

**FAILING OUR
COMMUNITIES:
A CASE STUDY APPROACH
TO UNDERSTANDING
PREVENT**

||| CAGE

Witness | Empower | Justice

Contents




3	Introduction
4	PREVENT interventions at CAGE events
8	PREVENT practice in London
14	Conclusions
15	Endnotes

© Copyright 2015 CAGE Advocacy UK Ltd
All rights reserved.

Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes.

CAGE is an independent advocacy organisation working to empower communities impacted by the War on Terror policies worldwide. The organisation highlights and campaigns against such policies in hope to achieve a world free from oppression and injustice.

CAGE Advocacy UK Ltd
Premier Business Centre
47-49 Park Royal Road
London
NW10 7LQ

 +44 (0) 207 377 6700
 info@cageuk.org
 www.cageuk.org

Introduction

THE stated objective of the UK's official counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) is to reduce the risk of terrorism to the United Kingdom and its interests at home and abroad. The CONTEST strategy is split into four strands – PURSUE, PREVENT, PROTECT and PREPARE. The focus of this report is on the second component of the CONTEST strategy – PREVENT. The stated objective of PREVENT is, “...to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.”

PREVENT was created in the aftermath of the July 2005 London bombings. PREVENT has been revised a number of times since its inception, firstly in 2011 and again in 2013. The current manifestation of PREVENT has been adopted on a statutory basis under the newly passed Counter-Terrorism and Security Act [2015]. CAGE deems the tenth anniversary of the 7/7 bombings as a time for reflection, to learn from the mistakes of the past. CAGE calls for a comprehensive change to counter-terrorism policy in the UK.

CAGE believes that the PREVENT strategy is based on a flawed evidential basis, which criminalises innocent and democratic political activism and dissent, perpetuates political grievances, and as a consequence, contributes to the radicalisation process rather than counters it. It is CAGE's belief that PREVENT strategy makes the UK less safe from the threat of terrorism.

CAGE recognises that these charges are very serious. Therefore, in this report, it provides real life cases of organisations and individuals that have been targeted under PREVENT. This is to help contextualise how the UK is becoming less safe from the threat of terrorism and how PREVENT contributes to a process of disenfranchisement, potentially leading to radicalisation. However, before doing so, it is important to provide a brief overview of CAGE's background and to share the instances in which CAGE and other civil society organisations have been unfairly targeted through PREVENT.

PREVENT interventions at CAGE events

Brief background to CAGE

CAGE is an independent advocacy organisation working to empower communities impacted by the War on Terror. The organisation highlights and campaigns against state policies, striving for a world free from oppression and injustice.

CAGE (originally CagePrisoners) has been campaigning against the War on Terror for more than a decade. Its work has focussed on working with survivors of abuse and mistreatment across the globe. Its website is one of the leading resources documenting the abuse of due process and the erosion of the rule of law in the context of the War on Terror. CAGE has delivered more than 750 lectures across the UK, produced cutting edge reports and provided a voice to survivors of the War on Terror through its media work.

The commitment of CAGE to highlight how to reduce the threat levels to the UK is evidenced through its acceptance of the actions taken by the authorities relating to the Airline Bomb Plot of 2007 and Operation Crevice in 2004. In both instances, the accused were arrested after thorough police inquiries had concluded. CAGE had no reason to intervene in these cases as they considered the authorities to have conducted their operations in an appropriate manner. Contrary to what is often claimed, CAGE is not simply against the police and security authorities. Instead, CAGE advocates against those policies that it feels criminalise,

marginalise and perpetuate feelings of insecurity, grievance and fear.

PREVENT impact on CAGE and others

The history of CAGE's knowledge of PREVENT interference relates to events that it has organised, but which have been attempted to be disrupted as well as through its own case work relating to complains and request for assistance by individuals and organisations.

CAGE is unaware if there are any internal PREVENT guidance documents on CAGE that may suggest there is any particular position against the organisation. CAGE has written to the police superintendent's office and have been informed that there is no formal policy of this sort in place. However, the action of the PREVENT officers seems to be out of sync with their practice, and hence questionable.

CAGE now evidences the challenges it has directly faced through PREVENT by referring to two examples of attempts to disrupt its events. These two examples help contextualise how the PREVENT programme is used against other organisations and charities too.

CAGE Water Lily event disrupted

On 26 July 2010, CAGE was contacted by Mr Farooq, the centre manager for the Water Lilly venue in East London. He explained that he would have to cancel CAGE's booking due to an intervention by PREVENT

officers. CAGE explained that they had a contract with the venue and would not be willing to change venues, particularly as they were only days away from the event. Mr Farooq explained that the police took issue with CAGE's selected speakers. When CAGE pressed for information on which speaker, Mr Farooq was unaware. CAGE's position was that because none of the selected speakers had ever been formally accused of having committed any criminal offences, they would not be willing to change their speaker list.

The venue was adamant that the only way the event could continue was if the police vetted the speaker list. This was unacceptable for CAGE in light of their position and commitment to the ideas of free speech and free expression. CAGE does not believe the police have the right to interfere with its events based on their perceptions of individuals or groups, unless an act of criminality is taking place. What was of particular concern to CAGE was that the police officer who had contacted the Water Lilly Centre had suggested that the venue would suffer reputational damage with the local council if CAGE were permitted to continue with the event. CAGE considers this to be a subtle threat that was made against the venue. The venue stated that whilst they supported CAGE's important contribution to human rights work, they did not want to damage their reputation and would only permit the event to proceed at a higher financial cost in order to compensate and mitigate for potential financial and reputational damage.

CAGE Karibou Centre event disrupted

The attempted disruption of CAGE's event was repeated two years later. CAGE had organised an event at the Karibou Centre in Brixton with a range of reputable and international speakers on the topic of isolation in detention. The event was scheduled for 18 October 2012 at 1800 hours. Three hours before the start of the event, however, Ms Elaine, the venue manager for the centre, contacted CAGE and stated that a police officer by the name of Ian Kershaw had advised her that it would be in the best interest of the venue to cancel the event. Officer Kershaw allegedly stated that the event was 'contentious'. Despite this interference, however, CAGE successfully persuaded the venue to allow the event to proceed on the basis that they would hire SIA approved security staff to ensure the safety of the participants. According to Ms Elaine, officer Kershaw made the following two points:

- "1. Do you know if you continue with this booking the relationship with the Local Authority will be affected?"*
- 2. If the media found out it will be negative publicity for the centre."*²

Based on the evidence gathered from these incidents, and instances of other events that have been reported to CAGE by other organisations, it appears as if PREVENT has taken upon itself to 'warn' venues they will suffer reputational damage by allowing CAGE a platform. However, there has been no specific sanction against CAGE. Neither has

there been any formal allegation put to CAGE and neither has there been a process by which CAGE has been engaged in dialogue with any police officer or authority.

CAGE emailed Chief Superintendent Matt Bell at the Metropolitan Police in order to question the actions of Officer Kershaw, and his role in attempting to disrupt our event. On 20 November 2012, CAGE received a response by Superintendent Operations for Lambeth Borough, Andy Howe. The email contained the following explanations for the actions of officer Kershaw:

"Ian Kershaw is the Prevent Engagement Officer for Lambeth and was visiting the venue having discovered that your event was taking place there. The main reason behind the visit was to ensure that the venue was fit for purpose and that the staff were aware of the nature of your event

As detailed above, there was no hidden agenda and he had no pre-conceived intention to either disrupt or prevent your event taking place.

There was no intention to disrupt the event he was purely ensuring that the venue was suitable and the owners were fully sighted on the nature of the event.

*There is absolutely no intention to disrupt any events or activities undertaken by 'Cage Prisoners'. The police have no powers to prevent such events taking place and nor would we want to interfere with your fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression."*³

The email from Andy Howe suggests that PREVENT officers do not have the power to shut down events. However, this neglects the fact that PREVENT officers cite reputational and financial risks and therefore aim to influence venues through fear. Groups such as the Muslim Research and Development Foundation (MRDF), Cordoba Foundation, Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA), Helping Households Under Great Stress (HHUGS), Tayyibun Institute and others have provided CAGE with examples of how they have been affected by attempted disruption in similar ways by PREVENT officers.

The ways in which CAGE has been targeted by PREVENT officers suggests that the UK government is not willing to accept that CAGE are an organisation that have credibility amongst Muslim individuals and communities, and work tirelessly to challenge political and ideological factors which contribute to radicalisation and terrorism. It also suggests that the UK government perceives organisations such as CAGE to be a part of the problem of radicalisation and terrorism rather than the solution. It is CAGE's belief that this is an unfair and anti-democratic perception, which must be addressed to ensure that CAGE can continue its vital work in engaging with, and challenging ideas put forward by, violent individuals and groups for the purpose of addressing the causes of radicalisation and terrorism.

The current approach being adopted by the UK government hinders CAGE's empowerment



The objective behind including these cases is to show how PREVENT is adversely affecting political activism and dissent, and securitising civic activity and settings.

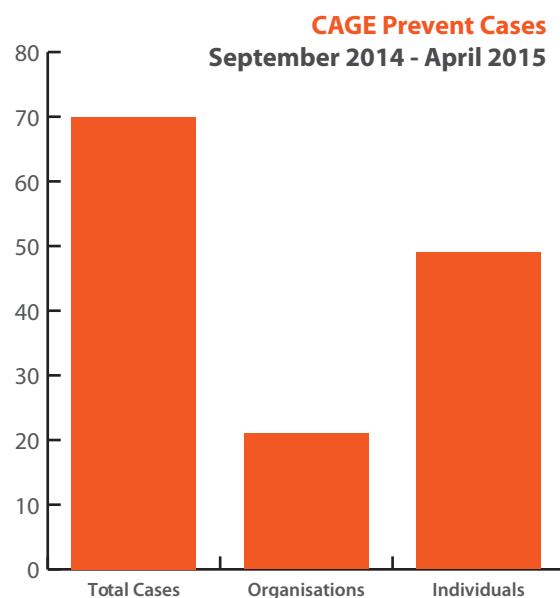
efforts, and thereby sustains and increases the risk of radicalisation and terrorism. This point is now analysed in reference to a number of cases in which PREVENT has been targeted at individuals in different settings, including health, education, social services, the family and social media. The objective behind including these cases is to show how PREVENT is adversely affecting political activism and dissent, and securitising civic activity and settings. Such actions, CAGE believes, increase the risk of radicalisation and terrorism.

PREVENT practice in London

FOR the last five years, CAGE has been receiving a constant stream of reports regarding the actions of PREVENT officers, and since September 2014 alone, CAGE has received almost 60 complaints relating to the actions of PREVENT officers. Key among the complaints is the lack of transparency and inability to challenge the assumptions that are made by the PREVENT officers. The underlying assumption that is built into every case CAGE has seen is that the only way for individuals or organisations to 'prove' they are not 'presenting a risk' or 'at risk', is by engaging with PREVENT. For those at the receiving end, this subverts the criminal justice system, or perhaps what should be referred to as the 'pre-criminal space'. In such an arena, individuals and groups involved in expressing legitimate and democratically compliant ideas are being compelled to prove their innocence.

CAGE believes that this form of action undertaken through PREVENT is highly damaging insofar as it creates a climate of mistrust, suspicion and fear. In essence, CAGE believes that attempts to close down and disrupt lawful and democratically compliant events reinforce and create grievances and therefore facilitate radicalisation.

Before illustrating key cases, the following data exemplifies the number of cases that CAGE has monitored, facilitated legal assistance and ensured that due process is upheld across the PREVENT landscape in the UK – this represents a timescale between September 2014 to April 2015:



CAGE has documented and witnessed several cases across a spectrum of sectors, and a few of them are illustrated in the case digest overview below. Among the sectors cited, CAGE has noted that there are new emerging areas within the public sector that are being affected by the PREVENT duty, namely, the social services. The PREVENT cases are on the increase, and CAGE is concerned that those tasked with the PREVENT duty are referring cases without adequate training and ill-define guidance which is equating to highly questionable cases.

CAGE now presents some exemplar cases from various public bodies who are required to implement the PREVENT strategy. It is also important to note that due to concerns over

confidentiality and legitimate fears our clients have around their own safety, CAGE have removed details which reveal the identities of individuals.

The National Health Service (NHS)

Case Study One – IM

A Muslim sixth form student went to his GP because of a medical problem with his leg. While showing his problem to the GP, he was suddenly asked for his opinions on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Middle Eastern conflicts more generally. The reasons behind the GP's line of questioning remain unclear. IM told CAGE how this encounter made him feel:

"I felt as if my doctor was acting like some kind of spy for the government. I know a little bit about the way all of this PREVENT stuff works, and honestly believed that my doctor was fishing for some information about me to pass on to someone else."

IM's case clearly illustrates how individuals are unfairly targeted and challenged on their political ideas and views based on their ethnic and/or religious background and appearance. This can have a damaging impact on the individual and can in fact contribute to an individual's radicalisation. It can do so in two ways. Firstly, it can make the individual lose trust in core civic services and create a friction between their Muslim and British identities, thereby making them feel like outsider. Secondly, it can make the individuals feel targeted and victimised because of their Islamic and racial identities, thereby

facilitating the creation (or perpetuation of existing) grievances.

Case Study Two – SB

SB is a Muslim woman who took a year off from work as an admin officer at an NHS hospital in London on medical grounds. During her time away, SB became more devout and began practicing her faith. She also began wearing the headscarf (*hijab*). On her return to work, there were accusations made by senior management that SB had mental health issues because she was now more devout and was adhering to her faith. PREVENT officers subsequently visited her in the work place and asked her for her view on politics, terrorism and religion, and expressed an interest in her Facebook profile. SB's parents were also questioned on the state of her mental health. Eventually, the PREVENT officers issued a report to NHS senior management explaining that SB had mental health problems, though mental health specialists later denied this claim. The whole experience of having her faith questioned and scrutinised made SB feel violated. It is worth citing her words at length:

"I feel that the visit to my professional place of work is a violation of my privacy which is unacceptable when I could have been contacted either by phone, in writing or in person. Work should not have been an option, definitely not a first option."

My second complaint is that once I went home I looked at all my statuses on Facebook and could not find one status that incited or encouraged illegal behaviour."

Most of my posts either related to my children or would ask everyone to pray for the people of Syria and elsewhere in the Muslim World where there is turmoil.

I am rather perplexed to say the least, as to:

1. Why I was visited at my place of work as a first option

2. And for what reason as I can see nothing on my page being of concern or inciting illegal behaviour.

I am a law-abiding citizen and I feel that my rights are being violated and that I am being discriminated against due to my faith. It is already made difficult for me to adorn Muslim attire due to fear of being labelled and attacked in public by people who have a phobia of Islam and Muslims.”

It seems clear that the practice and outward exercise of her faith through the taking up of the *hijab* was being used by SB’s senior colleagues to indicate radicalisation. This is despite seminal academic research by Marc Sageman, for example, showing that there is no correlation between religiosity and terrorism⁴. The initiation of highly intrusive questioning of SB and her family by PREVENT officers was therefore based on ill-informed evidential grounds. The consequence of such an approach is highly damaging. Firstly, suspecting somebody because of their faith-identity can create a feeling of isolation and victimisation, which causes them to close-off and draw-inward. This point was vividly made by Professor Ted Cante at a Prevent Parliamentary Select Committee hearing as early as

2010.⁵ Secondly, it can make them internalise the negative words and ideas being associated with them, which can create a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’. In such a case, an individual becomes more likely to become what they are constantly being accused of – radicalised. CAGE strongly believes that any action taken by the authorities based on racial and/or religious profiling serves to undermine community relations and trust. CAGE strongly urges security and police authorities to therefore reconsider their approach on such matters.

Social Services

Case Study Three – AA

AA was referred to social services by his secondary school because he was perceived to be on the path to becoming radicalised. In one of his Home Economic classes, the teacher requested all students to bring in meat or poultry, but AA said to his teacher in front of the class, “*but government is banning halal meat!*” The teacher questioned why, and AA replied, “*...because government hates Muslims*”. Additionally, AA would frequently turn up late for registration at school in the mornings, and when questioned by the teacher, he replied, “*because of morning prayer*”. The mother said to CAGE that AA had lied to his teacher. Morning prayers are much earlier in the day, and the real reason for going to school late was connected to him being bullied. AA did not, however, want the teacher to know about this because he feared the bullying would become more severe. The school



CAGE strongly believes that any action taken by the authorities based on racial and/or religious profiling serves to undermine community relations and trust.

believes that AA is on the path to being radicalised. Social services have therefore been contacted by the school though no contact has yet been made by them. In the meantime, AA has been transferred to an Islamic school in Kent, though the family planned this before the school had made the referral to social services. CAGE is currently involved in providing advice and support to AA's family on this on-going matter.

What AA's case reveals is that his politically held views, rather than being challenged by the teacher in the classroom were used to infer radicalisation, and led to his referral to an external agency. Also, the fact that AA was encountering difficulties at school through bullying suggests that his ideas and views may have been influenced by these difficulties. It is therefore critical that already existing mechanisms are used to support students to ensure their issues, grievances and ideas are addressed internally rather than escalated to external agencies. Schools have a duty of care to their students, and it is important that this duty of care does not entail the reporting of an individual to an external agency without reasonable cause. Schools and educational institutions deal with student violence and fighting, for example, without resorting matters to external agencies such as the police. CAGE believes that non-securitised and internal measures should be used in all such cases, without discrimination. Failing to engage students internally, and referring them to external agencies, as happened in the case of AA, increases the likelihood that they will move into those spaces, particularly online, in a bid to make

their ideas and views heard. In instances such as this, it is more likely that an individual will become radicalised without hindrance.

Social Media

Case Study Four – DF

DF, a 22 year old law student, was found guilty of possessing a copy of Inspire magazine on her USB flash drive. PREVENT officers approached DF's family home and sought to speak with her mother, and explained that they were concerned about her views based on four YouTube clips uploaded under the account 'east****slima', which she controlled. The PREVENT officers attempted to recruit her as an advocate against extremism in the context of community led projects. DF's lawyers liaised with PREVENT officers and soon realised that authorities did not wish to prosecute her for possessing the videos. DF's solicitor advised her that PREVENT was voluntary, and the PREVENT officer in question would not be making contact anymore. However, the same PREVENT officer returned with a police officer and interpreter with a view to speak with the mother of DF. This is a common trend that CAGE has detected in a number of different PREVENT cases. On arrival, the PREVENT officer stated that because DF was perceived to be an "extremist", they were worried about her influence on her younger brother, who is eleven years old. Soon after this visit, however, DF was arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000, her home was raided and several items were seized, including a USB flash drive containing a copy



CAGE believes that this is a wholly inappropriate way of stopping individuals from being radicalised, and is likely to have the completely opposite effect since it creates an impression that an individual has a choice to participate in PREVENT, though not consenting to the program leads to a terrorist prosecution.

of Al-Qaeda's Inspire magazine and several YouTube clips. On 17 March 2015, it was held that DF had contravened section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

DF's case reveals that there was no evidence of terrorist intent or criminal wrongdoing; a point supported by the fact that PREVENT officers had wanted her to work on de-radicalisation projects at the community level, yet she was still prosecuted. Her case also illustrates that PREVENT is being inappropriately used to collect intelligence on an individual, and then the individual, if they disagree to being mentored or to working in partnership with PREVENT, is then prosecuted for terrorism offences. CAGE believes that this is a wholly inappropriate way of stopping individuals from being radicalised, and is likely to have the completely opposite effect since it creates an impression that an individual has a choice to participate in PREVENT, but not consenting to do so leads to a terrorist prosecution. Such cases are very likely to create feelings of criminalisation and unfairness in the targeted individual, and their networks, and will reinforce and perpetuate a feeling of grievance and victimisation.

Education

Case Study Five - AU

AU is a 14 year old teenager, and currently studying in year nine in a mixed state school. AU is a devout Muslim, and regularly attends his local mosque, and takes a proactive approach in increasing his

religious spirituality. Although AU is the youngest in his family, his eldest sisters and parents see him as an inspiration because of his attempts to increase his religious practices. AU's academic achievements are impressive, and he is a good student. However, in March 2015, the school referred AU to a PREVENT officer, without the consent of his parents or guardian. Concerned to learn about the facts, AU's sister contacted the school and asked for a formal meeting. She was intensely angered by the situation, and could not comprehend how not taking part in music lessons warranted the school in contacting PREVENT. In the meeting between AU's sister and school teacher, it was made clear that the only grounds for referring the case to PREVENT was due to AU not proactively participating in music lessons. It is clear that AU deems there to be a tension with music and his interpretation of Islam, hence he does not wish to partake in music lessons. AU's case illustrates how there is no real ground for referring an individual to PREVENT. It must also be questioned on what evidential basis not engaging in a music lesson is a marker for radicalisation/ extremism. The fact that no consent was sought from AU's parents or guardian in referring him to PREVENT – even during his mandatory schooling hours – illustrates how PREVENT is operating under the radar and without the appropriate checks and balances. This is a common trend that CAGE has observed in other cases too and suggests that there may well be several cases across London where parents have no knowledge that their children are being questioned by PREVENT personnel.



THE PREVENT STRATEGY: A CRADLE TO GRAVE POLICE STATE

Read CAGE's new report, PREVENT: a cradle to grave police-state. The report takes a comprehensive look at the government's counter-terrorism policy, PREVENT and reveals a disturbing and wide-ranging its implementation is. [Read Now](#)

LATEST ARTICLES

Is there a plot to shut down CAGE?

CAGE has been under sustained pressure over the last few months since it's business bank has been closed down. Our work continues to grow in strength, but without your help we can't reach that strength, but

PRESS RELEASES

[CLICK THROUGH TO READ THE LATEST PRESS RELEASES](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Conclusions

PREVENT was devised as a response to the 7/7 bombings. PREVENT is a programme that aims to stop individuals from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. However, the methods and approaches being used by PREVENT officers in attempting to implement this policy seem to be having a damaging and counterproductive impact. CAGE believes they will do very little to tackle radicalisation and the threat of terrorism, and will, in fact, potentially radicalise individuals and perpetuate the threat.

Discussion, debate and ideas which are alternative to accepted societal norms, need to be had in public spaces, and without interference from security and police bodies unless criminal offences are taking place or incitement to murder/hatred. This will ensure those individuals with non-mainstream ideas and views can face organic and legitimate challenge/scrutiny by those organisations and individuals who have the appropriate knowledge and ability to do so. CAGE believes it is uniquely placed to do this and therefore strongly urges police and security authorities to refrain from attempting to disrupt its entirely democratic and lawful activities.

Terrorism and political violence is accepted as being a form of political action that is used largely in those societies that are closed, restricted and repressive. In such societies, individuals feel their attempts to bring about a desirable change through the existing political system will most likely be met by fierce, coercive and forceful action by the authorities.

CAGE therefore believes that it is critical for the UK to refrain from closing down and repressing the exchange of ideas and views in public spaces. If not, there is an increased chance that individuals will attend hidden venues – online and offline - to seek answers to their questions and find support for their views. In such instances, it is more likely that they will become radicalised because nobody will be able to challenge these individuals or their ideas. CAGE believes that closing down discussion, debate and alternative ideas in public spaces therefore increases the risk of radicalisation and makes the UK less safe from the threat of terrorism.

Many of the methods being used under the PREVENT programme are based on highly dubious and questionable evidence. For example, in the above case studies, the non-desire of AU to attend musical lessons, AA's comments about the UK government disliking Muslims and SB's taking up of the headscarf are not appropriate grounds for making referrals to PREVENT. Such actions are likely to create or perpetuate existing grievances, and are very likely to make individuals feel demonised, targeted and victimised. This increases the likelihood of them internalising the negative words and ideas being associated with them, which can create a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. In such a case, the person may well become what they are constantly being accused of – radicalised.

Finally, CAGE is concerned with the lack of transparency surrounding PREVENT as well as the strategy's unaccountability. There are no



CAGE believes that closing down discussion, debate and alternative ideas in public spaces therefore increases the risk of radicalisation and makes the UK less safe from the threat of terrorism.

formal processes for challenging assumptions of the PREVENT programme, and there is no formal way of redressing highly discriminatory and unfair practices of PREVENT officers. It is the very foundational conceptions of 'radicalisation' and 'deradicalisation' that must be rethought if threat levels are ever to be reduced in the UK. By continuing on the current path of PREVENT, with its workings not open to public scrutiny, we risk failing to the very communities we wish to reach.

ENDNOTES

1. Home Office, *Prevent Strategy*, HM Government, 2011
2. Note of conversation between Jilu Miah, CagePrisoners operations manager and Elaine, venue manager for the Karibou Centre, 18/10/2012
3. Email communication: Andy Howe, Superintendent Operations, Lambeth Borough to Muhammad Rabbani, Managing Director, CagePrisoners, 20/11/2012
4. See Marc Sageman (2004) *Understanding Terror Networks* [University of Pennsylvania Press]
5. House of Commons (2010) 'Preventing Violent Extremism', Sixth Report of Session 2009-10, *Communities and Local Government*, 30 March 2010. See page 21

 +44 (0) 207 377 6700
 info@cageuk.org
 www.cageuk.org

 **CAGE**

Witness | Empower | Justice