Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement
Corrected oral evidence: Integration
Tuesday 5 December 2017
3.05 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (The Chairman); Baroness Barker; Lord Blunkett; Baroness Eaton; Lord Harries of Pentregarth; Baroness Lister of Burtersett; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Baroness Pitkeathley; Baroness Redfern; Lord Rowe-Beddoe.

Evidence Session No. 18 Heard in Public Questions 149 - 162

Witness

I: Dame Louise Casey.
Examination of witness

Dame Louise Casey.

Q149 **The Chairman:** Dame Louise Casey, thank you very much for coming to talk to us today. We are reaching the end of our evidence sessions; we have one more. We are very grateful to you for coming to give us the benefit of your wide advice as evidenced in your report. I have the cautionary words that I have to read to all witnesses. A list of the interests of the Members relevant to the inquiry has been sent to you and is available. The session is open to the public and is being televised for BBC Parliament. A verbatim transcript will be taken of the evidence and will be put on the Committee’s website. A few days after this session you will be sent a copy of the transcript to check its accuracy. It would be most helpful if you could advise us of any corrections as quickly as possible. Finally, after this evidence session, if you wish to clarify or amplify any points made during your evidence or you have additional points you would like to make, you are welcome to submit supplementary evidence to us then. Could I ask you to introduce yourself briefly for the record?

*Dame Louise Casey:* Yes. I am Dame Louise Casey. I left the Civil Service at the end of July, so I am no longer a serving civil servant. This is my first appearance before a Select Committee as a free individual.

**The Chairman:** You are unbridled.

*Dame Louise Casey:* I suppose, in addition, I am a visiting professor for King’s College London’s policy institute and I am the chair of something called the Institute of Global Homelessness.

Q150 **The Chairman:** Thank you very much. Could I open up with a question? What is the current state of integration in the UK? Have there been any noticeable changes in the year since you published your review?

*Dame Louise Casey:* The current state of integration in the UK is not as good as it should be or could be. As I outlined in the report I published a year ago, there is a sense of a divided community or society, whichever way you want to describe the country in which we live. It is far too divided socially and economically between rich and poor, and between London and outside London. It is diversity, but in many different forms. We are currently living in a divided society, and in the intervening years since publication I would say that has probably get worse, not better.

My own sense is that the issues of Islamic extremism remain present and very much part of what everybody, including citizens and parliamentarians, is trying to deal with. Austerity continues to bite, and that impinges on action to deal with the issues, as I outlined in my report. I for one am concerned about the festering far-right extremism, which seems to feed off those sorts of issues. It feels as though far-right extremism has got worse in the last 12 months, not better.

**The Chairman:** One of the areas we have slightly struggled to come to
terms with is the white working class, what some people describe as the left behind. You wrote quite a lot about this in your report. In Chapter 6, you said, “Further consideration should be given to the particular reasons why the gap”—this is a gap of aspiration and engagement—“is worse for some White British children than those from minority communities”. Would you like to give us a stream of consciousness on what could be done about that? I do not mean about the children so much but about the communities as a whole.

**Dame Louise Casey:** Be careful when you ask for a stream of consciousness, Chairman. It is a really interesting day to be having this session in the light of the media in the last few days and the issue of white working-class Britain. The evidence we gathered for the integration review last year speaks for itself. Kids on free schools meals in particular—white boys and white girls, who often do not get quite the same level of interest as white boys appear to at times—fare very badly through the educational system and are still twice as likely as their counterparts not to get five GCSEs at reasonable grades. This is all off the top of my head. I could look stuff up, but that is my recollection of the evidence. Obviously, access to universities remains poor for that group.

There is a sense that people are now trying to attach that to a Brexit decision: that people in those communities chose Brexit. It was put to me earlier today that they voted for Brexit because they were not educationally equal to other parts of the community. I find that very tough and very difficult to accept, and it is quite patronising to many people in those communities. It irritates the hell out of me, because a lot of those communities are looking at the future for their own children and realising that it is not flat: it is going to get worse, not better. Meanwhile, they feel, understandably in many cases, that there is this big institution not in their own country that is sapping money away.

At the same time, they also feel there are people who have only arrived in the country who are jumping the queue for things like housing and public resources. Instead of seeking to understand those communities and why those families feel that way, I feel that a lot of people in the liberal intelligentsia, for want of a better expression, have jumped on that and said, “They’re just not clever enough to understand the issues”. I feel that we need to come at the sense of a divided society in a cleverer way than just blaming people, whichever side of the Brexit vote you were on. We cannot just blame people within communities.

In the social and economic chapter in my review, there were three standout issues for me. First, young black men in Britain growing up between the ages of 18 and 25 will be at an unemployment rate of 35%. Their white counterparts will be at an unemployment rate of 15%. I have served four Prime Ministers, and I have served a number of people around this table today, and it has been my privilege to do so. No matter who is in government, this is a stubborn statistic that does not appear to
change. White working-class Britain is the same when it comes to kids on free school meals.

The third group, which became the subject of much controversy and publicity in my report—I concentrate on it in an up-front way; I am not backing off from that for a moment—is the population, particularly women, from Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage communities. That group is seriously held back. Women and children specifically from those communities fare a lot less well when it comes to equalities and equalities of opportunity in ways that I did not imagine existed in the United Kingdom at such a scale until I did the integration review. I found that a cause for national shame.

Q151 Lord Blunkett: I would like to take that a stage further. We will come back to that latter issue shortly, but related to it is an issue that was raised in your report directly impinging on the question of integration and social cohesion. In a city like Bradford, 80% of the babies born—I do not know whether it was last year or the year before—were to first-generation mothers. In other words, they have been brought into the country under family reunion, often as very close relatives, in first-cousin marriages. These are really difficult issues. The Centre for Social Justice has done some work on this.

If Robert Putnam is right, and this therefore undermines social capital and the capacity of communities to develop a functioning civil society, which is what this Committee is looking at, is there anything positive we can do that does not just light a flame? Forgive me, but I tried this back in 2003, and I got my fingers severely burned by suggesting that the existing diaspora here might consider arranged marriages within the UK rather than from the outside—not that we should impose it but that it should be debated. The world imploded. Has the world moved on at all so that it might not implode if you answer the question in the way I know Louise Casey can answer questions?

Dame Louise Casey: Apart from anything else, we have David Goodhart in the room, who was at Demos and is now at Policy Exchange. David has done quite a lot of work in this area, which I looked at very carefully in the integration review. He uses an expression, “first generation in every generation”, which I would like to talk about. If I get it wrong, David, forgive me. There are two things I want to talk about. First, when is a forced marriage an arranged marriage, and where is choice? The second thing is the dynamic of a first generation in every generation. That marks itself out as being one of the most difficult things to talk about in the whole review, interestingly, and it has come up right at the beginning.

At one level, we—this includes me and certainly Governments—ought not to have views in these sorts of places, because we do not feel right or comfortable telling people who to marry, how to marry and those sorts of things. By the same token, there is a metropolitan borough council in the north-west, which is a part of Greater Manchester. On the council at one point not that long ago, every Asian member who was of Pakistani heritage—and the vast majority were—had only married somebody from
a village in Pakistan. That immediately means that the people arriving
constantly bring with them some of the dynamics of culture and
understanding that are not necessarily the same as other people growing
up in that metropolitan borough council, who may be more progressive in
their values about equality for women, the position of women in society,
how girls are treated as opposed to boys, openness to faiths and the
secular nature of the society of the United Kingdom. Language is a barrier
in those scenarios. There is a weight to the culture for them.

I saw this writ large in many of the communities and families that I
visited and listened to in the over 700 interactions we had during the
review. Therefore, the “first generation in every generation” dynamic is
potentially small in scale nationally, but quite significant in maintaining
cultural norms that are no longer fit for where we are in the
United Kingdom.

Just to get this out of the way now, if I can use Lord Blunkett’s question
to do so, the one thing I often say to people about forced marriages and
arranged marriages is that they are on a spectrum. One person’s forced
marriage is another person’s arranged marriage. At one level, people are
free to marry whomever they want in one society. Then you might have a
religious society where it is preferable if you marry within your own
religion. Then you might have a society where people want you to marry
not only within your own religion but also within your own caste. Then
that moves to: “We have two first cousins and we want you to marry one
of them. That is your choice”. At that point, I am afraid my support drops
off completely for that. I do not believe that is a reasonable way to treat
a woman, or a man for that matter, growing up in the United Kingdom.

There are two dynamics. It strikes to the heat of equalities. I have had to
remind myself constantly to say that you do not pick and choose the laws
of this country. The laws that protect religious minorities are the same
laws that say I am equal to a man. You do not pick which ones you want.
It is not a chocolate box of choice; it is something you have to embrace.
If you are uncomfortable with that, I now say that is tough. After two and
a half years of working exclusively in this area of integration, as we call
it, we need to be much more robust about issues like that.

Q152 Baroness Barker: In your report, you talked about social action and civil
society organisations. The backdrop to our inquiry is a huge drop in local
authority-funded generic support, a gap that is largely being filled by
faith organisations or organisations that in some way, although they
achieve social benefit, are set up for the benefit of a particular group.
How is that likely to impact on integration?

Dame Louise Casey: Again, I was quite blunt in the review, but
probably not as blunt as I would be in person. We completely take for
granted some of the things that we became used to having in our society.
As austerity has bitten, we have not worked out a game plan to go
beyond that. As Lord Blunkett will know, youth services used to drive me
absolutely insane, because I felt they were a very unreconstructed and
unreformed industry.
I used to joke that I had found myself in an area that had gone from the City Challenge under the Conservatives to the New Deal for communities under the first bit of Labour, and then to the neighbourhood renewal, which then found itself as part of the anti-social behaviour action plan. I went to this lovely youth centre one Wednesday. It was in a church. It was great. Everything was great. They introduced me to lots of kids, including kids on ASBOs so I could be uncomfortable with kids being on ASBOs. It was a great visit, and it had Duke of Edinburgh awards everywhere.

I said, “It is interesting. Earlier today, I was out with the police and they said the green directly opposite here is a bit of a hotspot on a Friday. How come you’re not open on Fridays?”, to which, as out of the mouths of babes, one said, “Well, the kids go drinking on a Friday”. I have always been quite tough about that. I find that funny myself, but you as a Committee clearly do not. Anyway, the point I was trying to make is that I am not a soft touch when it comes to youth services and more generally charities and organisations. A lot of them are self-serving. They think they are the only people who can get something right, they do not work in collaboration with each other, and so on.

However, the solution to what we are currently facing cannot be left to interfaith communities. We are largely a secular country, although obviously the Church of England is our foundation and the institution of the country. However, we ought to—I put it in one of the recommendations—have much more of an idea, and a plan that goes beyond a little of this and a little of that, when it comes to youth services.

What I would call an integration strategy must have civic organisations at the heart of it. It is great that we have interfaith communities, and often they lead the way in their behaviours on how to deal with these issues, but it cannot be left to them alone. I have felt for some time now that this is the default position: we leave it to the interfaith community to step up to the plate and deal with issues that are about integration in the United Kingdom.

**Baroness Lister of Burtersett:** The Migrants’ Rights Network, in its written evidence to us, suggested that your review put the onus on migrant communities to integrate, whereas they argued that it should be a two-way process. Is that a fair criticism? Would you agree there are responsibilities on settled communities, as they call them, to improve integration? If so, what are they? How can settled communities fulfil those responsibilities?

**Dame Louise Casey:** There are responsibilities on both communities. We have not worked out how to do that as effectively as we should have done, because it fits into this very difficult box where people often get too politically dogmatic about their position on, for example, immigration.

If I can start with the expression “two-way street”, I come from immigrant stock. My father arrived on a boat into Liverpool at the age of 13 to signs that said, “No blacks, no Irish, no dogs”. I get some of this. I
am now in a highly privileged position and I am well away from that world, but I understand the process by which people arrive in the country. Of course, Irish immigrants were white, as opposed to black, which makes a very significant difference to their experience of the United Kingdom, both currently and historically. I feel that we have got some of this wrong. I see incoming communities more like this: the country is on a bloody big motorway, and we are all going in the same direction. People arriving are coming in on a slip road. The majority of the population pulls out to the middle because it realises they are coming in, but we still all move in the same direction.

I feel very strongly that we have given a mixed message about what the two-way street is. Does it mean that we have women and children growing up in this country who feel that they are not equal to a man, they are not able to leave home without getting permission or they have to bring up their girls very differently from their boys? Does it mean that they are less likely to speak English than their male counterparts? Beyond that, does it mean that they do not accept that gay people have a role that we should respect in society and now have equal rights to marriage? Are they able to see that is progress towards which we as a country are moving? Do they accept the Royal Family? Do they accept the position of the Army? Do they accept Parliament? Do they accept democracy? Do they accept all those things? If they do not, frankly, that is not a two-way street. It is people going in the opposite direction. If anything, I see them as disruptors in society who are moving in the wrong direction. I do not want young men growing up in this country thinking that I am not equal to them. That just does not work for me. We have got some of the messages wrong. I get quite a lot of flak for saying these things, but I have been on this journey. Two or three years ago, I probably would have said that immigration was a two-way street. It is as important for the settled community to change, but only in so far as we are changing but moving in the same direction. I know it is a nuance, but it is a really important one.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett: Are you suggesting that those practices are true in all migrant communities? I am sure you are not.

Dame Louise Casey: No, not at all, but we are not clear about this. We have not really had an integration strategy. Dare I say it, in these political circumstances, to a lot of people we interviewed and met during the review, it feels as though immigration is stuck. The right wing would say, “We understand the impact on public services. We are going to set migration targets and we are going to handle the numbers”. That did not work. This is a caricature, but the left says, “All immigration is fine”. A lot of people living in very tough areas in the north just think that we have lost our minds if we think that people can just arrive here in their thousands and that we have not been on it.

Whether you are pro or anti-immigration does not matter to me. What matters is that as a country we need to be united. We have had people arriving, so we need to make sure that those people know the rules of
the game, that we do not abuse them and that we do not make their lives significantly more difficult. At the same time, the settled population have to see that we are managing it. The fact that we have cut English language funding and have not targeted that funding was one of our mistakes, if I am honest.

Q154 **Lord Blunkett:** As you knows, I agree with that. One of the staggering statistics from the material that we have been given is from a ComRes polling report that looked at different parts of so-called British values. Equality came quite low down on people’s scale of importance, but the best was equality between men and women. When I looked at it, I thought, “God, this is appalling”. It was presented as though it was pretty good: 62% of those polled believed in equality between men and women, which means that 38% did not. Is part of the problem that we have to establish whether the indigenous population believe in the values that we are espousing before we preach them to other people?

**Dame Louise Casey:** That is fair enough. One of the things we did not manage to land in the overall report, and the messages from the report last year, was that as the backdrop to all this we are not clear where we are as a country on issues such as equality. The year has played out rather viciously on that front, with all sorts of examples of women’s respect and freedoms not being what they should be in comparison with their male counterparts. In the introduction to the chapter on equalities, I attempted to write about that. I wrote, “Women still do not enjoy equality with men across a range of factors”. Clearly, that got lost in the ether.

This is a really difficult thing, but we have to own the fact that this is more likely to happen in certain communities. I was in Bradford. Baroness Eaton knows the area much better than I ever could. I went to a school whose teachers had done a poll of all the 11 to 16 year-olds in that school. Not one child between the ages of 11 and 16 thought the population of this country was less than 50% Asian. That told me something about the closed nature of those kids’ lives. I felt very upset, because I know, not only from the evidence but from personal experience with people, that this country is still pretty racist and they will still suffer, not as much as they used to, but it will still affect them in their lives; it will affect their life opportunities and outcomes.

What are we doing in 2017 across the community? I mean that in the widest sense: the schools, the local authority, the churches, the civic groups, the scouts, as well as the Muslim organisations, because they were largely Muslim kids in that school. We need to think about what they are being taught, how they are being brought up and how they are less likely to feel welcomed by the majority population, because we know that and we can see it from some of the polling in those groups.

**Baroness Eaton:** I am not sure this is exactly relevant to this particular point, but in your answers to questions you mentioned a local authority: Bradford, Oldham, or Rochdale—whichever of the small Greater Manchester local authorities it was. You have given us a picture of areas where we know the number of people from immigrant
I understand all that. Do you have any observations or thoughts as to other parts of the country where the issue is not as great and there is a different story to tell? There is some really good stuff here. If you are on free school meals in education, whether you are with a few, none or lots of other children who are on free school meals determines your outcome. It is not just you; it is the factors around you.

I know you are concentrating on the areas where the problems with integration are greatest, and I accept that, but can you talk about those other areas of the country where there are immigrant communities, but they are not the highest percentage or not more than 50%? Do you find the same problems there?

**Dame Louise Casey:** It was really difficult to compare the evidence on that. My answer to the question would be that you find fewer problems. If we are talking about Muslim communities, we have to remember that they are poor: Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage communities stand out as extremely poor communities. Men and women on the whole have low-paid jobs. Where those communities are very significant in number, we see more of the issues I talk about in the report, and we see them in the schools. In the body of the report, we talk about where the schools are in that.

This is very difficult for people I have met from other geographical areas. My sense is that they do not necessarily recognise the issues I talk about in my report. In Cornwall, for example, I interviewed a woman Muslim doctor, who said, "This is crazy. If this is what is happening, it does not represent me. It does not represent my religion. It does not represent my life experience". We could not conflate that with—

**Baroness Eaton:** You could not make a comparison.

**Dame Louise Casey:** Yes. It would be an interesting piece of work to do.

**Baroness Pitkeathley:** I want to ask you about civil society organisations. You have expressed some of your reservations about them, the robustness of their governance and the way they relate to these issues. In your view, what do these civil society organisations need to be doing to foster integration? What about a code that asks such groups to ensure that they have women and representatives of minority groups in their governance structures? There could be a quota or something.

**Dame Louise Casey:** I did not wish to run down the role of civic society. I am ex-voluntary sector, and now I am back in the voluntary sector. I both respect it and think that without it you do not have a thriving society. We are wholly dependent on it to lead the way forward in many difficult areas. I can think of numerous excellent organisations operating in this space, not just the high-profile ones such as Mosaic, which show leadership. That is one of the things I wanted to say in answer to your question.
I would say two things. First, they can often be set up by communities for themselves, which means that they have a greater level of power and authority than state and statutory bodies can have, whether they are church or non-church. They can often meet a need much faster than state or statutory bodies can do. Some of the domestic-violence projects operating in the space for women from different minority backgrounds and non-minority backgrounds can get to women and understand what is going on in a community a lot faster than local authority housing advice to help them deal with domestic violence.

One of the lessons learned when we made the English language announcement in January 2016, which was the only announcement made by government in the two and a half years I looked at this, was that routing that money through women’s organisations and domestic-violence organisations was a very powerful tool for reaching women. Those organisations and their leadership can give us very clever ways of reaching into communities to help them with things like health. We are trying to get to them not only through health but through language. Once you get them to language, they feel more empowered. We learned a lot. I learned a lot during that process.

As you can imagine, I am well up for the idea of a voluntary code on representation. We are at a moment, surely, in 2017, as we end this year and start 2018, when anything that we can do not only to message symbolically but to get change in representation, particularly of women and ethnic minorities, can only be a good thing. The more all institutions and all organisations reflect the make-up of the communities they serve, the less likely you are to see some of the problems that flow when those organisations are not representative. I am very clear about that.

Q156 Baroness Lister of Burtersett: You have already referred to the funding of English language classes and the need for it to be better targeted. You referred just now to women’s language. What needs to be done to improve English language skills in order to improve integration? I mean that generally, but I also have a particular interest with regard to refugees, for whom there are some very specific integration problems. In effect, you have answered the second part of the question about whether special attention should be paid to the high proportion of women with little or no English. How can we do something about that?

Dame Louise Casey: There are probably greater experts on issues such as English as a second language and the structures around that. Because it was seen as ineffective, it could be removed, but it was a bit like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Just because you think that something is not right does not mean that you should cut it completely. That is my reading of what happened with the structured approach to English as a second language.

You have just got me now that I am free, but I also think that the responsibility is on people coming to learn English before they arrive or to work their way up to speaking English when they get here. We are not paying to help these people learn English. Do you translate leaflets for
health for a woman or do you just hope that her son can translate for her? It gets a little political. Some people say, “They all have to learn English and it is their responsibility. We pay enough for this. We are going to stop doing translation”. Other people say, “Everybody can carry on speaking whatever language they want and we do not need a common language, because we should be multilingual”. It gets caught up in some of that.

It is very interesting that this Committee asked me to appear before it and that it is a House of Lords Committee, and it is very interesting that you are looking at these issues, because I sometimes feel that there is so much politics attached to these issues, rather than trying to find a way forward. The issue with English language is trying to find a way forward.

It is like homelessness, which is my other bugbear. Homelessness is not a state that you exist in for the rest of your life. It is a problem that needs to be sorted so you are a housed worker again, not somebody who has the label “homeless” for the rest of their life. I feel exactly the same about people who are not able to speak English. I am not keen on endless translation budgets; I am very keen on endless language budgets. That is where we are in this country. Some people will not like the fact that a lot of people have arrived in the last X decades or years who do not speak English, but they have. That is where we are, so we need a common language across the country. That is the most important thing, socially and economically, let alone for equalities.

On your other question, we need to be incredibly clever about how we target that money. Although you might want to use different types of approaches for different groups, in order to deal with the issues that I feel very passionately about you need a targeted approach that is not part of—I might as well get it all out—an extremism agenda. It has to reach out to women wherever they are living, because we want them to be able to speak English so that they can take part in our society, bring their kids up and be equal to men.

You would do that anyway. I do not need the threat of terrorism to think it is important that a woman can speak English wherever she lives in my country. You can do it. There are some very good people out there in these community groups who are really clever in how they reach into those communities. I was in one in Newcastle that does sewing. It unlocks a conversation with them that leads to talking about all sorts of issues, particularly domestic violence, in a different way. That involves sensitivity in policy-making and in delivery. People often think this stuff is tough. They say, “God, what do we do about integration?” The issue is tough, but some of the solutions are quite simple, and we could do them better.

**Baroness Eaton:** I have a short question. It is probably a little unfair because it did not sit within your remit, but do you know anything about how the Scandinavian countries deal with the issue of language and immigration? It seems to run quite smoothly, and I do not know how they deal with it. If you do not know, perhaps it is something we should
look at.

**Dame Louise Casey:** What they are doing in some other areas of Europe is really interesting. My starting point on a lot of the northern European countries is that they are so much smaller population-wise. Therefore, what they are dealing with is of a different magnitude. We were invited to Germany, which was a fascinating visit, because they had read the review and wanted to talk through it. I was quite struck by the huge volume of refugees and asylum seekers they were dealing with. They put language classes right at the top of their agenda and spent billions on them. Obviously, their numbers are huge in comparison to here.

They also realised that running alongside their language was citizenship. During a language course, they managed to convey the values of the country they wanted to promote. It was a very clever course. As Ministers and civil servants in Germany, their challenge was about how they could get to everybody within six months of arrival into Germany. They were not at that volume or that delivery capacity at that stage.

**Baroness Eaton:** Was it something they had to do? Was it mandatory or could they opt in or out of language courses?

**Dame Louise Casey:** No, I do not think it was optional. It was expected. They call it an entitlement. They have a right to it, but they have a responsibility to attend.

**Lord Blunkett:** To take this a little further, on the radio this morning, in a short but very interesting interview, you said that 62% of women from ethnic-minority backgrounds were economically inactive, compared with 35% of the population as a whole. In your review, did you come across any evidence as to whether this was to do with access to language skills or whether, in equal measure, it was to do with the social relationship within the family and what was expected?

**Dame Louise Casey:** Economic inactivity levels are almost 60%. They are unusually high among women from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups. At the point we wrote the report, 57.2% were inactive in the labour market, compared with 38.5% of all ethnic-minority women and 25.2% of white women.

**Lord Blunkett:** I shall go back and listen to the interview again.

**Dame Louise Casey:** No, I said “almost 60%”. I hope I did. I ended up getting irritated about the *Guardian*, so I redid all the statistics just because I had a cob on. It is a serious point that you are making. You think that you are clever when writing these reports, but they get completely lost on anybody other than you. If you have economic inactivity levels at that height, and you run alongside that, as we do, the statistics in the next paragraph, which say that this particular group has the lowest levels of English language proficiency of any black and minority ethnic group—in those communities, women are twice as likely
as men to have poor English—it tells you a story about their lack of opportunity in our society.

This would take a different type of research report, but when you then come to the issues of misogyny and the lack of equality in those communities, you can understand why. Overall, we know that women who are suffering domestic violence are less likely to tolerate it when they start working. The evidence is very clear on that in domestic violence. I was not clever enough when we wrote this report, but you start to see that you can unlock diversity through social and economic approaches to an equalities issue. If women in this group were working, were able to speak English and had proper jobs, they would be a lot less tolerant of being told whom they needed to get married to and how their children should be segregated in schools.

Q157 Baroness Barker: You will not be surprised that the Prevent programme has featured a lot in our thinking. Indeed, you wrote about it in your review and had some quite interesting criticisms of those who do not support it. One thing that has cropped up during our interviews with people is the sense that it is becoming a much more centrally driven programme. Therefore, it is not as easy for communities that are engaged locally and very concerned about radicalisation to use it productively. I wonder what you think about that.

Dame Louise Casey: My starting point on Prevent is that we need an integration strategy. At the moment, the focus is all on Prevent. I am very positive about the need to have a Prevent programme in my report. I have defended the Prevent programme and I stand by it. There is a part of me that thinks, “Why would you not want to prevent extremism and terrorism, whether extreme far right or from any other course?”

Again, we have got ourselves confused. I am afraid the Government have helped this confusion by not being clear about the role of Prevent in society. What we have always needed and what I recommended in the review is an integration strategy that deals with the sorts of issues that a committee on citizenship and civic engagement would be concerned with, in the same way as I have been very open and honest today about the sorts of things that I think are happening in communities, but I would be worried about anyway, regardless of whether there was radicalisation or extremism.

An integration strategy would be part of preventing the need for a Prevent strategy. Does that make sense? We have not got that right. It is a year later and I am still waiting for it to be published. It will be published, and there are really good people working on it across government. I used to say to various people around this table, “You do not pay me to be patient; you pay me to be impatient”. I have a sense of impatience about this, particularly when we know that some of the solutions with regard to English language and others could have been got on with. However, I will try to put that to one side.
We get confused. We have allowed Prevent to be knocked and knocked and knocked. I cite some of the cases. I listened yesterday morning to a Radio 4 programme in which women all talked to each other. They all cited the case that everybody always cites, which is a kid who meant to write “terraced house” and he wrote “terrorist house”. They say it is terrible and that he was arrested by the police. There is no truth in that urban myth at all. The kid wrote that, but the police did not deal with it in the way that was described and is constantly cited.

There are a lot of people in some organisations who really want to undermine the Prevent agenda. I find that very hard. With the Government and other organisations not being clear about its role and not defending it, we end up where we are. I found myself in east Birmingham with two young women who had set up their own gym and who wanted to set something up for women in that community. They were of the community; they were exactly the sort of people you wanted to do it. They wanted to do coffee mornings; they wanted to do health. It was an organisation that would have been able to reach into the community in a way that I or anybody else on this Committee would not have been had we opened it. People would attend something opened by them.

I went to see them during the week before half term. I said, “God, what are all those leaflets over there? Why have you not handed the leaflets out?” They said, “It is really tricky, Louise, because we have had to get our funding via the Prevent programme”. They got the 3p they were given via the Prevent programme. It was a bit more than that, but not much more; it was serious grass-roots funding. One of the workshops was going to be about jihadi brides. It was no wonder they were not handing the leaflets out. They were a really good community development project that should have been funded as a Prevent project and been part of a wider interfaith community in Birmingham, which they were. It turned out that their only route to funding came attached to something that meant they felt that they had to say something about extremism, jihadis and all the rest of it. That is the confusion the people out there are trying to manage. That is why we cannot keep waiting for an integration strategy; it is too long in the making.

Q158 Lord Harries of Pentregarth: Some of our witnesses are not happy about the stress on the word “British” in “British values”. They would rather talk about “shared values” and would like a wider range of values than the ones that have to be taught in schools. Do you have some views on that?

Dame Louise Casey: They probably will not make me entirely popular with the people who have previously given evidence. I might as well be honest. What makes it impossible for the liberal intelligentsia to embrace the word “British”? It is okay to be Irish, is it not? I am very proud of my Irish heritage; I have already mentioned it to you. It is okay to be Scottish, it is okay to be Welsh, it is okay to be a Londoner, it is okay to be a Scouser, it is okay to be a Mancunian, it is okay to be a Geordie. We somehow get uncomfortable when it comes to the word British. That gifts
the extreme right wing to use that expression over and over. Therefore, they have ownership of it, not those of us sat in the room today.

I have been on a journey with this. I probably started out as a wet Guardian reader, who was uncomfortable with the word “British”. I find myself thinking, “Dear God, how did we get to a point where the word “British” is owned by the extreme far right, and therefore we are totally uncomfortable with it, rightly so, I might add, because it is owned by the extreme far right?”

I have watched some of these courses being taught and discussed with students, and they are best when they are talking about what a British value is. Last time I checked, a British value is something like integrity in public life, democracy, the rule of law, equality. They are British values and they epitomise those British values. Left to their own devices, quite a lot of teachers out there use the discussion about British values not to make them learn the national anthem by rote but to give a sense of the things that a lot of good people—I hope I am one of them—would want to inculcate in young people growing up in this country.

You have asked me a question on a day when I am being blunt. We ought to be less ashamed of the word “British”. We should reclaim it from the very, very, very nasty people who seem to have claimed it. I would like them seen off, really.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett: I hope you are not writing me off as a member of the liberal intelligentsia. I think of myself as British citizen. It is my citizenship. I did not get a sense from anyone who has questioned it that they are uncomfortable with the term “British”. I keep asking what is quintessentially British about these values, which are also the values of other countries. It is not that people are saying, “We must not say we are British”. But some people perceive it as exclusionary, because they hear, “We cannot believe in democracy unless we are British”. You talked very fairly about having a discussion about what British values are, but some people who have given evidence to us feel that they are imposed from above, so there is no discussion.

Dame Louise Casey: I am of the group of people who say that they do not need the Government always to tell them what to do. The British values stuff came out as part of a Home Office-led strategy as part of an extremism strategy, and it gets everybody’s backs up, including mine. You should be looking at exploring with young people things like what the word “British” means versus “Scottish”, integrity and India’s latest appointment of a democratic leader. Those are the conversations you should be able to have in a wider setting. I am obviously the type of person who believes in citizenship, PSHE and sexual education being taught in school. Despite my demeanour and what I have said today, I am probably a bit of a liberal myself. I believe that those are the sorts of things we should be teaching in schools. We should be clear, though. Fundamentally, I do not mind what you call it, but you cannot pick and choose the laws of the country that we exist in. Those laws apply to us all.
Q159 Baroness Morris of Yardley: You have almost answered this. I have the next two questions to ask, and you have just touched on both of them in your answers, so I am going to round them up together. Thinking back to the two women you met in Birmingham, that was a very good example of how things could have been better. As a policy thing, could the promotion of British values, and therefore integration, have been more effective if it had not been wound up with the counterextremism agenda? That is the first thing, and I think you said yes to that.

Secondly, you just mentioned citizenship teaching in schools. That had been going on long before we got obsessed with teaching British values. Should we emphasise teaching citizenship education well, rather than getting schools worked up and inspected as to whether they are teaching British values? They are not inspected on the first; they are inspected on the second.

Dame Louise Casey: The answer to the first question is yes, without a doubt.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: I thought you had said that.

Dame Louise Casey: I am not a specialist in education, so I need to be clear about that. There are two things here. First, a lot of educationalists are on the front line of dealing with the most challenging aspects of non-integration. During the review, I felt that a lot of the heroes in the public sector were the head teachers and deputy head teachers, who were trying to hold this incredibly difficult line, keeping a community or a set of individual parents on board—often the parents felt they had to keep the leaders of the groups happy—literally on things like swimming, theatre and closing on Friday at 1 o'clock; those sorts of things. This relates not only to those of the Islamic faith but to other faiths as well.

In many ways, I thought teachers were the heroes in this. At the end of all this, I thought, “Can we not just ask how to negotiate the best way forward?” Some people are very invested in citizenship, so could you have a component that is about British values, or do you have a wider PSHE that pulls these things within it? At the moment, we are saying that women are equal to men, that it is okay for gay people to get married and that we should respect that even if we do not condone it within our religion. If we are saying these things only because of something called extremism, we are getting something wrong. That is where the integration strategy, or even a different educational strategy, has to be right.

I am more concerned about the fact that the Department for Education, probably not knowingly, has recently left much of the management of those issues to Ofsted. Ofsted inspects schools and finds problems and then there is an outcry. I know that this is not a subject for this Committee, but I feel that it is time to take stock of where we are with many of these schools. We should not keep opening them and then saying, “We do not like the way you are doing it”. The horse has bolted. I am sorry; that was a longer answer to your question.
Baroness Morris of Yardley: Might I follow that up? Sometimes we are obsessed with what schools teach and not what kind of places they are. Looking back on your visits to schools, you will have learned from the head and the deputy head the problem they have in managing what they think is a good education, and a community that has a different view. Did you sense from the school that for some children the community they were in for those hours of the day exhibited British values, no matter what was taught and no matter what the arguments are elsewhere? Sometimes we underplay the fact that kids are there for quite a bit of time. There is an opportunity for schools to do the right thing as well as teach the right thing.

Dame Louise Casey: I could not agree more. On the visits, whether I was gone for a day or overnight, we always did schools. I saw more schools where I thought, “God, these people are amazing. They exhibit the values of integrity, warmth, kindness, embracing people from different cultures and trying to get everybody to the same place. They feel strongly about educational attainment, because they are educationalists”. I also saw examples of schools that made my hair stand on end, but fewer.

Q160 Baroness Redfern: How could the naturalisation process for new arrivals be improved to help to create a more integrated society? Are the citizenship tests and ceremonies appropriate and useful? You have already alluded to the lack of integration strategy and language proficiency. Could you elaborate on that, please?

The Chairman: It is also expensive. An issue that has been raised with us is that the citizenship tests are very expensive.

Dame Louise Casey: The evidence shows that people like the citizenship oaths and ceremonies. They like coming into town hall versions of rooms like this and feeling part of changing their nationality. An English language test is vital, and I questioned whether our bar in English language proficiency was high enough on arrival. I am not an expert in this area, but I was not sure that we had a high enough bar and were asking people to hit a certain standard before they arrived. The population of people arriving from south India was half a million in both cohorts. Those are big numbers. They have a lot to offer, if you look at it that way. Rather than seeing them as a problem, if you see them as having a lot to offer if they come in with English at a certain proficiency, that would be a good thing.

In the review, we tried to grapple with people who stepped off a bus at Sheffield from Slovakia or Roma who were often quite impoverished on arrival. I met people who literally thought they were going to get money that they could send home, and if they were lucky at the end of the week they would get a six-pack of alcohol and a bag of food and be put into lodgings. Quite a lot of exploitation of those sorts of individuals goes on. One of the recommendations in the review, which is probably where you are leading from, is for there to be some more organised way for people who are going to stay in perpetuity to learn to speak English and to have
a sense of joining our society and being welcome—at the risk of being liberal for a minute. That is what I felt, but I was not sure how you could organise that.

A lot of this was pre Brexit, and obviously a year on from when I published there are different opportunities, depending on how the negotiations go in the future, in relation to organising migrancy. If I went to a different country, I would expect that country to want me to be economically active and, if I was going to be part of their society, to be able to speak English. I often get the Spanish question: what would I expect of people in Spain? I would expect them to be self-sufficient, not to draw down on their economy, and at least to have rudimentary Spanish.

Baroness Redfern: That bar is set and nothing has changed on that bar.

Dame Louise Casey: The coalition reduced the English language test. I would put it up.

Lord Blunkett: Will we need to recommend, Chairman, that they return to having a look at the Life in the UK booklet? Most of us would not pass or come anywhere near to doing so.

The Chairman: This does not just apply to people newly arrived; it applies to everybody. Some of the evidence we have heard about engagement is that people should have a series of episodes as they go through their school and early life, such as when they start school, go to secondary school and first vote, that would draw them more clearly into our society. I know that is outside your report, but would you like to comment on that? Perhaps it was in your report.

Dame Louise Casey: There is a piece in it where I major on young people. I could not agree more with what you are saying. Integration is about social and economic opportunities. I would like everybody who goes to Eton to meet somebody from the other side of the tracks at some point during their lives, certainly at some point during their childhood, so they can seek to understand where they come from. In the same way, I would like the person who is in a very poor area to have their horizons lifted.

I did this report for Prime Ministers and government, but one of the attractions of coming to this Committee is that I feel we ought to have an organised offer, as close to mandatory as is humanly possible, for every kid. It is not fair to say that we should leave it to chance, but it is not organised enough. For example, referrals from Tower Hamlets to the National Citizen Service, of which I am a supporter, remain incredibly low, whereas referrals from Surrey remain incredibly high. I was trying to be gentle in my report, but between the Duke of Edinburgh, Step Up To Serve and the National Citizen Service we should have something, for the good of the country, to try to heal our rifts.
It would be such a good thing, perhaps when people finish their GCSEs, if they all did something. I know the NCS is three weeks and it is too much for certain people. There are different levels of the Duke of Edinburgh that some people do, and of course that goes towards their university stuff. I still have kids in deprived areas who go nowhere near any of that stuff, let alone kids from the families that I have particularly talked about today. It was in the anti-social behaviour White Paper in 2003 that we wanted to have a national community service for every young person, yet we have never been able to get that over the line. Different Governments have had a go at it, but it is still not there. That would be a really great mixing tool.

Q161 Baroness Eaton: A lot of what you have said today has been very honest and has highlighted things that communities and individuals have often found very difficult to discuss for fear of being labelled in all sorts of ways. Thank you for everything that you have included in your report and for your contributions today. In the current political context, are we more willing to discuss these sensitive issues than in the past, or are we not politically prepared to challenge, tackle and deal with them?

Dame Louise Casey: I took great heart from the fact that this Committee would not allow me not to appear before you, let me put it that way. I knew that if I came I would tell you what I really thought. I did the Today programme this morning, where it was levelled at me that the Guardian had counted the number of times that my report used the word “Muslim” versus the number of times it used the word “Polish”. You then think, “For God’s sake, there is a reason for that”. I love the Guardian, so I have to be careful what I say. If you cannot see that there must be a way to get this discourse out there, we are letting down the very people we think we are protecting.

I did the inspection into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. It was one of the toughest things I have ever done in my life, let alone my professional career. The public servants in Rotherham who fell by the wayside did not wake up in the morning thinking they were going to let the girls be abused. Of course none of them thought that. Yet somewhere along the line the dial is moved and people start thinking, “This is tricky”. They hold back, and a girl goes from being vulnerable to being wayward. People say of her family, “We do not know a lot about them”, which becomes, “They are troublemakers”. Of the boyfriend, they say, “He is all right. He may be 25, but he is all right”. The dial moves again. Then one day really bad things happen. That had such a searing effect upon me, as some of my colleagues know, that even if I do not get the way of talking about it right it is better to try to get people to talk about it than not to.

I am not convinced that politicians are here on this issue. I am not convinced the media are here on this issue. I think the public are. If I had this conversation in a community group, indeed with Muslim and other community groups, we would have a feisty conversation. I have done so. They are prepared to have these conversations. The consequences of not having the conversation and not getting this right are very grave. Yours is the only Committee that has asked me these types of questions in the
two and a half years that I have been doing this job. This is the first time I have had such questions.

**Baroness Eaton:** What do they ask you?

**Dame Louise Casey:** They are more interested in facts and figures, and in me supporting their political position, one way or the other.

**Baroness Barker:** I am really interested, because I have done a lot of work looking at the way we change the legislation on forced marriage in this country. You are right that there was a lot of criticism from the left, which believed that communities under siege were being done down again. I want to come at it from a slightly different point of view. I am from the gay community, and I watch what different religions do and say and the consequential effects that has upon young people in my community. Given all that you have been through, to what extent do you think the religious protections in this country, such as the exemptions from the Equality Act, are harmful and should be addressed?

**Lord Blunkett:** That is a hand grenade if ever I saw one.

**Dame Louise Casey:** Yes, it is. In all honesty, I am not an expert in that legislation or that particular element of the law. This is incredibly candid, but the Church of England and possibly even the Catholic Church are on a journey. It may be a slow journey, but they are on a journey. You can see that sometimes when Justin Welby speaks. You can see that a little with Pope Francis. I said to the Cardinal, “I need to be really clear with you about the Catholic Church’s position on gay marriage, so I know where I am before I go any further”. I said something at an integration Select Committee and ended up on the front page of the *Catholic Herald*. Everybody wrote hate letters, which I thought was quite interesting in itself. However, I said. “I understand that certain religions do not condone same-sex relationships. The issue for me is whether you respect them, and whether you are able to teach them in an honest and decent way within your schools. If the answer to all that is yes, we are fine. If, on the other hand, you start going in the wrong direction, I have a problem and I will really criticise you in my review”. As you can see, we got to the place where we did. It was not an argument. It was not something that I had to ask for. Latterly, six months after I had seen him, he went to the head teachers’ conference and explained his position, among everything else.

I worry that there are certain minority religious groups that are not on that journey and are not prepared for the condoning to become a little stronger. What Ofsted has found in certain schools, including strictly Orthodox Jewish communities, other minority faiths and Islamic faith communities, is a step way beyond what should be tolerated in the United Kingdom. I did not have to work very hard to find young people in those communities who were really suffering.

Dare I say it, most of us here are of a certain age group. One thing that policymakers need to get their heads around is the statistic that I put in
the report, because I liked it so much, from YouGov’s massive poll of 18 to 25 year-olds, of whom 49% said they would not describe themselves as “strictly heterosexual”. That made me smile, because I thought that that population would be less likely to treat people like you in an inappropriate and often horrific way.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much. We are seeing the Cardinal tomorrow, so we shall be able to cover that.

**Dame Louise Casey:** That is perfect timing. I had better ring him to tell him what the deal is.

**The Chairman:** You said that it was a sensitive issue. We have had some quite frank evidence from various people in our sessions, and it is good to have the discussion.

**Q162 Baroness Pitkeathley:** This is the last question, Dame Louise. Those of us who listened to you on the radio this morning will know that the Government have not yet responded to your review and that you are not a happy bunny about that. Can I ask you to continue with the frankness that we have been very glad to hear from you today? Do you know if the Government will take account of your report? What do you hope they will say, and what do you think they will say?

**Dame Louise Casey:** Sometimes the things you care about the most are the things that you have to not watch over when you leave. When I left Shelter I had to let them get on with it. That was really tough. I adored that organisation 25 years ago. When I stepped down from being the rough-sleeping tsar, again, I had to let them get on with it. I have to tell you, watching the number of people sleeping out on the streets in this country go up since 2010 was a test of my silence. This has been the same. One has to respectfully allow Ministers and civil servants to put a strategy together. I know that there were personnel changes during the course of the year. They have brought in somebody excellent to head up the integration team. He did not start until July. If I am absolutely honest with you, it frustrates the living daylights out of me that we were six months into the review and at that point Downing Street said, “Where is it? Can we do an announcement? What is your biggest issue? Let us get something out now”. I said, “I really want an English language announcement. I want you to start spending money on these specific groups”, and they did it.

You can always do things, and not everything costs money. I am frustrated with the length of time that it has taken, but I am hopeful. I really hope in the strategy that they produce in January or February they will take time to reflect the issues that we have talked about today and that are in the body of the report. This issue seems really tough, and it seems really difficult to know what you would do about it.

At the same time, as a former delivery person—to use language from that era—there are some things that you could do. Some of the solutions to this are quite simple. They are about English language and targeting that
language in specific ways. They are about being very clear on the role of schools and around integration, Prevent and counterextremism. That is not beyond our wit. They are about shaking down civic society so that people know that they have funding and that it is not just for five minutes.

You could also do work in specific areas of the country, where there are significant numbers of kids on free school meals, where there are white working-class issues, or where you have Pakistani or Bangladeshi-heritage women. You would have different strategies in different places. This is not beyond our wit, but because it is seen as such a difficult thing I sense that it gets locked in the Whitehall cupboard that says “too difficult”. I would always say the things that are the most difficult to do are the ones that you should do first and be bravest about.

**Lord Rowe-Beddoe:** Can I take you back to British values? I was very interested in your references to and descriptions of the situation and status. What can be done to take the hijacking of that phrase away from the extreme right? It is not just a phrase; it is a damn sight more than that.

**Dame Louise Casey:** That is a really good question. In recent weeks, last week and the week before in particular, I have thought about that quite a lot. There are a number of things. First, having the conversation in the way you are today is the most powerful approach. Let young people have this conversation about what Islamic extremism is, why there is a rise of the far right and what dislocation is. It lies in the hands of educationalists and young people to have those conversations. We need people to have more adequate responses than mine on the teaching of British values so that we know what we are doing about it. It is about people in your positions, left, right, centre or wherever they are, being able to have that conversation with the people in the places that they are. We should expose the things we see from these organisations that have the word “British” in them that are far from British values. In fact, they are the exactly opposite of the values that most of us would call British. You could run an exposure campaign.

**Baroness Lister of Burtersett:** At a number of points today, and in your report, you have talked about socioeconomic divisions. When we, in a nebulous sense of “we”, talk about integration, the assumption tends to be that we are talking about ethnicity and immigration. I wonder why you think that is. Do you think that the Government are taking on board what you have been saying about socioeconomic divisions? We have heard lots of pieces of evidence that suggest that they are a barrier to people being full citizens.

**Dame Louise Casey:** I do not wish to upset any colleagues from the Conservative end of this Committee. I was one of many people who felt great hope when Theresa May talked about one nation and no divided nation. I was game on for that. This is square in that territory. The solution to some of the equality exclusion issues that we have concentrated on today is economic and social inclusion. If I had a magic
wand that meant that men in the Bangladeshi community had better employment outcomes than being a taxi driver or working in a chicken shop on less than the minimum wage, that would start to change some of that divided nation.

We as a country, and you, the people in these two Houses, who have more power than I could ever dream of, have to see that Brexit is not only about a negotiation that most of us have now lost track of and barely understand. It is about what is happening domestically in our own country and what type of country we want it to be. That is the challenge for Brexit. What type of country do we want to be? The “Thought for the Day” chap, as I sat in the studio, said something immensely powerful. He said that the rhetoric on social mobility cannot crumble to dust. I thought, “You do not need me in the studio”. Everything in my review is about social justice, social mobility, poverty and all those things. It took a man in a collar to point that out to us all this morning.

Baroness Eaton: I want to pick up on your observation about the Bangladeshi community being largely taxi drivers. Schools have a huge role in relation to aspiration. From my experience in Bradford, people are told, “You can work in the foundry down the road or be a taxi driver”. That happened to a friend of mine, who is now professor of data medicine at a university. I have not quite worked out what happened in between, but school gave him nothing. There is a real danger in these areas where children are underperforming, and the assumption is that they cannot do anything better. The economic things that you mention are influenced hugely by what happens to people who leave school with skills and a desire to improve their lot.

Lord Blunkett: The same happened in the pit villages.

Dame Louise Casey: You will not find it surprising that I wholly agree with you. The solution to a divided society is greater equality of opportunity for all. The solutions to the more difficult aspects of equality and diversity that we have talked about today also lie in that. It is about equality of opportunity, but you would expect me to say that.

The Chairman: Dame Louise, thank you very much. We have run on and you have been kind enough to give us more time. The fact it has run on is evidence of the value that we attach to your opinions. Thank you very much for sharing with us all your experience.