

## **A Shared Future**

### **Response from the Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, and the Rt Hon Baroness Beverley Hughes, Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime**

#### **Introduction**

Greater Manchester is still in recovery from the horrific attack last year at the Manchester Arena.

We have set in train a range of actions to aid that process and provide a comprehensive response to what happened.

Our primary duty is to support the families of those who died and people living with injuries and we continue to do that in any way we can.

Second, we are supporting Greater Manchester Police (GMP) with their investigation into the attack and work to bring those responsible to justice.

Third, we resolved early on to take an honest look at the response of our emergency services so that we could improve our preparedness for any future events.

To that end, we commissioned Lord Kerslake to carry out a thorough review of the response and we are now in the process of implementing his recommendations, most notably by conducting a major review of Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service.

Fourth, we recognise our wider responsibility to the public of Greater Manchester to consider any measures that might reduce the chance of any repeat of an attack. That is why we commissioned this review to look at what more we can do to tackle violent extremism and promote social cohesion.

We remain intensely proud of the way Greater Manchester responded to what happened. That spirit of defiance and solidarity that we felt immediately after the attack was present again as the city remembered one year on. Now we need to work to capture that spirit and make our communities permanently stronger.

This review contains important recommendations on how we might do that and we would like to extend our sincere thanks to Councillor Rishi Shori and all of the Commissioners for their time, consideration and care in preparing this Report.

We welcome the Commission's recommendations which will be discussed in detail with our partner agencies and local councils. But there are four broad conclusions that we can draw now on the back of the Commission's advice.

## **We will look to develop a new, whole-society approach to gathering information and tackling extremism**

It is clear that the nature of terrorism has changed and cities need to face up to the consequences of that. It is no longer the case that acts of terror are likely to be perpetrated by known terror organisations. Now, it can be individuals or small, localised groups who plan and carry out these atrocities.

In return, this development requires a new, more localised response. If it was ever the case that the police and security services might be able to monitor every person who poses a risk to us, then it is certainly not possible now.

We are living in turbulent times, with extremism on the rise in all communities and walks of life. The growth of social media seems to be fuelling a polarisation in society and creates the conditions for individuals to be influenced and radicalised in their own homes and local areas.

If we are to tackle this, we all have a part to play as citizens. Efforts to tackle extremism must start with all families and in all communities.

On the back of the Report, here in Greater Manchester we propose to use devolution to pilot a new whole-society approach to the gathering and handling of information that could be linked to radicalisation or violent extremism, where all citizens accept their role to challenge extreme behaviour.

The Report recognises that there is no single cause of individuals becoming radicalised, but that behavioural patterns caused by situational or emotional changes can be an early indicator. However, whilst the Report identifies that the majority of people would feel comfortable reporting 'hate crime', they are less comfortable raising issues of concern about changes to an individual's behaviour with statutory agencies.

We need to develop new ways for people to have difficult conversations about friends or family about whom they are worried, without it necessarily being a formal reporting process. We need to make it easier for people to have these conversations and to report their concerns.

We also need to provide guidance for the public, as part of the Report's recommendation to establish a set of Greater Manchester Community Engagement Principles, on the types of behaviour and concerns that should be discussed confidentially and reported.

So we accept in principle the Report's recommendation that we should establish a Greater Manchester informal phone line as a helpful source of information for police and public bodies. Further work is required to determine who should host the phone line, how it would be funded and the guidelines administering it. But we will look to introduce a pilot so that it can be evaluated and its effectiveness assessed. We see that it could be a valuable asset for the public to be able to call for anonymous advice and guidance, as well as report their concerns.

To take a whole-society approach to this means that there is an obligation upon us all to report behaviour which goes beyond the norms of acceptability. In these new, more challenging times, we cannot expect the police and security services to be able to do everything. They need all of us to share the responsibility by providing local information and intelligence that can help them form a wider perspective and protect our communities.

This localised approach to tackling extremism fits well with the Home Office's proposed pilot for a Regional Multi-Agency Centre in Greater Manchester. We welcome the fact that the Commission has supported the pilot.

Information sharing now needs to flow two ways: from local intelligence to the police counter-terrorism and the Security Services, but also from those agencies back down to local level, where it is appropriate to do so.

It is often the case that information about individuals comes from a number of different sources and no one agency has all of the pieces. But, once local and national information is put together, it can form a comprehensive picture about an individual or group.

That is why the sharing of information both through the statutory bodies and the informal phone line is so important to building the totality of intelligence that is required.

It is important that families, schools, universities, employers and the public at large can have confidence that they are able to seek advice on, and report unusual behaviour which could help fill in the picture or identify those at risk of radicalisation or violent extremism.

This is why a whole-society approach fits together with the pilot by enabling the sharing of local and national information to build a comprehensive picture about individuals or groups.

### **We will work to refocus the Prevent Strategy, challenging false perceptions**

We are clear on the need for a counter-terrorism strategy and, as the Report recognises, Prevent is the right mechanism and is working well in many areas.

However, the Report states: "*high levels of distrust and suspicion of statutory agencies continue to exist*". Prevent is also perceived to target one community.

If the perception of the Prevent Strategy is different from the reality, then that can be exploited by those seeking to undermine any form of counter-terrorism strategy.

Therefore we accept the need, as identified in the Report, to provide more information about Prevent. Any counter-terrorism strategy needs to be localised, have community buy-in and be seen to be fair to all communities rather than appearing to target one.

Operation Dovetail is a programme that will transfer the safeguarding responsibilities under Prevent from the Police to Local Authorities and has been piloted in two areas in Greater Manchester. At the same time the RADEQUAL programme in the city of Manchester has developed a community network that facilitates difficult discussions and provides the opportunity to challenge.

Both of these initiatives have shown that it is possible to develop the trust and engagement of local people in talking about difficult and challenging topics.

We will build on this excellent work already underway in Greater Manchester to apply the learning and roll it out across all 10 districts.

In this way we will help people to become much more aware of Prevent and its positive possibilities, including examples of best practice and how it links to our approach in Greater Manchester. This will allow the Prevent Strategy to be more effective and build trust in communities around the strategy.

### **We will continue to promote the #WeStandTogether movement as an informal means of building common values**

We have heard the argument put by the Commission that a Greater Manchester Charter would not be an effective way to build social cohesion and that instead we should build on the spontaneous Greater Manchester #WeStandTogether movement that emerged after the Arena attack.

For these initiatives to work, they need to command support and confidence and the most effective way of doing that is by using ideas and movements that have grown organically and with public support, not imposing them top-down.

It is through the principles of the #WeStandTogether movement that we will best be able to develop the guidance for the public and the informal phone line pilot.

We accept the recommendation that community cohesion events, wherever possible, should be promoted under the #WeStandTogether banner.

### **We will invest in young people to give them hope for the future**

The Report identifies the need for additional investment in young people and the services that they use.

We do not believe that reductions to services caused the Arena attack or the other terror attacks in the UK. However, if we are to build a truly inclusive Greater Manchester, then we do need to ensure that all young people here grow up with a sense of hope for the future. We need to provide opportunities for them to get on in life, expand their horizons and meet with others from a range of backgrounds.

As the Report indicates, this is a means of achieving greater social cohesion within their peer group and across the diverse communities in Greater Manchester.

Here, we will make young people our priority when it comes to public investment.

We welcome the Commission's recognition of the work being undertaken by the Youth Combined Authority, particularly around a Curriculum for Life. Also welcome is the acknowledgement in the Report that travel costs can be prohibitive for young people, which restricts their ability to engage in community and social activities, and that the existing half-price bus travel needs to be extended to be free for 16 to 18-year-olds.

Safeguarding our young people is of paramount importance and the Report is clear that this should begin with a whole-family approach. However, there may be mental health issues, social isolation or family breakdown which can all lead to concerns about safeguarding and the new approach to providing advice and reporting will play a role in safeguarding individuals as well as society.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to state that we know that the implementation of the actions and recommendations set out in this Report will not necessarily stop further terror attacks. However, there are things that we can do, as a society, that can reduce the risk and assist our counter-terror and security agencies.

Sadly, in the times in which we now live, the threat to our safety and security can come from anywhere. That is why we believe so strongly that a whole-society approach to promoting vigilance and cohesion is what is required.

The Commissioners have looked in depth at many difficult and challenging issues and have produced a Report that, given its complexity and wide-ranging recommendations, will require further work by all those organisations with responsibility over these many areas.

We will continue the engagement and discussions that the Commission has begun as we continue the recovery process in Greater Manchester and make it stronger for the future.