

Integration and Community Cohesion

Purpose

As background to the discussion.

Summary

In July last year Louise Casey was tasked by the Prime Minister with conducting a review of how to boost opportunity and integration as part of the Government's strategy to address extremism. An interim report setting out initial findings is due to be published in early 2016. This session gives an opportunity for councillors to make suggestions and raise questions or issues which particularly affect local government, so Louise Casey can take them into account in completing her review and making any recommendations to the Government. A biography of the speaker is attached at **Appendix A**.

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the presentation and raise issues from a local government perspective.

Action

Officers will take forward actions identified.

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Background

1. On 20 July 2015 the Prime Minister explained how the Government would address the threat from extremism. In his speech the Prime Minister outlined the four pillars of the Government's Counter Extremism Strategy. The fourth strand in the Strategy is designed to build a more cohesive society, so more people feel a part of it, and are therefore less vulnerable to extremism.
2. Among the issues that the Prime Minister indicated this strand would seek to address were the isolation of some individuals and communities, increasing the opportunities available in some parts of the country, addressing the barriers created by a lack of proficiency in English, and how greater numbers of women from ethnic minorities could be supported into the workforce.
3. To assist in identifying a range of programmes and interventions to boost opportunity and integration, the Prime Minister announced Louise Casey had been asked to carry out a review of what could be done. In particular he said the review would look at a number of issues including how the Government can ensure people learn English, how employment opportunities could be boosted, and how state agencies can work with communities to promote integration.
4. Since the Prime Minister's announcement Louise Casey has travelled around the country to hear views from a wide range of communities on the issues of isolation and deprivation. In December she wrote to local authority chief executives and the LGA, highlighting the important role local government has to play in this agenda and seeking views on what councils could do to tackle isolation and segregation, and increase integration and cohesion.
5. An interim report from the review is due to be published early in 2016. It will inform the development of a new wider Cohesive Communities Programme in 2016. This will support local interventions that improve integration and extend opportunity in the communities that most need it. In the Spending Review announcement the Government said that current levels of funding for community integration programmes would be maintained, but would be targeted to support the recommendations of the review.

The LGA's work

6. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board heard from the review team in December, and sent a submission to the review in January. The submission outlined councils' work to promote integration, boost opportunities and tackle radicalisation. It also raised a range of other related issues including the role of councils in boosting economic growth; the need to integrate work across Whitehall on Prevent, counter-extremism and integration; and better information sharing by the police and security services with councils.
7. Around the wider Prevent and counter-extremism agenda we are in discussion with the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government to develop a comprehensive support package for councils, and we have published case studies showing how councils are engaging with their communities about the threat of radicalisation.

Appendix A

Louise Casey CB



In July 2015, Louise was appointed by the Prime Minister to carry out a review into how we can boost opportunity and integration in the most isolated and deprived communities. The review is set in the context of the Government's strategy on countering extremism and building more cohesive communities.

In September 2014, Louise was appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, to conduct an independent inspection of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council following Professor Jay's Inquiry into child sexual exploitation. The Report and wider recommendations were submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2015.

From 2011 to August 2015 Louise Casey was the Director General of the Troubled Families programme at the Department of Communities and Local Government. She worked to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment to turn around the lives of 120,000 of the country's most troubled families.

In 2009, Louise was the first independent Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses, acting to promote the interests of victims and witnesses in Whitehall, the Criminal Justice System and beyond.

In 2008, Louise was Director General in the Home Office, heading up the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Group. Prior to that, she carried out an independent review from the Cabinet Office which took a detailed look at the public's view on crime and how to engage them in tackling it.

In 2005, Louise was appointed as the head of the cross-government Respect Task Force which worked to tackle anti-social behaviour by getting to its causes through programmes such as parenting and intervention and support for problematic families. Before that, she was the Director of the Home Office's Anti-social Behaviour Unit.

Louise also led the successful strategy to reduce the number of people sleeping rough and established the Homelessness Directorate in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Between 1992 and 1999, Louise was Deputy Director of Homelessness Charity Shelter and, prior to that, held a number of posts in the social welfare sector.

Louise was awarded the Companion of the Order of Bath (CB) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, 2008.