Written evidence submitted by
Department for Communities and Local Government

Executive Summary

- The Government is clear that hate crime of any kind, directed against any community, race or religion has absolutely no place in our society.
- Our approach is set out through the cross-Government Hate Crime Action Plan published on 26 July 2016 which focuses on reducing all forms of hate crime including Islamophobia.
- We recognise that religious hate crime is increasing with particular concerns about under-reporting and improving awareness and our understanding of the nature of hate crime incidents.
- The Government has launched a new £2.4m funding scheme to help protect places of worship including mosques - and mandatory disaggregation of police religious hate crime data will start on 1 April 2017.
- DCLG is actively working in partnership with Muslim communities to offer reassurance that anti-Muslim hate crime is taken seriously and to focus our efforts on issues of concern to the community.
- DCLG has provided £760,000 funding to Tell MAMA to support and raise awareness of how to report anti-Muslim hate incidents.

Introduction

1. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) shares a trilateral responsibility for countering hate crime with the Home Office and Ministry of Justice. DCLG’s specific role is to help to create the environment that prevents hate crime from happening in the first place, and in particular to lead on preventing religious hate crime including anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred. DCLG welcomes this opportunity to submit written evidence on Islamophobia. Our tackling of Islamophobic incidents and attitudes takes place within the context of the Government’s overall approach towards countering hate crime.

Countering hate crime

2. Everyone in Britain has the right to feel safe and at ease in the place where they live. Hate crime of any kind directed against any community has absolutely no place in our society. The Government views all forms of hate crime with equal seriousness and concern. There is no place for treating victims differently regardless of their race, faith, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability.

3. We need to tackle hate crime effectively as these crimes have a deep impact on victims because they are targeted against some intrinsic part of their identity. The effect of these crimes is often felt not only by the victim, but also by family, friends, neighbours and others in their community. Hate crimes also go against the fundamental values of tolerance and respect for others that underpin our diverse
Through fear, abuse and violence, hate crime can limit people’s equality of opportunity and infringe their basic human rights.

There is a strong legal framework in place against race and religious discrimination and criminal penalties for offences such as incitement to racial and religious hatred and for racially or religiously aggravated assault and criminal damage. Those who perpetrate hate crimes of any kind will be punished with the full force of the law. Police forces continue to be alert to crimes being committed against members of all communities and take appropriate steps to safeguard people and property. Nobody in this country should live in fear because of who they are and the Government would urge anyone who witnesses a hate crime to report it so that this deplorable behaviour can be tackled head-on.

The government published in partnership with the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice on 26 July 2016, a new Hate Crime Action Plan which focuses on reducing all forms of hate crime including Islamophobia. This plan which builds on the success of ‘Challenge It, Report It, Stop It’ published in 2012 includes measures to increase the reporting of hate incidents and crimes by working with communities and police to develop third party reporting centres. The plan also provides stronger support for victims to help put a stop to this pernicious behaviour.

Alongside these commitments, the Government has launched a new £2.4m funding scheme to help protect mosques and other places of worship which are at risk of hate-related incidents. We have also introduced the mandatory disaggregation of religious hate crime data by police forces in England and Wales from 1 April 2017 to help reveal the true scale and nature of the problem. The indicative breakdown of police recorded religious hate crimes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for 2015/16 identified that of 4213 total reported incidents, 2372 (56.0%) were anti-Muslim in nature.

There was an increase in racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police following the EU referendum on 23 June 2016. This reflected general reports of a spike in hate crime and racist incidents taking place in communities following the UK’s decision to leave. However three months after the announcement of the referendum result, the number of reported hate crimes had decreased by 37% from the initial post-referendum peak. The Government is clear that there is no excuse for any form of intolerance, and those who break the law will be punished. We continue to work alongside communities and police to provide reassurance and monitor the situation.

Tackling anti-Muslim hatred

This Government has done more than any other to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. In 2012, we set up the first ever cross-government working group on anti-Muslim hatred which brings together a range of Government departments and key independent stakeholders to drive forward our work in countering anti-Muslim hatred wherever it appears. The working group has to date:

- Engaged with the Society of Editors and more recently with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to develop training for editors and journalists to tackle the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media.
• Raised awareness of the valuable role played by the provision of religious education in schools.
• Tackled hate crime on the internet by working with social media providers to increase the understanding of anti-Muslim hatred.
• Supported local workshops to build the capacity of community organisations to use social media effectively in order to promote positive narratives.
• Held a number of regional roadshows to promote integration and counter anti-Muslim hatred and engage communities about what more can be done.

9. The current Ministerial agreed priority work streams being undertaken by the working group are:

• Tackling the far right and counter jihadists
• Arranging a public transport awareness campaign
• Assessing the extent of anti-Muslim bullying in schools
• Devising training to improve Muslim literacy for journalists
• Improving the protection of mosques and Muslim community centres

Support for Tell MAMA

10. We are committed to building confidence and making it easier for victims of hate crime to come forward and report what has happened to them. A key part of this approach has been working with voluntary sector organisations who are independent of the police to encourage greater reporting of all hate crimes.

11. Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti Muslim Attacks) is recognised within and beyond Government as the only third party reporting organisation in the UK which is capable of carrying out work around tackling anti-Muslim hatred to the required standard. DCLG strongly supports the work of Tell MAMA and welcomes the recent launch of its National Hate Crime Awards which focus on the importance of standing up to all forms of hatred. We have provided them with around £760,000 funding since 2012.

12. Tell MAMA has played an important role in monitoring levels of anti-Muslim hate crime and helping to understand the nature of this, for example, the vulnerability of Muslim women on public transport. From 1 January to 31 December 2015, 2622 anti-Muslim hate incidents were reported to Tell MAMA by victims, witnesses, third parties or the police, compared to 729 in 2014. 2686 anti-Muslim hate incidents have been reported to Tell MAMA during the first nine months of 2016.

13. There is clear evidence from sources such as Tell MAMA that reports of religious hate crime spike following terror attacks at home or abroad, although it can vary dependent on the nature of that event. The largest increase Tell MAMA has reported was following the November 2015 Paris atrocities, when there was a particularly significant increase in reports during the first few days. The increase following the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015 was less, though there was a spike in reports of anti-Semitism to the Community Security Trust at this time. Tell MAMA has also reported significant increases following the EU Referendum vote which corresponds with our official statistics on religious hate crime. Reports of online hate crime start
instantly following any international incident and street-level based incidents normally take effect within 24 to 48 hours and then tend to return to more normal levels within 7 to 14 days.

14. Tell MAMA’s regional outreach programme has expanded, widened and deepened their activities in major urban areas across England with significant local Muslim populations in order to raise community awareness of how to report anti-Muslim hate incidents. This has led to improved relationships and confidence in countering anti-Muslim prejudice; increased advice and support to victims; and positive media coverage. Tell MAMA has also developed an increasingly close partnership with a growing number of English police forces which has strengthened the extent and quality of their reporting data.

**Educating young people and tackling anti-Muslim bullying**

15. As part of preventing hate crime, our approach is to tackle the prejudice and intolerance that fuels it, with a particular emphasis on educating young people. DCLG has supported the Anne Frank Trust which promotes Anne Frank’s message of compassion, respect, tolerance and understanding through education, highlighting the dangers of prejudice and discrimination. They work in schools within areas facing the most significant challenges to integration, particularly London and the West Midlands. We are also funding a project called StreetWise which specifically works to address anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic bullying in schools.

16. The Government takes tackling all forms of bullying, including that directed against Muslim pupils on racial and religious grounds, very seriously. A clear message has been sent to schools that they should deal with all forms of bullying and victimisation at the earliest opportunity and not allow pupils to suffer emotional or physical harm. All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy with measures to deal with bullying. Schools are free to develop their own anti-bullying standards, but how a school deals with these issues will inform its overall Ofsted judgement.

**Promoting integration**

17. Increased awareness, understanding and respect is central to our community integration agenda and building a successful society where all members value and respect each other. Britain has a proud tradition of tolerance within the law where individuals and groups behave in a courteous and considerate manner and respect the integrity of others. Any person is free to express their views and beliefs, but they also have a duty to behave responsibly and to respect other people’s rights. Our integration policy and projects aim to break down barriers, emphasise local action and bring people together; celebrating what we have in common rather than what divides us.

18. Since 2010 DCLG has provided over £60 million to support communities to come together. In the last two years alone, over half a million people have taken part in interfaith, social and other integration projects, bringing together people from all different faiths and backgrounds to make their area better.
19. We support a range of projects that support faith communities to work together and raise awareness of the consequences of hatred. Projects include Sadaqa Day, a Muslim-led day of social activism which took place in March 2016 and Nisa-Nashim which brings together Jewish and Muslim women around the themes of business, culture, social action and sports and well-being.

20. Since 2011, we have provided £9.5 million to Near Neighbours which encourages dialogue between people of different faiths and backgrounds. Near Neighbours has funded over 1100 small interfaith projects reaching over 940,000 people. Recent projects funded by Near Neighbours include the Salaam-Shalom Kitchen project run by the Nottingham Liberal Synagogue, encouraging Jewish and Muslim people to get to know each other, whilst also providing hot meals to vulnerable members of the community. In West London, Jewish, Muslim and Christian sixth form girls are learning computer coding together.

21. DCLG is also providing £1.2 million funding to the Remembering Srebrenica project to raise awareness of the fatal consequences of hatred and division and ensuring that lessons are learned.