Youth Work responses to prejudice and extremism

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• Academic evidence about Prejudice and young people
• Educational approaches that can work and those that won’t
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Aims of the session

• Make sense of what’s going on at present
• Identify how to ‘up our game’ on this

• These are national problems
• Youth Work has a unique role to play
• You already ‘know’ a lot about these issues
• We need to be able to discuss these issues openly and honestly
Academic evidence - all young people

- ‘Parallel lives’ and segregation has a negative effect on prejudices about ‘others’
- Policies of past twenty years have made these separate identities stronger
- Economic change has had a negative effect on the identities of the less well-off
- Internet and media can re-enforce prejudices
- Political groups have a similar role – ‘cumulative extremism’
Academic evidence – Muslim young people

• ‘Muslim’ identity is very strong, as shown by our local research
• Many positives about that but it does have downsides
• Islamist ideology is being promoted by some groups, like HUT, and on the internet
• Some individuals can then travel further towards violent extremism
• PREVENT has an unhelpful focus on Muslims only
Academic evidence – White young people

• Focus on ethnicity has ignored economic class, so ignoring the situation of the White working class
• There has been a ‘white backlash’ against anti-racism, as it’s sometimes been understood and practised
• Groups like BNP have stirred such views up, but they are reflecting as much as leading
• Young people express ‘race’ prejudices partly because ‘race’ is what we always seem to talk about
Educational responses – what **doesn’t** work

- Too much stress on rules that ‘police’ and judge young peoples’ attitudes, language and behaviour around these issues can be counter-productive
- Input that is like school, ‘lecturing’ them won’t work
- Throwing young people together without careful planning or without their agreement will end badly!
Educational responses – what can work?

- Well-planned Cohesion work that brings people together – 'Contact theory'
- Work being fun and stressing positives
- A 'human rights' approach that focuses on what we all want and all have in common
- Political education processes that enable young people to learn how to debate and argue about things openly
- Work around how to understand the media and the internet
- Work with young men around macho attitudes
Moving forward – key questions

• What are we doing well at the moment?
• What do we need to get better at, or do differently?