

Background and Context

On 7 July 2005, four bombs were detonated in central London - three on the underground and one on a London bus killing 56 people including the bombers and injuring many more, some serious. The bombs were attached to people who committed suicide. Three of the four suicide bombers lived in Leeds and had been students in the City.

How the Topic was Handled

- Following the bombings, media messages gave concerns to the Muslim community with a perception that all Muslims were potential suicide bombers. Muslims naturally felt victimised by this stance.
- Following the announcement that 3 of the perpetrators came from Leeds, there was an increase in tension. A mosque was firebombed in Armley along with some sporadic attacks on corner shops and people being sworn at. The street where it was thought that the bombs had been made was closed off for some time to allow the police to carry out forensic investigations. The community affected by this atrocity felt very fragile, under siege, as well as being in a state of shock that people they had known and seen regularly could have done such an atrocious act. The families felt shocked by their sons' actions.
- Youth workers and the Police engaged quickly with the community where the people had lived and with their families to offer support and prevent further racial retaliation. Other organisations also became involved in ensuring that the community did not break down, in particular the Local Authority.
- Ministers were kept fully informed of the situation on the ground and were able, because of this, to assess (with local advice) what the right timing for a visit to the area was. A very good working relationship existed with the local MP and the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH) representative: this made sure that Whitehall was fully updated and informed of the situation.
- The first month was the most hectic then things started to settle back to some form of normality.
- The Local Authority and the Police all worked overtime and the Hamara Centre (a Community Centre that is rooted in multi-faith community engagement) stayed open 24/7.

Government Visits

- Mark Carroll, Home Office, visited Leeds and Dewsbury on 2 August 2005 to find out first hand what was happening on the ground.
- Paul Goggins, Home Office Minister, visited Bradford on 23 August 2005, and Hazel Blears, Communities and Local Government Minister, visited Leeds on the 25 August 2005 for the "Big Conversation" around suicide bombers and the after effects.

Lessons Identified

- The need to trust the local community and to have frank and honest dialogues with the community including minority groups,
- A remembrance event helped to further bring the community together.
- Everyone working together for the same aim of restoring normality.
- Ongoing regular meetings with community groups and information sharing.
- Taking the community view on appropriate visits, events, etc.
- Delaying any Ministerial visit(s) until the time was right for both the community and the Minister.
- The media cannot be ignored. They can be a hindrance, especially the international media, but local media are key partners who will remain after the satellite trucks move away.

Contacts for Further Information

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