1. QED Foundation is a national charity founded in 1990, which works to promote the social and economic advancement of disadvantaged communities, with a particular emphasis on the needs of ethnic minorities. Our main focus is on influencing social policy by working in partnership with the private, public and third sectors to address barriers to integration. However, we also deliver education, training and employment services direct to communities. First-hand experience of this work at grass-roots level informs our campaigning activities.

2. We are submitting evidence based on experience gained through supporting more than 30,000 people from ethnic minority backgrounds through education and training. We have helped 1,000 women in Pakistan to develop English language and life skills before coming to the UK. We have chosen to answer questions 9, 10 and 11.

3. Why do so many communities and groups feel “left behind”? Are there any specific factors which act as barriers to active citizenship faced by different communities or groups - white, BME, young, old, rural, urban? How might these barriers be overcome?

4. The last decade has seen some progress in ethnic minority representation in public life, with a record number of 51 MPs from non-white backgrounds sitting in the House of Commons in 2017. However, these successes cannot overshadow the fact that it is much more difficult for people from BME communities to achieve their potential and enjoy the same quality of life as their white counterparts. If you are from an ethnic minority background, you are more likely to be unemployed or have a low-paid job that is not commensurate with your skills and experience. Low incomes create a vicious circle of child poverty and poor educational attainment. The absence of visible role models from similar ethnic backgrounds in many areas of public life further reduces young people’s aspirations.

5. In August 2016 the Equality and Human Rights Commission report *Healing A Divided Britain* revealed that 82% of hate crimes in England and Wales are racially motivated. Many commentators have ascribed the sharp rise in offences following the Brexit vote to xenophobic political rhetoric, which was seen as legitimising racist attitudes. Prior to the referendum many Muslim communities already felt victims of a climate of suspicion caused by government anti-terrorism strategies. Such an environment promotes a ‘siege mentality’ in disadvantaged communities and discourages engagement in wider civic life.

6. While we believe inability to speak English is the main barrier to active citizenship faced by many isolated BME communities, lack of transport is another important factor. Many families do not have access to a car and bus and train fares can be prohibitively expensive. As women from some ethnic minority groups rarely leave their immediate neighbourhoods, they are more likely to feel at home engaging in activities in familiar settings.

7. Recommendations

8. Measures to promote the social integration of Muslim groups should focus on the benefits of increased diversity and active citizenship rather than linking community cohesion to anti-terrorism measures.
9. Political parties should crack down on the use of inflammatory and provocative language in public debate.

10. The media should take a more responsible and equitable attitude to reporting sensitive issues relating to faith and ethnicity including coverage of Far Right and Islamic extremism.

11. Opportunities to engage in active citizenship should be made available to people from minority faith and ethnic groups at trusted neighbourhood venues such as community centres and places of worship.

12. Public bodies should actively recruit for leadership roles such as school and college governors and board members from BME communities. These measures could include asking successful role models to talk about their experiences and encourage others to follow suit.

13. Efforts to promote active citizenship should focus on those BME communities that have shown least social and economic progress and face the highest levels of disadvantage including Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali groups.

14. How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?

15. The last 18 months have seen the publication of a glut of reports highlighting shocking levels of social segregation. Whilst people from similar backgrounds will always want to live in close proximity to each other, they should have opportunities to mix with people of different faiths and ethnicities in the workplace. We therefore see increased diversity at work as a crucial first step to encouraging active citizenship yet much work needs to be done before this is a reality. The Healing A Divided Britain report revealed that the previous five years had seen the number of long-term unemployed young people from ethnic minority backgrounds almost double while it fell slightly for their white counterparts.

16. Some individuals face many barriers to participation because they belong to overlapping communities of interest. For example, in July 2016 a House of Commons select committee report found that Muslim women, 65% of whom are economically inactive, suffer the greatest economic disadvantage of any group due to their ethnicity, faith and gender as well as a combination of all three factors. Underlying reasons include discrimination and Islamophobia, stereotyping, pressure from traditional families, lack of tailored advice around higher education choices and insufficient role models.

17. In addition many Muslim communities are concentrated in post-industrial areas with few employment opportunities. In 2016 a Policy Exchange report revealed that the former mill towns of Oldham, Bradford, Batley, Halifax, Blackburn, Keighley and Accrington - all with large south Asian populations - were among the ten worst integrated places in England and Wales.

18. Workplace diversity is further reduced by the tendency of many ethnic minority parents to steer gifted children towards a few favoured professions such as medicine and law whilst others follow their relatives into low-paid jobs with few opportunities for progression such as restaurants and taxi driving. However, QED Foundation has successfully used madrassahs as bases for
delivering careers advice to Muslim students and their families. We have also worked to strengthen links between these Islamic educational institutions and mainstream schools.

19. QED Foundation initiatives aimed at increasing workplace diversity have included:

- job 'melas' or fairs, where young people have face-to-face access to a wide range of employers
- producing a series of programmes promoting non-traditional careers with Yorkshire Television and distributing them to community groups throughout the region
- working with the Home Office to promote ‘fast-track’ Civil Service careers to high flyers from south Asian backgrounds
- supporting directors and senior managers of 800 large private and public sector organisations to recruit, retain and reward BME employees
- helping 350 small and medium-sized companies in England and Wales to address underrepresentation of ethnic groups

20. While much attention has been paid to levels of ethnic segregation in schools, there has been less focus on further and higher education. Ethnic minority students are greatly underrepresented at Russell Group universities and the EHRC report found that 89% of apprenticeship starters were white.

21. Recommendations

22. Young people from BME backgrounds should be encouraged to aspire to careers in a wide range of industrial sectors and at all levels of seniority.

23. Trade associations and professional bodies should do more to encourage men and women of all ethnicities to consider more diverse employment opportunities.

24. Universities, colleges and other educational institutions should build links with disadvantaged communities and offer additional support and mentoring to BME students.

25. Economic regeneration initiatives, including the proposed Northern Powerhouse, should ensure that people of all faiths and ethnicities will be able to share in the future prosperity of the area.

26. How important are levels of English proficiency for first and second generation immigrants and what could be done to increase them, including through support for ESOL classes? Are there particular barriers faced by newcomers to Britain? Could the naturalisation process, including the citizenship test, be improved and if so, how?

27. English language training is the single most important factor in facilitating the successful integration of new arrivals to the UK. The ability to communicate with people from the host community is also critical in promoting citizenship and civic engagement among second-generation immigrants, particularly women.

28. However, ESOL classes are best delivered as part of a holistic package of support. For example, QED Foundation was funded by the EU to run courses for third-country national women in Yorkshire and London including English language training. Students also benefited from support
with confidence building, communication skills, personal finance and accessing health, housing and education services. There were visits to employers to see the world of work at first hand and opportunities to explore British heritage and culture.

29. We have also trained English language teachers in Pakistan and run pre-departure courses to prepare over 1,000 women to join their husbands in the UK. This approach has since been adopted elsewhere in the EU and we have recently run a similar pilot programme for men in association with the University of Bristol.

30. Unfortunately the majority of interventions aimed at increasing English proficiency do not reach the people who are most in need of help. These people may be additionally handicapped by poor literacy levels in their own language and many college courses assume a higher degree of competence than is the case. Furthermore, institutional settings may be intimidating and unsuitable venues for educating people who have little experience of venturing outside their immediate community and limited access to transport.

In contrast, voluntary and community-based organisations are often able to meet the needs of the most isolated individuals because they have spent many years developing a deep understanding of the neighbourhoods they serve and winning the trust and goodwill of their diverse populations. They are also best placed to build bridges with wider society by engaging volunteers to help immigrants develop language skills and familiarise themselves with their surroundings.

31. However, their ability to deliver these much-needed services is now severely compromised as they have been progressively starved of resources, particularly the withdrawal of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. This programme was replaced by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund in all EU member states in 2015. Although the UK has been allocated €370m and the national programme states that the government welcomes the involvement of the voluntary and community sector, to date there have been no assurances that any financial support for its work will be forthcoming. Meanwhile organisations that are well placed to support the naturalisation process are being forced to scale back their operations, with the resultant loss of expertise and experienced staff.

32. Recommendations

33. English language tuition is best provided by trusted organisations and community anchors working at grass-roots level such as female-led madrassahs. Sufficient funding should be made available to cover outreach activities and offer crèche facilities to meet the students' childcare needs. Training should also be available at times that enable women to combine learning with family and home responsibilities. If necessary, the delivery of culturally appropriate tuition might entail single-sex classes.

34. In addition to ESOL classes, new arrivals need a wider range of support such as confidence building and an introduction to life in Britain.

35. Pre-departure training in English and life skills should be available should be available to migrants before departure to the UK.

36. ESOL provision should be extended to settled ethnic minority communities as well as new arrivals.
37. The government should make a firm commitment to set aside a proportion of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to support voluntary and community sector initiatives helping newcomers to settle in to life in the UK, including English classes.

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