

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" - "VIOLENT EXTREMISM"

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION: Tuesday 18 November 2008 2000 - 2040

REPEAT: Sunday 23 November 2008 1700 - 1740

REPORTER: Amardeep Bassey

PRODUCER: David Lewis

EDITOR: David Ross

PROGRAMME NUMBER: 08VQ4277LH0

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

Transmission: Tuesday 18 November 2008

Repeat: Sunday 23 November 2008

Producer: David Lewis

Reporter: Amardeep Bassey

Editor: David Ross

BASSEY: The Government says the UK faces a severe and continuing threat from Al Qaida and associated groups. The security service believes there are currently two hundred Islamic terror cells operating in the country, involved in at least thirty active plots. In response, the authorities have developed a multi-million pound counter-terrorist strategy. Much has to do with strengthening policing, but millions are also going on local projects to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim community and make them more resilient to the extremist message.

BLEARS: We do face a very serious threat in this country and it is long term, and if we can stop particularly young people being drawn into extremism, then we've got a chance of reducing the threat to this country.

BASSEY: But at a grassroots level there is an emerging concern, which some say could even backfire on the Government.

SHAH JAHAN: This quite misguided central Government agenda has the potential to be completely counter-productive, to lead towards greater alienation and resentment as opposed to increasing the security of Britain.

BASSEY: Tonight, File on 4 examines how the strategy is and isn't working, and why it has provoked such a backlash from some elements of the very community it is trying to engage.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY WITH COMPUTER

JENVEY: I'm going to show you a file sharing website with thousands of books on it. It was advertised on closed forums as al-Ghuraba, which is a banned terrorist group in the UK, al-Ghuraba's library. There's books on all sorts of things from Jihad – is it permissible to kill prisoners? Is it permissible to carry out martyrdom operations?

BASSEY: Glen Jenvey is an investigator who has been monitoring extremist websites for years. He says a wealth of Jihadi information is already just a click away. But what's alarming him most is an emerging new generation of radical preachers. They are young, aggressive and sound very British.

JENVEY: I have noticed on the British front, in the last three months there's a whole new generation of websites. They are a new generation of hate speakers, but they've been educated by the main preachers of hate and they're British. They know exactly what to say and what to say on camera, because they know what will get them arrested and what will not get them arrested.

BASSEY: How easy is it to get access to these websites?

JENVEY: They want to attract new members, so it's not difficult to gain access.

ACTUALITY OF PREACHER

PREACHER: You know they try and pump multiculturalism in this country, in Britain. It can never work, brothers. The Notting Hill Carnival, yeah, you've got a bunch of Kuffar naked, dancing like animals on the streets, banging some drums.

PREACHER 2: One report was saying in order to deal with extremism amongst the Muslim community, we need to push interfaith among the Muslim community quite heavy. This interfaith is one of the most destructive ideas, it's so dangerous, and ... in Islam. Why? Because Muslims and the Kuffar, we cannot stand together.

JENVEY: The speakers are saying that Islam can't coexist with any other religion, and they are teaching racism and hatred. People need to understand that these websites are the British wing of Al-Qaida and they use them as newspapers, as a form of educating the hopeful new recruits and gaining support and sympathy. The idea is to attract new younger faces into the Jihadi movement within the UK.

BASSEY: There is growing evidence that the internet is playing a crucial role in radicalising young Muslims, and some of the Jihadis running the sites are based here in the UK. The world's most wanted so-called cyber-terrorist, Younes Tsouli, who went by the screen-name Terrorist007, was eventually tracked down to a flat in Shepherd's Bush in London. His cyber-grooming network spanned the globe and helped radicalise Britain's youngest terror convict, fifteen year old Hammad Munshi from Dewsbury. Last month Munshi was sentenced to two years after investigators analysed his computer and discovered Jihadi literature and bomb-making manuals. Dr Peter Neumann is director at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at London's Kings College.

NEUMANN: It's certainly true that the internet has come to play an increasingly important role. The internet makes it easier for people to find each other. If I'm a radical who has no links whatsoever to other radical groups, it is quite risky if I have to seek out these links in the real world. The internet makes it easier for people to seek out other people to link into networks, to engage in discussions with these people and so for all these reasons the internet can facilitate radicalisation and recruitment.

BASSEY: There is only so much the Government can do to stop the messages getting out. So the approach now is to build resistance in the community to counter the militants' warped view of Islam. In 2007, they launched a policy called PREVENT, also known as PVE - Preventing Violent Extremism. It's been backed by £70 million of public money paid directly to local authorities over three years to counteract the extremist message.

NEUMANN: It's about providing an alternative argument. The interesting thing is, one of the studies that came out two years ago showed that the degree to which people got excited about foreign policy was inversely related to their knowledge about foreign policy and that seems to suggest that if you provide more sophisticated pictures of some of these issues that are being used by extremists, the less likely people are actually to fall for them. And so I do think it is by providing complexity, shades of grey, making clear that a lot of these issues are not black and white. Preventing violent extremism is about making it clear to young Muslims that they are as much part of this society as everyone else and that you can be British and Muslim at the same time, that there is no conflict, and that if someone comes along and says you have to choose between being a good Muslim and being a good Brit, that's a false choice, you can be both at the same time.

MUSIC

MAN ON VIDEO: Hello team. I just thought you'd want to know about some information that we got in yesterday that I've been working on. One of our sources has heard some information about an extreme group ...

BASSEY: This is a PREVENT scheme in action. A group of Muslim teenagers sit in an Islamic education centre in Preston, watching a video about a fictitious terrorist plot.

MAN ON VIDEO: From speaking to the source we have now established that the extremist group is actually called True Path, not what we thought originally, and their leader is someone called Hassan. Now Hassan has been calling for violent extremist action against the Government outside a mosque. What worries me most is that apparently Hassan has purchased a large quantity of peroxide in the last few weeks. I'll leave you with that for now. If there's anything else you know, let me know.

BASSEY: The teenagers have been given an unusual task. They have assumed the role of counter terrorism officers. Encouraged by a facilitator, their job now is to consider how to make arrests, how to reassure the local community and whether or not to share certain sensitive intelligence data.

SOHAIL: Right okay, you're the police team that are investigating this potential threat. Your primary role is to protect the lives of people, okay? So think about ...

BASSEY: The man running the project is Counter Terrorism officer, Sergeant Ken Kirwan. He says it's important for the police to explain their role and garner support for what they do.

KIRWAN: When we are involved in counter terrorism arrests across the UK, sometimes we haven't got it right, and the impact, the negative impact that has on our communities can be quite significant and extremely long-lasting. There have been community concerns about, particularly after the arrests, you know, and people being released into the community and there has been no apology or communities have been disrupted and they have not been fully briefed as to why that is the case, and the length of time it takes for a matter to go to trial, and the whole issues of sub judice and what you can tell communities or not. These are real concerns that people do have.

SOHAIL: Now, the police team, what do you want from the community to help you in your investigation?

BOY: Information on suspects.

SOHAIL: Yes.

BOY: People to come forward and give evidence.

SOHAIL: Yes.

BOY: Cooperation.

SOHAIL: Okay.

BASSEY: The scenario builds up until a bomb goes off.

EXTRACT FROM VIDEO – BOMB BLAST

BASSEY: The youngsters now have to face managing a terrorist investigation alongside all the ricocheting tensions that a terrorist attack can generate.

BOY: Get the Muslim leaders, like Imams to condemn the act.

SOHAIL: Fantastic point. It's a collective approach ...

BASSEY: The project is called Act Now and is funded by PREVENT money paid to local authorities in Lancashire. The role-play exercise is staged at local colleges and community centres across the county. Sergeant Ken Kirwan says it is specifically designed to encourage an open discussion about the problems and sensitive issues faced by young British Muslims today.

KIRWAN: There is still huge concern over the UK's foreign policy, particularly as it relates to Iraq and Afghanistan and Palestine, and these issues come across time and time again when we are engaging with people. There is a general feeling that Muslims in the UK get a raw deal. And for a lot of young people, this is a real driver potentially for people to get involved in extremism. And there is not enough alternate voices or opportunities to debate these issues, so these perceptions, these views are largely left – or potentially left - unchallenged in our communities of Lancashire.

BASSEY: How qualified are the police in dealing with these grievances?

KIRWAN: Well clearly when it comes down to foreign policy the police are not geared up to sort of engage in the sort of political debate and that's really where having other partners who come in who can inform the debate, who can discuss these key issues are absolutely essential.

BASSEY: But as a counter-terrorist officer, he admits that the policy also has some vital intelligence value.

KIRWAN: The case of the 7th July 2005 always is in the back of my mind. There was information and intelligence within the communities of West Yorkshire regarding these individuals for quite a period of time before those terrible events on the 7th July that the community were aware of, but that information never came through to the police, it never came through to the security services, and the key question we have asked ever since then is why is that the case? The fundamental reasoning behind that really is that maybe we hadn't built up relationships with key members of our community, maybe we hadn't built up the trust and confidence where people could pass that information on. And I think communities defeating terrorism really involves a local response, it really does come down to people feeling trust and confidence at a local level.

BASSEY: The police are bullish about this initiative, but there are sensitivities among the other agencies involved. We've had to use extracts from a DVD because we weren't allowed to attend a live session at a local further education college.

ACTUALITY OF GAME OF POOL

BASSEY: However just a few miles up the road, we went to a local youth centre tucked away amid the sprawling terraced houses that make up the predominantly Muslim district of Deepdale in Preston. The teenagers there were less reticent.

Would you go to any police project, I mean, Preston are running a few projects where they're trying to bring young Muslims on board and let you ask them questions, etc, would you ever do that?

BOY: No, no.

BASSEY: Why not?

BOY: They won't listen to us. Even if we went to some of them things, yeah, they wouldn't take our voices on board anyway. It's just, they just do it to say that they're doing something about something.

BASSEY: One of the things that the police are trying to do now is they've got this thing called the Preventing Violent Extremism project, which is, as it says, trying to prevent young kids getting radicalised. Is there a problem round here with kids being radicalised?

BOY: I think that's the biggest joke. People don't want to know about terrorism round here. That's the least of our worries. We just want to live our life and I don't know why they're doing stuff like that. It's a joke really, that man. Because if somebody wanted to come up to you and they say, 'Oh, do you want to join Jihad?' obviously they want to die, don't they? It's a stupid thing.

BASSEY: It's not only kids on the streets who believe that the terror threat is being over-egged. Similar doubts also exist in the oak-panelled corridors of the House of Lords. Labour peer, Lord Nazir Ahmed.

AHMED: Most of the people that I see that are surrounding government ministers and departments are exaggerating the situation, who are frightening the ministers and their advisers by saying, you know, 'Here I see a problem.' It's politics of fear rather than politics of hope. It obviously creates anger amongst the majority because they are being made to look as fanatics and people who don't want to deal with their own problem.

BASSEY: We're told by the Government that we're living at a time when there's a very serious threat, a continued threat, plots are being exposed, we're being told that there's two thousand suspects being watched. Are you saying this is all a fantasy?

AHMED: Absolutely not. In fact, there is a real problem and we are deeply deeply concerned with that. Look, you don't need money to deal with the problem because everybody wants to deal with extremism, everybody wants to deal with terrorism. I've not come across anyone in mosques or committees who doesn't want to deal with terrorism and extremism within our society. The problem is that these people who take money want to do it in their own way and they don't have much say inside these institutions either.

BASSEY: The Minister responsible for implementing PREVENT at a local level is Hazel Blears, at the Department for Communities and Local Government. She rejects the criticism outright.

BLEARS: The country does face a pretty serious threat. It is a long term challenge for us and I think the reason that we're concentrating so much on PREVENT is because we need to build the resilience, particularly of young people, so they don't get drawn into this activity in the future.

BASSEY: We've been speaking to the Labour Peer, Lord Ahmed, and he says that the threat has been exaggerated.

BLEARS: Well I don't accept that for one moment. If you're going to tackle this you can't just arrest your way out of it. Security is important, but actually getting into those communities, where people are feeling confused, perhaps they've got a lack of identity, they're vulnerable to the extremist messages that are peddled at them, then getting into those people and being able to increase their resilience so they can say, 'I want no part of this extremism,' is complex, it's difficult, but it's absolutely essential.

BASSEY: Perhaps a mark of how essential this work was to Whitehall is the speed at which it was implemented. Within a month of the PREVENT policy being announced in February 2007, a pot of £6 million was made available to seventy local authorities to fund pilot projects. Among the first recipients of this Pathfinder fund, as it was called, Wycombe District Council. But how the council used the money quickly became a controversial and divisive topic. Mohammed Khaliel is a high-profile community worker in the area, who advises police on Islamic issues. He says he was surprised that he was overlooked.

KHALIEL: It appears that people that had been established, like myself, in the area, had a forty year track record of having lived and grown up and taking ownership for the area were excluded. In fact, they engaged with people that the community did not know who they were. And what appears to have happened here is that people were chosen, people were nurtured and then people were then suddenly setting up groups and applying for money to deal with community problems, when the wider community didn't

KHALIEL cont: know all their projects. All I think the community would ask is open and transparent engagement and it seems to be more of a no-go closed shop, and that's not the way to administer public funds.

BASSEY: The Chief Executive of Wycombe District Council, Karen Satterford, concedes that in the first wave of projects the council was given just three weeks to decide which ones to put forward.

SATTERFORD: Well we'd had bids from all organisations who were within the partner agencies. We had very little time obviously to open that up to the community. This was about getting resource in as quickly as possible into a very very sensitive situation.

BASSEY: Was that against normal policy of the council to not open the bidding up to local community groups who, you know, at the end of the day would have been involved in this at the front line?

SATTERFORD: These were very exceptional circumstances, and what we were doing was responding to what the Communities and Local Government Department was asking us to do, to get those bids in very quickly. So, no, we didn't have an opportunity to look into that in too much more detail.

BASSEY: By having such time pressures that you were working under, have you seen that it's led to some community groups and some members of the community feeling that there was a lack of transparency throughout that period?

SATTERFORD: It's always a case with grants rounds, where there are some people who are going to be unhappy, unfortunately, because there's never enough money to go round. But we were working as much as we could with the community through other fora, through the communications forum, through working with Imams to discuss with them what projects needed to be put together.

BASSEY: As the row escalated, local Conservative MP Paul Goodman became involved. He's been asking questions in the House of Commons about the way Pathfinder funds were allocated and is critical of what he says was undue haste.

GOODMAN: Because everything was done in such a rush and frankly in such a cockeyed way, it was all done far less effectively than it might have been. If you're trying in three weeks to create a programme that's going to last for a year, rather than having, say, three months to do it, you're going to be able to consult less, you're going to be able to tap less into the energies and the talents of the local community, you're not, I suspect, in most cases going to be able to run a fully transparent bidding process. It's a bit of a missed opportunity if the whole thing's shovelled through in three weeks. And the Government still doesn't really appear to have a very clear idea of the sort of person this programme is targeting and how effective it thinks the scheme's going to be.

BASSEY: Do you think will the project fulfil the aim of preventing violent extremism?

GOODMAN: My hunch is that some are good, some are not effective and that some are making no difference. So I think it's been a mixture so far of good, bad and indifferent.

BASSEY: High Wycombe wasn't the only place where Pathfinder projects sparked a fierce debate. In Birmingham, which was designated as an extremist hotspot, some local councillors complained about a lack of consultation and transparency. But it wasn't just about who was getting the funding. Questions were raised about the type of projects that were being patronised - whether an Asian Business Forum or Muslim photographic exhibition really had a role in preventing extremism. Among the sceptics is Mehmood Naqshbandi, an adviser to the Metropolitan Police on radical Islamists.

NAQSHBANDI: Hearsay tells me of cases, for example, in which primary school age children are taken on a coach trip to the zoo, and on returning from that coach trip they're given a pep talk on the coach before they go home, telling them to remember to be good citizens with a view that, somehow or other, in twenty years' time or more, this will make them think that they shouldn't become militants. Now clearly that's

NAQSHBANDI: pretty far-fetched and common sense suggests that that probably is not a good way to spend PVE money. Frankly local governments, by and large, haven't got the faintest idea where to spend the money effectively. To be perfectly frank not many people do have much of an idea.

BASSEY: Amid all the criticism and confusion, the first tentative assessment of the Pathfinder projects was compiled by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. The sixty page report was published only last week. Its author is Denis O Connor, the former Chief Constable of Surrey.

O'CONNOR: What I can tell you is that we've found that the bulk of our sample were more at the cohesion, helping everyone feel like they belong to the community than dealing with people who were potentially unhappy at the very least and on route to somewhere worse. We found, though, that when they experienced difficult things, for example, after the so-called airlines plot when that happened. After that, people tend to develop a harder edge, there's less of the coffee morning and more specific things about people who seem to be in danger of going into places we don't want them to go to.

BASSEY: Is it a case of local authorities literally have to wait for something to happen in their own back yard before they're going to tackle the hard end of preventing violent extremism?

O'CONNOR: Let's be realistic about this. It's very hard for people to come to terms with the idea that you've actually got people intent upon ultimately doing something terribly destructive. It's utterly alien to us. And I think the fundamental problem is a lot of people think that that's something that happens somewhere else. And if they don't have intelligence or an event that convinces them otherwise, they're reluctant to accept it or they adopt a low risk approach, which is let's gently find our way forward.

BASSEY: Even those working at the hard end of PREVENT have misgivings about the way the projects are being run.

QADIR: We understand that there are extremist recruiters out there looking out for individuals who are showing signs of frustration, anxiety, anger and they'll pick them off, one by one. It is like a battle basically against ideas and against individuals and groups.

BASSEY: From a busy and cramped office in east London, Hanif Qadir leads the Active Change Foundation. He knows all about the lure of the violent Jihadi. In 2002 Hanif was recruited for jihad by an Al Qaida operative in east London. He got as far as Pakistan before turning back at the Afghan border. It's given him the credentials to now work with vulnerable kids deemed to be on the brink of violent extremism.

QADIR: We work with approximately four or five hundred young people on a weekly basis here. The numbers of young people who are frustrated and who are at risk of seriously getting involved in radical extremism are growing. We've been referred cases of young people as young as eight and nine years old who are showing some serious signs of extremism. We're actually working with a youngster of that age now. This kid, he doesn't see anything wrong with regards to 7/7 bombings or terrorist activity. He wants to kill George Bush. We have to then find out where these messages are coming from and why they're coming that way. We understand by working with this young kid and his family that there are a lot of issues at home that are underlying. We need to address them as well as his misconceptions with regards to the West. The rhetoric that he's talking are coming from his relatives that are based in the Middle East, so this kid of nine years old talking the way he is is a very worrying factor.

BASSEY: Active Change got money under the PREVENT Pathfinder programme to develop a Young Muslim leaders project .The aim was to train streetwise young Muslims to stand up to the militants and instil them with the confidence and knowledge to counter the violent radicals.

QADIR: We are, for specific projects from the local authorities, developing young Muslim leaders, and that was to develop young people to be resilient towards violent extremist messages. We went on to select ten individuals who would be the young people that would stand up and challenge extremists' viewpoints. It's a fantastic

QADIR cont: concept. It was supposed to be a nine to ten month project. It ended up being six months because of the time it took to write the contracts and all that up. But you cannot have a result, you cannot create effective individuals in a matter of six months. It takes three months to get to know them, to get their trust.

BASSEY: But the way the project was designed didn't allow Hanif Qadir to continue working with the same group. When it came to the funding being renewed, he says he was told by his local council, Waltham Forest, that he had to start afresh - with a completely new set of potential leaders.

QADIR: To me that was a downer. It is counterproductive, it is a waste of resources. Last year's money has just gone to waste, as far as I'm concerned. We need to be able to deliver our project as we see fit because we are best suited to deliver that. We know what is on the ground. We understand the community dynamics. We understand the nature of the recruiter. We understand the nature of the terrorist and we understand the hearts and minds of young people, so we are best suited to tackle that problem. I feel that this is a tokenistic gesture for the Muslim community. You want us develop young Muslim leaders but in actual fact you don't want them to do the job that the project is actually designed to do, and I find that hard to swallow to tell you the truth.

BASSEY: In a statement to File on 4, Waltham Forest Council said it had always been clear that the leadership training programmes it runs would involve a turnover in recruits:

READER IN STUDIO: We are very keen that young people who previously participated support the new group of young people. We see them as mentors and facilitators for the new programme. However, it is really important that we use our funding from Government effectively, and we asked both Active Change Foundation and the provider of the other programme for young leaders to recruit fifteen new young people each. This was clearly set out in our tender documents to all potential providers and was the minimum we felt was required to achieve an effective outcome and value for money.

BASSEY: Communities Minister, Hazel Blears, admits the Government is still on a learning curve, but insists that working through local authorities is the best approach to combat violent extremism.

BASSEY cont: One Muslim youth worker that we've spoken to, who works with vulnerable young Muslims at a grassroots level in East London, he tells us that his local authority has interfered in the way his project operates and this has undermined its effectiveness. I mean, do you think that local authorities really are qualified to take the lead in preventing violent extremism?

BLEARS: Yes I do. I'm absolutely convinced that you cannot tackle this simply from Whitehall. It's local authorities who know their communities far better than we do at the centre. If you were simply to bypass local authorities you would not be half as effective on this agenda. I'm not saying for one moment that the situation is perfect, we've got all the answers, everything's working out there. This is fairly new business, it's complex and it is difficult.

BASSEY: Across the PREVENT project, we've come across projects like the Asian Business Forum, projects that are tackling domestic violence. I mean, what do these kind of projects have to do with preventing violent extremism?

BLEARS: Well, if you look at domestic violence, then clearly that's an important subject on its own. But if, in the context of doing that work, you're also empowering Muslim women in their community then you are creating an extremely powerful force that can help us on this agenda. There's quite a lot of hard end work going on in local authorities, it's not all, you know, shall we get together and do a nice kind of fluffy project. This is difficult stuff but they're tackling it.

BASSEY: But it is the way local authorities may be asked to use their knowledge of their communities that is beginning to raise alarm bells with some Muslims. And it's led to the first open revolt.

ACTUALITY OF CHURCH BELLS

BASSEY: Reading is home to ten thousand Muslims and prides itself on its diverse communities and the absence of any inter-ethnic tensions. There is little sign of any extremist activity, and the only arrest in the town under terror legislation has been that of an alleged Nazi extremist earlier this month. However, because of its relatively

SHAH JAHAN cont: community. There is a big question mark over organisations now whether a lot of the organisations who previously did give good will to the Pathfinder work, if they will give similar goodwill to the PVE projects, because there's a feeling that our participation has been kind of taken for granted.

BASSEY: How representative is your group of the Muslim community in Reading?

SHAH JAHAN: It has support of about a dozen Muslim organisations and mosques as well as other prominent individuals, and is backed by a petition of a thousand signatures which were collected in only a two week period within the Muslim community, and that is quite a substantial statement considering there's only ten thousand Muslims within Reading. I think it's been quite an achievement to bring lots of different people together. It should show that, you know, really the gravity of the concern actually.

BASSEY: Reading Council wouldn't be interviewed, but a statement stressed the success of PVE projects in the area. It said that money had been allocated by the Government according to set criteria, and went on:

READER IN STUDIO: It is essential that the members of the community engage with the process as this is an excellent opportunity to use Government funding to promote and support community projects in Reading and build on the trust, understanding and tolerance that already exists.

BASSEY: Communities Minister, Hazel Blears, also dismisses the concerns raised by Shah Jahan and his supporters.

In Reading we have heard from a group that has been specially set up to oppose the way PVE has been implemented, particularly this year after the Pathfinder year, and what really concerns them is the way that PVE, at a community level, ties in with some of the counter-terrorism work and how this could lead to sort of unfair targeting of people who are just becoming, as they put it, more Islamic or politically active.

BLEARS: If there's a group set up specifically to campaign against getting resources to address a problem in your community, then I should think most people would give them fairly short shrift.

BASSEY: They were certainly on board when the Pathfinder projects were introduced, but what has worried them is the way the PVE has developed into something much more complex, particularly the links between the projects on a ground level and counter-terrorism work.

BLEARS: Well clearly trying to prevent violent extremism is absolutely what we want to do here. That doesn't mean that you're saying that everybody you work with in the Muslim community is a potential terrorist. Far from it. What we're saying is that particularly young people and women can be a real force for good, and we want to increase the resilience of those young people to resist the violent extremists.

BASSEY: Neighbourhood mapping is just one element of the PREVENT strategy's contribution to intelligence gathering. The recent joint report by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary places great store in this role for local authorities. Indeed, it says they don't do enough and goes as far as to recommend that frontline council staff become involved in gathering raw intelligence data.

READER IN STUDIO: Some of the best local information may be gathered at neighbourhood level by the street cleaners, wardens and housing officers. This means creating an environment in which 'softer' intelligence about seemingly minor matters is routinely gathered and shared.

BASSEY: The man who helped write the report, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Denis O'Connor, says it makes perfect sense.

O'CONNOR: People who are on the streets, working on the streets, working around estates, they spot what's different from the norm. What they notice, those kind of guys, may to them not look that profound, but actually added to other information can be very significant. What we found in the study is though, they're not sure who to tell and how to tell that, which is why we think sharing information is so pivotal, right at the heart of all of this.

BASSEY: How qualified are, you know, frontline council staff in spotting a potential terrorist or a potential extremist, and in effect would they not be acting as a wing of the intelligence services?

O'CONNOR: I suppose if the mindset is let's spot people so that police can arrest them, then you'd be absolutely right. I think if the mindset is, some people may be becoming distressed about the world, they may be starting to adopt somebody else's ideas, ordinary people can spot that. The point of PREVENT is, let's recognise that and let's be prepared to challenge it and offer those kids or other people some other things to think about and do before we get down the line and they're fodder for terrorism.

BASSEY: Can you see how it might lead to further alienation of the Muslim community who already feel that they're being watched and under siege and under suspicion all the time?

O'CONNOR: I can, and of course that's why this is difficult. You have, potentially have a community that feels at times it's under siege, and if you approach this in a crass and insensitive manner you're very likely to breed that.

BASSEY: It's a difficult balancing act for Communities Minister, Hazel Blears. How to ensure that the need for intelligence on extremists doesn't end up defeating the broader aims of a strategy designed to win hearts and minds in the Muslim communities.

BLEARS: I think for anybody to caricature it as street cleaners picking up evidence that they then inform to the police, I just think is a total misrepresentation of anything that we're engaged on.

BASSEY: I mean, that particular scenario, you know, it's clearly mentioned in the Audit Commission report.

BLEARS: No, I wouldn't accept that. Clearly the Audit Commission report was talking about sharing information, sharing intelligence, making sure that local authorities have got a proper view of the problem that they might have in their area, and that's absolutely essential. But we're not talking here about a short term strategy in that way. We're talking about long term generational work.

BASSEY: But doesn't that kind of advice play into the fears of certain members of the community?

BLEARS: Well, I think that some people, for their own purposes, could portray it in that way. I think all that does is stoke up fear and mistrust and I really do believe 99% of people who are straightforward really do want us to tackle this, but you can't do it if you just deny that there's a problem.

SIGNATURE TUNE