

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Pen & Inc.

The latest issue¹ “[...] has a focus on early year’s reading and the power it has to instil a love of reading from a young age.” [p3]

It includes articles looking at aspects of reading in the early years, plus, as always, listings of new titles.

For the National Year of Reading, *Pen & Inc.* is free and open access for everyone.

Black Lives Matter/Anti-racism/Decolonisation

Understanding anti-Muslim hostility: foundations for action

This important new report² from British Future (in association with the British Muslim Trust) is a starting-point, setting out key issues and some ways of starting to tackle these, with a further report due later this year.

It starts with a bald statement:

“Anti-Muslim hate is on the rise in Britain. Reported hate crime hit a new record in 2025, following two summers of far-right community disorder and growing experiences of online discrimination. High profile cases have also demonstrated how this hate can be misdirected towards other faith and ethnic minority communities.” [p8]

The report sets out key findings, then looks at what we need to do now.

The key findings include:

- “Muslim respondents express confidence about their place in Britain. Almost three quarters (73%) of Muslim respondents say Britain is a good place to be a Muslim” [p9]
- Yet Muslims report widespread experience of prejudice and the perception that this is rising.
- A narrow majority of the British public express basic acceptance of Muslims in Britain.
- But acceptance is shallower than needed to secure resilient foundations.
- About twice as many people (22%) see Muslims as making an overall negative contribution to British society compared to members of other faiths such as Jews (12%) or Hindus (8%).

¹ *Pen & Inc.*, Spring/Summer 2026, <https://content.yudu.com/web/43mce/0A43mcf/PenInc15SprSum26/html/index.html?origin=reader>.

² *Understanding anti-Muslim hostility: foundations for action*. British Future, 2026, <https://britishmuslimtrust.co.uk/assets/reports/understanding-anti-muslim-hostility-report-bmt-june-2026.pdf>.

- More than one in three (37%) agree with a statement that “The growth in the Muslim population poses a foundational threat to UK culture.”
- Around one in six also hold persistently strong, hostile views of Muslims.
- Attitudes become more positive when interaction with Muslims is more frequent.
- Most people in Britain recognise anti-Muslim prejudice exists and support action to tackle it.
- There is some confidence in community relations, mixed with fears for the future. [These points taken from pp9-10]

The report then goes on to look at how to begin to tackle these issues:

“We conclude with eight key challenges that emerge from the data – and look at the distinct roles that different institutions and networks can play in reducing prejudice, to help build a stronger social norm of accepting Muslims on equal terms. Our follow-up report, to be released later this year, will provide new qualitative research and advice to better understand the messages, messengers and practical solutions that can help to broaden acceptance of and empathy towards Muslims as a social norm across society.” [p11]

The eight challenges include:

1. Don't normalise anti-Muslim hostility – and don't exceptionalise Muslims.

“It is important, when devising strategies to reduce anti-Muslim hostility, to recognise that it has distinct features. However, an effective counter-prejudice strategy would focus on normalising perceptions of Muslims instead of singling them out as a group that is significantly different to others. A useful goal would be to align attitudes, so opinions towards Muslims in Britain were similar to those towards other faith minorities.” [p11]

2. Understand that tackling anti-Muslim hostility is everybody's business, not that of Muslims alone.
3. Recognise that different actors and networks can make distinct contributions to a society-wide effort.

“Every institution and sector can make a significant contribution to the challenge of reducing hostility. Coalitions of Muslim and non-Muslim allies can make the case for why the definition of anti-Muslim hostility matters. The state must also play a role in addressing the one in six with prejudiced views of Muslims, to provide a safe and secure environment for Muslims to live without experiencing hatred.” [p11]

4. Narrow the generation gaps.

“This research shows that anti-Muslim hostility is more prevalent among older than younger people. This positive shift across generations suggests schools have been doing a good job over

the last two decades. A challenge now is to explore how these efforts could engage people in intergenerational contact, involving parents and grandparents.” [p11]

5. Beyond contact: testing and deploying effective communications to those least likely to have real-world contact with Muslims.

“Our research suggests that the most urgent challenge is to reach effectively those segments of the public least likely to have contact with Muslims but who are in receipt of alarmist content (particularly online) that reinforce perceptions of threat, fear and cultural incompatibility. A priority should be to develop, test and pilot effective communications that resonate with these audiences, helping humanise Muslim fellow citizens and shift perceptions of Muslims as a homogenous bloc and existential threat.” [p12]

6. Target efforts at those whose attitudes can be shifted.

[...] There are also significant gains to be made by engaging the third of society that is broadly neutral, to strengthen condemnation of hate and broaden ‘live and let live’ respect in ways that make sense to the median citizen.” [p12]

7. Navigating political polarisation.

“There is an increasing risk that heightened polarisation creates contrasting, politicised social norms within progressive and conservative blocs and parties. Political parties that question the need for the new government definition on anti-Muslim hostility can still play a constructive role. Policy critique must be paired with a clear commitment to recognising Muslims as equal citizens and setting firm boundaries against hateful attitudes among party members and/or office-holders.” [p12]

8. Understanding intergroup attitudes and challenges.

“In a multi-ethnic, multi-faith Britain it will be important to understand the unique characteristics and drivers of hostility across a range of communities. There has been a significant commitment among civic and faith leaders from Muslim and Jewish communities to maintain relationships. Yet tackling anti-Muslim prejudice also offers an opportunity to build solidarity across South Asian communities and citizens in the UK, where there are currently weaker networks of engagement.” [p12]

For me, possibly the starkest findings are those around potential violent clashes:

“Most Muslims expect increased tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims over the next five years (66%), as do most members of the UK public (59%).

We then asked people whether they thought there could be outbreaks of violence between Muslims and non-Muslims in the next five years. Here, Muslim responses mirrored the general public findings even more closely, with 22% of Muslims (and 21% of the general public) thinking this was ‘very likely’ and 31% of both groups believing it ‘somewhat likely’. Muslims were more inclined to think violence is unlikely (31%) than the public as a whole (24%).

Far-right voices and memes on social media have warned of impending ‘civil war’ between Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK, and so we also asked all respondents how likely they felt this was to happen. Some 14% of Muslim respondents (and 12% of the general public) felt this was ‘very likely’ and a further 21% ‘somewhat likely’ (general public 20%) while 47% of Muslims, and 44% of the wider public, felt it was unlikely.” [p46]

This does point up the significance of far-right voices on social media – and also indicates areas where we can play a possible role in dealing with misinformation.

This is an important report.

In the accompanying webpage/press release³, the British Muslim Trust says:

“The report today is the first of a series of publications, drawing on research into public attitudes towards Muslims aiming to understand the extent and nature of prejudice and hostility so as to tackle it more effectively. The research also examines Muslim attitudes and experiences in Britain. Further research will include qualitative discussions with Muslim and non-Muslim respondents to dig deeper into underlying attitudes, stereotypes and the roots of prejudice and develop detailed recommendations.”

When the next stages are published, they should begin to identify detailed ways in which we can all tackle these issues.

Recommended.⁴

Counter-terrorism and human rights: from Prevent to proscription, a collection of essays rethinking the UK’s counter-terror infrastructure

This new collection⁵ of three essays from Amnesty International looks at what they argue is:

³ See: https://britishmuslimtrust.co.uk/research/understanding-anti-muslim-hostility?cb=20260615-01&utm_source=Equally+Ours+Newsletter+2025&utm_campaign=a75f1f22c8-Newsletter+February+11+2025_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_93cf2d2bcb-a75f1f22c8-120687778.

⁴ Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 18 Jun 2026.

“[...] the discriminatory nature of the UK’s counter-terrorism framework and the human rights violations it enables.” [p3]

Of particular interest and relevance here is “Prevent in schools: there is an alternative”⁶.

“The focus of Prevent falls disproportionately on children and young people. Between 2015-16 and 2023-24 in England and Wales, more than 25,000 children were referred to Prevent, including nearly 3,000 aged 10 or under and over 200 aged 3 or under [...]” [p9]

The essay also argues that:

“Prevent not only affects the children who are referred; it also shapes the wider learning environment. Amnesty International has shown that Prevent produces a ‘chilling effect’ on public debate, peaceful assembly and education [...] Research finds that many school leaders and teachers, fearing penalties for non-compliance, take a risk-averse approach and broaden what counts as ‘extremist’, generating suspicion around lawful activities and discouraging discussion of legitimate topics [...]”

Students report that schools adopt policies to avoid controversial issues, [...] making them reluctant to voice or debate difficult views. Parents – particularly in Muslim families – also caution children to avoid expressing opinions that could be misinterpreted as signs of ‘extremism’ [...]” [p10]

The essay proposes an alternative:

“Most Prevent referrals now concern people with complex vulnerabilities, such as mental ill health, social isolation or neurodivergence, rather than clear terrorism-related risks. In 2024-25, over two-thirds (68 per cent) of Prevent referrals involved cases where there was ‘no ideology’, a ‘fascination with extreme violence’, or ‘multiple ideologies (with no dominant ideology)’. This shift shows that Prevent’s purpose has become blurred and its remit stretched well beyond its original counter-terrorism aim. The commission [⁷] proposes a reconfigured model in which Prevent is one part of a broader, locally-led safeguarding framework capable of addressing diverse forms of vulnerability and violence. [p12]

To make this work, there needs to be a:

⁵ *Counter-terrorism and human rights: from Prevent to proscription, a collection of essays rethinking the UK’s counter-terror infrastructure*. Amnesty International, 2026, https://media.amnesty.org.uk/documents/RacialJusticeEssays_LORES_v4.pdf.

⁶ Hilary Pilkington and Tufyal Choudhury “Prevent in schools: there is an alternative”, pp9-14.

⁷ Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice, <https://binghamcentre.biicl.org/independent-commission-on-counter-terrorism-law-policy--and-practice-?cookieset=1&ts=1782744861>.

“[...] commitment at national and local government levels to investing in social cohesion as a strategic priority and to shoring up community, neighbourhood, youth and mental health services that help people live well together. Past experience shows that when countering ‘extremism’ and promoting cohesion are combined within Prevent, a sense of shared identity can be undermined as particular communities appear targeted or stigmatised. However, there is also evidence that the absence of properly funded and supported social cohesion policies since 2010 has contributed to the rise in ‘extremist’ views and lack of community resilience to them, allowing vulnerabilities to be exploited by groups that use social exclusion, racism and rights violations to divide society and justify violence.” [p13]

Useful background reading.⁸

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“Research and Background: Libraries and Family Hubs”

This is a new toolkit⁹ from the LGA:

“Exploring how libraries and Family Hubs can work together to create accessible, preventative and family-centred support systems, highlighting the unique role libraries play in improving outcomes for children, young people and families through trusted community-based services.”

The introduction states:

“This toolkit has been developed to support local authorities, library services and partner organisations to maximise the contribution libraries can make within Family Hub systems. It provides practical guidance, evidence, examples and tools to help areas build connected, preventative and family-centred services. It also recognises that while libraries offer a highly cost-effective platform for delivery, achieving the ambitions described in this toolkit may require additional investment to unlock the full value of libraries as strategic partners in supporting children, young people and families.

By working together across libraries, Family Hub teams, health, education and voluntary sector partners, local areas can create a more accessible, inclusive and coordinated system of support – one that meets families where they are, strengthens communities and helps children, young people and families thrive. Libraries are not simply venues for Family Hub activities; they are key partners in delivering a modern, preventative and relationship-based support system.”

⁸ Source: email from Amnesty International, 24 Jun 2026.

⁹ “Research and Background: Libraries and Family Hubs”. LGA, 2026, <https://www.local.gov.uk/research-and-background-libraries-and-family-hubs>.

The toolkit looks at, amongst other things:

- The Role of Libraries in the Family Hubs Agenda, eg by being a “universal access point”; providing help and navigation; supporting those who don’t engage with statutory services
- Libraries’ ability to be a Hub site and a satellite one (“More commonly, libraries operate as network or satellite sites within a broader Family Hub system. In this role, they extend the reach of the hub beyond a central building and into local communities.”)
- Libraries’ role in offering venues for a range of other agencies to deliver their provision ...
- Thereby “Extending Geographic Reach and Reducing Inequality”
- Through their everyday contacts with people, libraries “offer a unique opportunity to spot needs early”
- “Library membership opens the door to a wide range of benefits for children, young people and families, including access to books, literacy programmes, digital resources, learning opportunities and community support.”
- Supporting digital access and inclusion
- Community outreach and engagement: “Libraries play a critical role in community outreach and engagement within the Family Hubs model. Their deep roots in local communities, combined with their universal and accessible nature, position them as powerful platforms for reaching families who might otherwise remain disconnected from support.”
- Delivery of Early Years and Literacy Support.

The toolkit has a number of brief case study examples, eg auto-enrolment initiatives; Camden’s “Share and Read with Baby” packs¹⁰; and a link to Libraries Rising SparkSpace¹¹.

A helpful reminder of the key role that libraries can play – and how to strengthen it.¹²

Abbreviations and acronyms

LGA = Local Government Association

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¹⁰ See: <https://news.camden.gov.uk/newborns-in-camden-to-receive-their-first-library-card/>.

¹¹ See: <https://librariesrising.org.uk/what-we-do/sparkspace/>.

¹² Source: LinkedIn.