bell, The Challenge (Secretariat)
- Stuart Macnaughtan (Senior Parliamentary Advisor to Chuka Umunna MP)

1. Introduction and background to the APPG

- 1.1. The APPG Chair, Chuka Umunna MP, welcomed attendees to the meeting. He spoke about his motivations for setting up the APPG and his intention to run the APPG on the model of a Select Committee. He referred members to the “APPG Working Practices” paper for details.
- 1.2. The primary purpose of this meeting was to approve the first inquiry proposal and to discuss current and historical policies and initiatives to tackle social segregation.
- 1.3. Jon Yates from The Challenge was invited to say a few words about The Challenge as an organisation and the rationale behind its providing the secretariat to the APPG on Social

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

Integration. He spoke about social integration as an issue and detailed how a focus on social mixing is designed into the programmes ran by The Challenge. There is a clear opportunity for parliament to take a leading role in moving the discussion on social integration forward, engaging with multiple stakeholder groups and with the wider public. Mr Yates said he was honoured that Mr Umunna had taken an interest in the issue and that he looked forward to working with the parliamentarians.

2. Election of officers

- 2.1. It was moved that Stuart McDonald MP (in absence) would join the APPG as an Officer. All voted in favour.
- 2.2. It was moved that Debbie Abrahams MP (in absence) would join the APPG as an Officer. All voted in favour.
- 2.3. It was moved that Holly Lynch MP would join the APPG as an Officer. All voted in favour.
- 2.4. It was moved that Lord Lennie would join the APPG as an Officer. All voted in favour.

3. Approval of the first inquiry proposal

- 3.1. The Chair drew members' attention to the first inquiry proposal, which would deal with immigration (copy available on request). The proposed inquiry would explore the relationship between immigration and integration, and would be divided in two phases: policy and practice. The first phase would involve members holding one hearing in parliament and one hearing in the community. The second phase would involve a number of community visits. Mr Umunna invited the members to comment on the inquiry proposal and to suggest their ideas.
- 3.2. Jim McMahon MP suggested that the APPG should consider visiting Oldham. He said there might be some uncomfortable truths to be discovered regarding this issue but if the APPG could create a safe space for a community evidence session it could prove beneficial.
- 3.3. The Chair responded that the APPG would be happy to work together with Mr McMahon to organise a hearing in his constituency which would be held in confidence. He asked Mr McMahon if he would add anything else to the policy considerations outlined in the first inquiry proposal.
- 3.4. Mr McMahon reiterated his point about the importance of providing a safe space for witnesses to provide evidence and pointed out that any inquiry needs to be carried out

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

with a degree of caution as it inevitably sheds some negative light on the community where it takes place.

- 3.5. Ruth Smeeth MP drew attention to the importance of education and policing in the integration debate.
- 3.6. James Berry MP pointed to the class dimension of ethnic segregation and wondered if middle class people were likely to be more integrated irrespective of their ethnic background.
- 3.7. Lord Lennie referred the members' attention to the issues in the North East. He said that there was a growing resentment and a lack of understanding between settled communities and the migrant population. Consequently, the members needed to be prepared for a lot of honesty and potentially anger at the outset of the inquiry.
- 3.8. The Chair concluded that all these comments would be incorporated into the first inquiry proposal and a new version would be circulated to the members.

4. Other business

- 4.1. Mr Umunna also asked members if they saw value in inviting academics who specialise in difference methodologies of measuring integration to give evidence to the APPG at a later meeting
- 4.2. The Vice Chair stated that this might be worth exploring.

Public meeting, 4:30 – 6:00pm

Those already present were joined by 40 members of the public and three external speakers:

Lord Ahmad: Minister for Counter-Extremism

Professor Ted Cantle: a prominent academic who specialises in community cohesion and who formerly chaired the government's Community Cohesion Review Team.

Louise Casey: a civil servant leading the government's review into integration and opportunity.

1. Disclosure of relevant interests

- 1.1. In accordance with point 10 of the Guide to the APPG Rules, all MPs and Peers must disclose any interest that meets the test of relevance, either orally or in writing, at the time when it is relevant. The Chair invited the APPG members to disclose any such interests at the start of the public session.

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

1.2. Jim McMahon MP declared that he is a serving member of the Oldham Council.

2. Chairman's questions to Lord Ahmad

2.1. The Chair started by asking which government department holds responsibility for integration.

2.2. Lord Ahmad pointed out that the government took a cross-government approach to the issue but the responsibility for extremism lay with the Home Office. He praised the Prime Minister for his personal interest and drive in tackling segregation and extremism in the UK.

2.3. Mr Umunna asked to what extent the government saw integration as the answer to radicalisation.

2.4. The Minister responded that government policy in this area aimed to empower local communities. He cited the example of the Prime Minister's recent initiative to encourage more Muslim women to take an active part in society by improving their English language skills. Lord Ahmad pointed out that isolation and the resulting fragmentation of already segregated parts of society could potentially lead to radicalisation. The government's counter-extremism strategy launched last year had four pillars and the Minister said that integration was probably the most important one of them. He confirmed that integration was central to any legislation or initiative undertaken by the government in this area.

3. Questions from the APPG members

3.1. The Vice Chair, James Berry MP asked who should be responsible for integration in the UK – the government or independent organisations.

3.2. Lord Ahmad pointed out that the responsibility was a collective one – the government currently works with third sector organisations, local community groups, schools, and parents. He further stressed that any integration effort needed to stem from a partnership of the government with organisations holding local knowledge – whatever form these may take.

3.3. The Vice Chair proceeded to ask the minister to name the top two challenges for social integration at the moment and asked how the government was working to address these.

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

- 3.4. Lord Ahmad responded that the top two challenges were social mobility and access to opportunity. However, the Minister emphasised that social mobility has improved considerably over the past few decades – especially in London.
- 3.5. Jim McMahon MP referred to an opinion that has previously been expressed in the media – that too much political correctness has led to an increase in segregation – and asked for Lord Ahmad’s comments.
- 3.6. Lord Ahmad confirmed that there was a need for very candid conversations but argued that some of them might need to happen in private and in confidence. Too much public attention and debate can sometimes demonise particular groups in society and prove counter-productive. We need to be open and honest about the challenges we face, but we also need to carefully consider the approach based on individual circumstances.
- 3.7. Lord Ahmad talked about the way the Prime Minister’s recent drive to tackle segregation of Muslim women was misrepresented in the media and distracted the attention from what was actually the real issue – people being unable to speak English. Lord Ahmad said we needed to continue to provide the support to communities to ensure they are resilient and integrated. He pointed to his own parents’ experience of settling in in the UK and reiterated that access to opportunities was already better for the new generation but needed further improvement.
- 3.8. Lord Lennie asked about practical initiatives the government was currently supporting that had the potential to bring different communities together and to improve social integration.
- 3.9. Lord Ahmad pointed to Muslim Women’s Network as a good example and alluded to a number of projects which work to identify and challenge islamophobia online. The government’s role has been to ensure that any offensive content can be removed from the internet as well as upskilling young people and improving access.
- 3.10. Nus Ghani asked the Minister to expand on his points about skills, the importance of involving parents and communities. She inquired how closely the government had worked with different departments and as to whether there was a perfect integration standard the government was working towards.
- 3.11. Lord Ahmad repeated his point about the importance of safe environment and reporting of hate crime. He mentioned the soon-to-be-announced measures that would ensure the security and protection of places of worship. He also mentioned the government’s drive to ensure that UK residents spoke good English. In terms of government departments, Lord Ahmad said he worked especially closely with the PM

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

and with the Education Secretary. There was also some work going on with the Justice department and with prisons – integrated approach to integration. To reach the goal we need to make sure that our message of access and opportunity reach everyone – no matter what background they come from. The Minister said he was looking forward to working with the APPG.

3.12. Holly Lynch MP asked the Minister for his opinion on how the Prevent Strategy could be incorporated into broader integration discussions, without alienating people.

3.13. Lord Ahmad responded that Prevent was tailored programme to identify what the challenges are within a particular community or for a particular individual to give people confidence to speak up. He reiterated his point that the four pillar strategy is about working in partnership.

3.14. The APPG Chair concluded this discussion by pointing out that the government’s integration strategy needed more clarity and asked the minister to make sure there is an explicit breakdown of departmental responsibilities available on the gov.uk website.

4. Chairman’s questions to Ted Cante

4.1. After Ted Cante and Louise Casey joined the session, the Chair started off by asking Prof Cante to reflect on the past 15 years since the publication of his 2001 report and offer his thoughts on the changes that have taken place in the UK communities since then.

4.2. Prof Cante responded that there was more acceptance of diversity and more tolerance but also more segregation in communities across the UK. Demos recently reported that the number of boroughs/areas with a non-white majority had increased three times and was especially high in London. Prof Cante said that there was also a growing segregation of minorities in schools - one that exceeded residential segregation – and increasing segregation in the workplace.

4.3. The Chair asked if Prof Cante could provide an assessment of government initiatives and policies on the issue to date.

4.4. Prof Cante emphasised that there was no current government strategy on integration, which is why the APPG on Social Integration was so welcome. According to Prof Cante, this lack of strategy goes back many years – pre 2001. The 2001 riots showed that integration wasn’t going to happen naturally but this lesson still had not sunk in. The focus is now on extremism, anti-terrorism, and Muslim communities. Prof Cante interpreted this as a sign that we have lost touch with the agenda of community

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

cohesion and integration. Muslims have become the suspect community and are arguably more alienated from mainstream society than ever before.

- 4.5. The Chair proceeded to ask for Prof Cante's opinion on Baroness Corston's claims that government initiatives in community cohesion had actually made things worse.
- 4.6. Prof Cante responded that this is to an extent the view in the Muslim communities – especially with regard to the Prevent agenda.
- 4.7. The Chair pointed out that the integration debate is dominated by anti-radicalisation rhetoric but the integration agenda should be broader and look beyond race, ethnicity and religion. He invited Prof Cante to comment.
- 4.8. Prof Cante indicated that he agreed completely with the Chair's broad view of integration. He pointed out that one of the great things about the Community Cohesion Review was the opportunity to involve the white majority in some of the initiatives and draw their attention to the issues. Prof Cante emphasised that the UK is doing much better in terms of integration than other European countries (here, Prof Cante cited the example of recent elections in Austria). But a focus on Muslim communities has not helped. Prof Cante stated that Nadiya Hussain winning the Great British Bake-Off had done more for integration of Muslim communities than ten years of government policy.

5. Chairman's questions to Louise Casey

- 5.1. The Chair started off the discussion by asking Ms Casey about the status of her review – was it a government review or a review to the government?
- 5.2. Ms Casey commenced by saying that the launch of the APPG on Social Integration was very timely and positive and confirmed that she aims to operate as independently as she can. She was asked by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to carry out a review of "how to boost opportunity and integration in our most vulnerable and isolated communities". Ms Casey proceeded to list some of the issues her review had looked into: lack of opportunity, integration of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, women's issues, over-representation of black men in prisons, and under-achievement of white working class kids in schools across the country. She agreed with Prof Cante insofar as admitting that Nadiya Hussain winning the Great British Bake-Off is indeed a great thing, and went on to say that Sadiq Khan's election as Mayor of London was a positive moment for London and for the UK. Ms Casey said that these things wouldn't happen in every country and she was happy they happened in hers. However, the issue of parallel lives cannot be ignored and neither should islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and women's issues be. Yet people are reluctant to talk about these difficult issues. Gender

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

inequality exists everywhere, for example, but we should not shy away from saying that it is worse in some communities, and we should do something about it. Ms Casey claimed that the debate on whether or not we should make people speak English is 'daft' – common language is the first step to integration in any country and there can be no level playing field if we do not start from an equal footing. We need to be brave and say difficult things to one another. This is exactly what Ms Casey's report will aim to do – reflecting the complexity and the sometimes contradictory positions people hold on integration. Ms Casey concluded her remarks by saying that people in public office need to step up now and join her work – this is the moment for social integration.

6. Questions from the APPG members

- 6.1. Jim McMahon MP asked Ms Casey and Prof Cantle whether and how subtle community changes could encourage integration and to what extent problems are inter-related and some fixes can be easier than we think. Mr McMahon mentioned that four single-faith Muslim faith schools have opened in Oldham in the last four years without any community consultation – in complete defiance of 2001 recommendations. How do you create opportunities for people to experience different cultures in this context?
- 6.2. Prof Cantle responded by saying that Oldham was brave enough to organise the first fully integrated school in the country and there is not enough of the same effort across the country. Prof Cantle suggested that all schools should automatically seek 25% children from other backgrounds. This has been taken up by this government in their approach to free schools – and if we can have mixed schools, we can have mixed communities. We should not be allowing schools to teach children one view of the world only.
- 6.3. The Chair noted that some people argued faith schools should be abolished altogether
- 6.4. Prof Cantle said that faith schools aren't the only schools with a segregation problem, though they tend to be the worst ones. It is possible to have a faith ethos and be multi-faith rather than having one single faith. Prof Cantle admitted that, personally, he would not have faith schools at all but it is not a feasible line of argument given the political context.
- 6.5. Louise Casey reiterated that there is no government department on integration and no central strategy and hinted that one of the recommendations in her review will concern this lack of centralised effort. She proceeded to note that even though we haven't had a co-ordinated approach to integration in the past years, there are community organisations and initiatives out there that are already doing a great job.

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

- 6.6. Nus Ghani wondered how brave Ms Casey's report will be in terms of calling certain things out. Ms Ghani said that too many people were afraid to cause offence and wondered if Ms Casey was one of those people.
- 6.7. Louise Casey replied that she was not afraid of causing offence but reiterated that we have to stand together as a nation on this. If the review comes out against social and religious conservatism, politicians need to stand behind it. We need a national conversation and the House of Commons and the House of Lords should be the site of it.
- 6.8. Nus Ghani MP questioned Prof Cantele's use of "suspect communities" term. She said that community leaders in her constituency often represent "their mates" and not the whole community.
- 6.9. Louise Casey responded to this by saying that there are hate mongers on both sides and we need to stand against them. We need to "lose the nastiness" in the debate and in this context Prof Cantele's comment about Muslim communities being made suspect by the government is not helpful.
- 6.10. Prof Cantele defended his use of the term by arguing that "suspect community" is a recognised way of talking about certain communities and has been used at different points in history, e.g. Irish people during the troubled times.
- 6.11. Holly Lynch MP asked Ms Casey if her report will offer policy solutions and whether it will "come back for more" at a later point. She said her own constituency was a very segregated area and she was always on the look-out for practical solutions that could help to integrate people.
- 6.12. Ms Casey replied that the report will suggest solutions but made clear that the door for feedback will not be closed. Ms Casey said that she has not discovered a panacea for social segregation and this is an issue we will need to work on for years to come.
- 6.13. The Chair asked if the self-appointed community leaders who spoke with no real mandate were a problem.
- 6.14. Louise Casey responded with a confident "yes".
- 6.15. The Vice Chair, James Berry MP, asked how we can ensure that the proactive measures suggested by the report are not misinterpreted as an attack on certain communities. Mr Berry brought up the government's push to ensure Muslim women spoke English as an example – it was a great initiative at heart but one that received a lot of pushback from communities due to the way it was presented by either the government or the press.

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

- 6.16. Prof Cantle responded that human rights trump certain cultural practices. Also, some of these practices are not necessarily a feature of that community at large – it's important to know the difference and to portray it in that way. Fundamental values and basic human rights should be the driver behind any initiative.
- 6.17. Louise Casey wondered where we should draw the line between human rights issues and cultural practices. She brought up the example of arranged marriage to illustrate her point – how do we know when arranged marriage becomes forced? According to Ms Casey, the truth is that nobody ever thinks that it's their community or their religion that has a problem. When Ms Casey says these things as a white woman she gets a lot of backlash, yet if a Muslim woman said it, it would be even worse. Ms Casey repeated her previous point that we should not be afraid to offend where necessary.
- 6.18. The Vice Chair asked how social class relates to the integration debate.
- 6.19. Prof Cantle responded that currently there is a concern about housing and lack of integration by social class across the UK. He pointed out that the private rented sector saw a re-emerging trend of "poor doors", which he found very worrying.
- 6.20. Lord Lennie wondered if Ms Casey's report will make recommendations around the government structures and asked how the EU debate changed the integration discussion.
- 6.21. Louise Casey responded yes to the first question but said that unfortunately she could reveal no further details.
- 6.22. Prof Cantle responded that whatever the numbers are on immigration we still need to discuss strategies for integration. Public opinion is also often ahead of government policy – surely most people realise that the world is increasingly global and that is cannot be scaled back. Prof Cantle suggested that we lack the leadership to develop a positive story about diversity.
- 6.23. To formally close the debate, Chuka Umunna MP asked Prof Cantle to give his closing comments to Louise Casey in his capacity as the "grand father of social integration".
- 6.24. Prof Cantle responded that what struck him most during his time working on the report was how not joined up the central government was. His final advice to Ms Casey would be to make sure that the integration strategy is accepted across government departments and doesn't just sit with one Minister.

7. Announcement of the new inquiry

Address: APPG on Social Integration, c/o Chuka Umunna MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Email: APPG.SocialIntegration@the-challenge.org

Website: SocialIntegrationAPPG.org.uk

Telephone: 07964 260 201

7.1. Chuka Umunna MP, the Chair of the APPG, announced the launch of the inquiry into immigration and integration.

8. Any other business

8.1. No other business.

9. Date of next meeting

9.1. Date of next APPG meeting is Monday 4 July, 4-6pm, Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House.

MEETING ENDED AT 6:05pm