

PRESS RELEASE

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Subject: Communities Together event

Communities Together

On Wednesday, 23rd November 2011 Norden High School & Sports College, Rishton hosted a Communities Together event. Communities Together is a project run by two local charities, Hyndburn Community Network and Aawaz.

Peter Shaw, Chair of Hyndburn Community Network commented, "Through Communities Together we are building understanding between communities helping towards integration and harmony. We engage with key community voices and promote different traditions and practices to bring about shared engagement and bring communities together at joint events.

Through the project we are assisting and enabling communities to be more aware, informed and alert to any issues around the Prevent agenda. We work with individuals, families and established communities and a network of voluntary, community and faith organisations to successfully and effectively address Prevent. One of our main activities is to hold social events focused on information sharing and advice that will help bring understanding and created dialogues between communities and we are pleased to have worked in partnership with Norden High School & Sports College on this event."

During the evening guests watched a variety of student performances including a rock band, named Mango Turtles performing 'Beat it', two Bollywood dance performances and a talented young lady performing 'Skinny Love' and then had an opportunity to watch an original one act play challenging the threat of extremism. '*Step Away Before He Explodes*' is a classroom drama about four students with nothing in common except their misconceptions and intolerance towards one another and was performed by Manasamitra. The questions the play asks are rooted in real opinions and beliefs and was written by Huddersfield poet and playwright Gareth Durasow who directed the play at Norden.

Steph Holden, Acting Head at Norden High School & Sports College said, "We are delighted to be hosting and contributing to the 'Communities Together' event which is providing the opportunity to bring together many people from both our local and wider communities. In particular, the presence of a range of representatives from such diverse organisations identifies the importance and relevance of this event to all of our lives. The performance is aimed at raising awareness and developing tolerance within our diverse communities.

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“In addition I would also like to highlight the school’s appreciation of our recent successful ‘Awards for All ‘bid, from the Big Lottery Fund which has enhanced our provision in delivering community events such as this.”

The event was attended by the Mayoress of Hyndburn Cllr Collette McCormack, Lancashire Constabulary, county councillors and officers from Lancashire County Council, councillors and officers from Hyndburn Borough Council, representatives from the voluntary, community and faith sector, school governors, staff, pupils and parents.

Barbara Sharples, Network Manager added, “Hyndburn Community Network and Aawaz are working closely with Lancashire Constabulary Community Engagement Team to organise Communities Together workshops, informal training sessions and events on race, culture, faith, community belonging, diversity and equality. We will also be hosting dialogues and discussions on current issues including British values and speaking out against the false ideologies of the extremists. There are more events planned in local schools as we see working with young people and parents and bringing them together with the voluntary, community and faith sector from the local neighbourhoods as integral to the success of the project.

The event was a joint project between Hyndburn Community Network, Norden High School & Sports College and Aawaz; funded by Lancashire Constabulary from the Pan Lancashire PREVENT money and is supported by Hyndburn Borough Council.

Ends....

Issued by: Hyndburn Community Network

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Note to Editors:

Communities Together – more information

The role of the two agencies involved in the delivery of the Communities Together project, and the key aim of the project, is to reduce social exclusion and to engage, involve, and develop individuals so that they feel included in their local neighbourhood and are actively involved in their community.

We open up dialogue and debate in relation to PREVENT by organising question and answer sessions in communities around myth busting to examine stereotypes and misinformation.

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We arrange and host meetings, events & activities between key community people to build trust, respect and informal networks.

In partnership with Lancashire Constabulary Community Engagement Team we are holding workshops, informal training sessions and events on race, culture, faith, community belonging, diversity and equality.

We also host dialogues and discussions on current issues including British values and speaking out against the false ideologies of the extremists.

One of our main activities is to hold social events focused on information sharing and advice that will help bring understanding and created dialogues between communities.

We can also provide one-to one support and group work where these are requested or required.

PREVENT – more information

Prevent is an integral part of the government’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.

Prevent addresses all forms of terrorism, including the extreme right wing.

Prevent tackles non-violent extremism where it creates an environment conducive to terrorism and popularises ideas that are espoused by terrorist groups.

Prevent makes a clearer distinction between counter-terrorist work and UK Government integration strategy.

The PREVENT strategy contains three objectives, these are to:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it
 - prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
 - work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.
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Manasamitra – more information

Manasamitra commissioned Huddersfield poet and playwright Gareth Durasow to write and direct an original one act play challenging the threat of extremism. Step Away Before He Explodes is a classroom drama about four students with nothing in common except their misconceptions and intolerance towards one another. Leechy thinks the country would be a better place if all Muslims were locked up. Fatik thinks that violence is the best way of dealing with people who disrespect Islam. Shafiah is torn between religious commitments and her desire to live a rebellious teenage life. Polly desperately wants to keep the peace. Find out what happened when these characters are locked in a detention without supervision and when the violence they only hear about in the news threatens to happen right in front of them.

The process of creating Step Away Before He Explodes was highly collaborative, featuring text, imagery and ideas contributed by young people from around the Dewsbury area. We worked

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closely with students from Westborough, St John Fisher and Batley Girls High Schools and Ravensthorpe Community Centre to ensure that the questions the play asks are rooted in real opinions and beliefs. Violence begets violence but can extremism be a positive thing? To a lesser or greater extent, is it natural for teenagers to want to rebel? How far would you go to right the wrongs you hear about every day? And at what point do the ends cease to justify the means?

Step Away before He Explodes was a play commissioned by Kirklees Community Cohesion Team which explored how the threat of extremism affects young people in the Dewsbury area. A film of the play was specially made and showcased in various schools and colleges including Airedale High School and Wakefield College. An education pack was also produced which can be downloaded for free on the link below. This was stage one of the project which ended in July 2010.

As part of follow up work we intend to deliver a school engagement programme through a series of activities and consultation workshops which address issues around extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. The activities and workshops will capture young peoples thought and attitudes through storyboards and testimonials (statistical and anecdotal evidence).
