

Conclusion / Summary cont..

Objective 1: Understanding the Impact of Ms. Champion's comments on the Community

An overwhelming theme was an increase in verbal and physical racist abuse. Respondents reported suffering online abuse, being spat at in the street, being accused of being pedophiles and groomers, which was in the backdrop of an already heightened and increased level of perception of racial abuse over the preceding few years; a perception corroborated by the proliferation of 16 right wing marches in Rotherham, which included activity and presence from banned far-right extremist groups. *"Hate speech, being spat at on the street, racist slurs."* (Man, Respondent ref 75) *"I personally feel under attack, as does my family & community in which I live. White people in my area are being verbally abusive & there is tension in the area. Over the yrs, there has been increase of racist abuse in my area which the police had admitted. Sarah Champion's comments will only fuel this bigotry"*. (Woman, Respondent ref 4)

Respondents observed that the perpetrators were from diverse segments of society, men, women and children. *"I and my family have been bearers of racist abuse from white individuals from men, women & even children after Champion's comment"* (Man, Respondent ref 84)

Respondents reported feeling isolated and alone, being divided from the wider community, feeling frightened for their personal safety, and being apprehensive about going about their daily lives for fear of abuse or attack. Respondents reported being abused in public and community spaces like Clifton Park, which is concerning because it further serves to alienate this community from the wider community, and further sow seeds of division and exclusion which is contrary to the stated objectives of Government. *"Frightened to go out and do daily chores as Champion's statement has stirred racial tension once again"* (Man, Respondent ref 34)

Respondents reported being abused at work, by colleagues and customers. *Whilst working late one night, a woman commented, "you not going to rape me"*. (Man, Respondent ref 96)

One of the most concerning themes was the impact upon school-age children, who were identified as being stigmatised and targeted following the publication of the article and contemporaneous in time to the publication of the article. One respondent, ref 162 remarked, *"My children who don't usually get involved in politics have shared both girls & boys that they feel angry with these comments- also have had to challenge work colleagues who have said they agree with what had been said 'that Pakistani culture teaches Pakistani men that ok to rape white girls. Also have spent since 2011 tackling misconception that Asian girls not abused & nowhere in Sarah's comments was this highlighted"*.

Others commented that the comments further burdened school age children who are already dealing with the consequences of events in Rotherham, and in hand with the governments Prevent strategy. *"I have young polite, caring respecting, loving boys who attend local comprehensive School, that week the article was published, and they got called rapist Paki's. I was mortified when my sons told me that. Things are hard enough in schools and in the community for young people in Rotherham (through no fault of their own but because of their ethnicity and their religious beliefs) since the publication of J report and the governments prevent strategy. Sadly, Sarah's article added fuel and divided the community further"*. Woman, Respondent ref 8

95% of the Respondents described the impact of the comments as ranging between fairly significant and very significant. In terms of how confident respondents were in Sarah Champion, of the respondents, two thirds answered the question, with 84% stating they were either unconfident or very unconfident. When the question was clarified further by identifying whether the **comments**, had impacted on their perceived level of confidence in Ms. Champion, **an overwhelming 89% stated that their confidence in her had changed since her comments**. The respondents made it clear that the impact of her comments, had affected their confidence in her in a significant way, and that **after her comments, their confidence in her had changed from positive to negative**.

Having expressed that they did not have confidence in Ms. Champion as their MP, **71% of respondents who answered the question, said they did not think anyone represented them politically**. This is consistent with other themes identified in the report, **nameiy feelings of isolation, exclusion and lack of a voice**. When they were asked to explain what influenced their response to the question of whether they felt politically represented, one of the themes to emerge was that **the community had no political influence, again tying in with themes of feeling isolated and ignored**. It is notable that some respondents remarked how their voices were consistently ignored in **substitute for the voices of 'community leaders' who they considered did not represent them and were motivated by self interest in the same way they felt politicians on a local and to a lesser extent, nationally, were**.

Objective 2: Hear / listen to our voice, understand our hurt

Integral to the success of this **grass-roots, community commissioned report** is that elected officials and other stakeholders through the publication of this report and its intelligence and data, get a true sense and extent of the hurt experienced by the Rotherham Pakistani community since the CSE scandal. The sense communicated by the project group and the findings of this survey is that the respondents feel exhausted, disappointed, fearful and strategically excluded from the political process and local political engagement processes. Rather than including the local community in democratic processes, the authority is drafting strategies and proposals to superficially impose their intentions.

Rather than including the local community in democratic processes, the authority is drafting strategies and proposals to superficially impose their intentions.

The fact that nor the government appointed commissioners, or the officers had the gumption to appoint a senior manager from the local community, following the Government intervention shows the depth of trust issues that now exist. It sends a very distinct and clear message that we cannot be trusted. It also represents a hugely missed opportunity. Shakoora, Group member

The project groups perception is one of abandonment and isolation. It is notable that in the wake of the comments from Ms Champion, not a single elected Councillor initially spoke out against the comments, until a local human rights charity, JUST Yorkshire, based in Rotherham did⁴. Not until JUST's statements were published, did local or national politicians⁵ stand up in opposition to Ms Champion's comments. Additionally, a local Pakistani / Kashmiri Councillor released a statement to add support to JUST Yorkshire's press release.

For the local community at least, the silence from almost all local elected officials was deafening. It is also notable that the narrative which has been deployed by elected councillors in the last 2/3 years to discuss the far-right proliferation in Rotherham, reflected by over 16 marches in almost as many months, is deeply concerning; on one occasion, it is alleged elected Councillors in a public meeting, shortly before a far-right protest in February 2017, described the far-right protesters and those uniting under the ANTIFA banner, as **'just as bad as each other'**.

This comment went unchallenged and it gives an insight into the challenges facing the Pakistani community and the sense of hostility that they perceive. That elected officials would seek to attach to the far-right and ANTIFA, the same moral equivalency, is all the more concerning, given that at the time of this particular protest,

- Muhsin Ahmed had already been murdered in a racist attack, by perpetrators deploying the same language and slurs as those used by far-right protesters
- Ismail Hussain had been subject to a racially motivated attack which resulted in a finger chopped off with a machete - he too was called a groomer.
- Some of the far-right protests had been organised by National Action¹, and granted official police permission to protest, a group now banned because of its extremism and violence.
- By the time of this protest in February 2017, two juries had already unanimously acquitted the Rotherham 12¹, and convicted members of the far-right groups of violent disorder.
-

Objective 3: Build bridges not walls

It is notable that the project group had already made attempts to build bridges by writing to the Leader of Rotherham Council, Chris Read, and requested a meeting to discuss the impact of Sarah Champion's comments and to try to identify an agreed way forward.

Notwithstanding this, this report is motivated in part, to identify failings, feelings of hurt, and then to open meaningful lines of communication between the Council / state and the community from a grass roots up; to that end the Pakistani community in Rotherham should be commended for their patience and resilience and determination to seek dialogue and in their willingness to build bridges despite everything they have been subject to, as referenced in the background and context of this report.

Objective 4: Hate incident or crime?

Evidence from the findings of the survey, suggests that at the very least, there is potential that a hate incident has occurred as a result of Ms Champion's comments.

It is arguable that Ms Champion made her comments in full knowledge that they would or *could* incite Islamophobia, and therefore by extension Islamophobic attacks, as evidenced by her comment to the Today Programme, *"...I didn't sleep last night, coming on talking about this, because I know every time I talk about it, the level of Islamophobia increases..."*.

Whether the findings of this community survey meet the respective legal threshold to attribute to Ms Champion any hate incident or there is any crime related culpability is not for this report, or the project group to decide; that is a matter for the respective statutory authorities.

More fundamentally, if it transpires that during the period of early to mid-August there was no noticeable increase in community tensions / or racial incident reporting, then the authorities must determine why, despite the sentiments expressed in the survey, the community did not report incidents to the authorities, and whether any failure to report denotes a current lack of confidence from the community in Rotherham's statutory authorities; this has not been assessed in this report.

If the local or national Labour party is truly a champion of diversity, race equality and committed to tackling discrimination in all its forms, then it must make the decision whether it will review the findings of this report and provide the Rotherham community a deserved response.

This report highlights that whilst Rotherham Council may have convinced Government appointed Commissioners and the Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, that the Council is now moving forward and has the diligence and governance in place to manage its own functions, from a BAME / Pakistani community perspective, as evinced in the light of the views of the respondents, who have communicated feelings and experiences of isolation and demonization, nothing could be further from the truth in respect of its relationship with the local authority and its functions in meeting their individual and collective needs. Whilst this report rightly looks into the impact of Ms Sarah Champion's comments, it has to be asked of the media and other local stakeholders why none of them have been inquisitive of the language used in Rotherham, creating the narrative underpinning the term "grooming gang" that has gripped the conscience of the state, and if this is prescribed exclusively for Asian communities. And in that context, why has there been a deathly silence in understanding the impact of this narrative on local race relations – directly or inadvertently giving rise to hate incidents, murderous crimes and an individual losing his limb.

15/03/2018

Temperature Check Executive Summary (Report)

Understanding and assessing the impact of Rotherham MP, Sarah Champion's comments in the Sun Newspaper on 10 August 2017. Ref:

"British Pakistani men are raping and exploiting white girls... and it's time we faced up to it..."

Report Authors:
Zaiban Alam & Nadeem Murtuja

just
YORKSHIRE

Promoting racial justice, human rights and equality



Preface

On the morning of 10 August 2015, 81-year-old Mushin Ahmed was savagely set upon...by two white supremacists from Rotherham, Dale Jones and Damien Hunt, both 29, as he walked to Mosque, a short distance from his house. They accused him indiscriminately of being a 'groomer'. Mr Ahmed died of his injuries 11 days later.

Exactly two years later, on 10 August 2017, even as Mr Ahmed's family and community remembered his horrific murder for no other reason than that he was a Muslim male from Rotherham, and therefore labelled with the moniker 'groomer', their Member of Parliament, Sarah Champion, was fanning the flames of racial hatred by calling out 'British Pakistani men' as sexual predators who work in gangs to groom and sexually exploit mainly white pubescent girls. Suddenly, all Pakistani males, or anyone who looked like them, were held to be implicated and all personally responsible.

- How could she have been so insensitive as to write her article and give those interviews to the media two years to the day after the racist murder of an 81 old Yemeni elder whom his murderers dubbed a 'groomer'?
- How could she not have related the extent of neo-fascist harassment of the Pakistani community in her constituency to the likely impact of her utterances about 'British Pakistani men raping and exploiting white girls...?', especially as she herself told the Today Programme on Radio 4: **'...I didn't sleep last night, coming on talking about this, because I know every time I talk about it, the level of Islamophobia increases'**?
- In what way could she be said to be representing all her constituents if she, by default, gives such encouragement to the neo-fascists in her constituency to continue their racist harassment of the Pakistani community?
- More fundamentally, what has been the impact on race relations in Rotherham as a result of the neo-fascist activity – and why are the state sponsored agencies in Rotherham silent, or non-inquisitive to understand that impact?

Hopefully, this report will be a watershed moment for Rotherham and a wakeup call for Sarah Champion and all stakeholders, to begin making amends to the Pakistani community and stand together with that community - and in doing so collectively decide and agree a way forward – the recommendations in this report surely provide them with a good starting point.



Professor Gus John

Executive Summary

Commission of Survey:

JUST Yorkshire, a charity that promotes racial and social justice, civil liberties and human rights was commissioned by a group of community members, activists and organisations to support the development, design and analysis of an online survey and report to assess the impact of Ms Sarah Champion's comments in the Sun Newspaper on August 2017 on the local Rotherham / Pakistani / British community: **"British Pakistani men are raping and exploiting white girls...and its time we faced up to it...."**

JUST accepted the request to analyse and write this report (without remuneration) on behalf of the group subject to the following provisos:

- A) That this report is nothing more than a temperature check report that is only focusing on one segment of the local community
- B) That the atmosphere that exists in Rotherham cannot be directly attributed to Ms Sarah Champion's comments;
- C) In that context, it is very difficult to assess if the impact of Ms Sarah Champion's comments has directly resulted in an increase in racism, islamophobia or community tensions etc. this can only be determined by South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham Council through their community tensions monitoring processes;
- D) Therefore, this report is a temperature check at best- providing the local Pakistani community a platform to respond directly to Ms. Sarah Champion's comments and have their voices heard.
- E) To acknowledge that Ms Sarah Champion should be commended for the invaluable support she has provided to *some victims of the CSE scandal*.

The Questionnaire / Survey:

- Agreed survey should be done online to ensure a degree of independence in relation to the results.
- Online survey will unintentionally exclude some people.
- Survey must not be leading or biased.
- Survey Monkey tool to be used
- In total 15 questions – both open and closed.
- Survey ran from 28th September 2017 – 17th October 2017
- There were in total 165 respondents – 30% women and 70% men.

Agreed Objectives of Survey:

- 1) **How did the comments make the community feel / what has been the impact.**
- 2) **Hear / listen to our voice / understand our hurt**
- 3) **Opportunity to Build Bridges not Walls**
- 4) **Hate incident / or crime?**

Conclusion / Summary:

Sarah Champion's comments dismayed an entire community, coming as they did in the backdrop of all that Rotherham and its diverse communities have endured and experienced over a 7-year period; not least the considerable and probable impact on race relations post the CSE scandal in the town.

"I am regretting voting for this lady. She has undone a lot of the hard work that our community is doing to bring about community cohesion (Man, Respondent ref 30) Disrespectful to the whole Pakistani community (Man, Respondent ref 17)"

Since 2012, there has been a series of official reports and investigations, concluding amongst other things, that predominantly the offenders in respect of CSE and grooming in Rotherham were males from a Pakistani heritage. The Oxford definition of heritage is: *cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations*. In essence, the usage of the term heritage in this context is potentially very problematic, as it condemns entire generations of Pakistani's.

"Making this statement clearly creates a mind-set amongst the certain parts of the indigenous population who are unable to decipher the false from the truth. In result regard the Pakistani community as the culprit in general which is a very dangerous precedent (Man, Respondent ref 161)"
"Painting all Pakistani men with the same brush (Man, Respondent ref 26)"

Persistent references to the ethnicity when perpetrators are deemed to be non-white not only racialises the CSE scandal; it inadvertently / potentially fuels the "othering" of minorities and causes further division on racial, ethnic and faith lines.

"These kinds of comments cause division and hatred. Which we are experiencing (Woman, Respondent ref 9)"

It is clear from the numerous comments given by respondents that they feel this method of "state legitimized" ethnic and religious profiling potentially criminalises, dehumanizes and insults the culture, faith and traditions of an entire community¹, which serves to potentially isolating and marginalise the Pakistani community in their own home town. Moreover, it potentially legitimises the racially motivated abuse and crimes the community has been subject to since 2012 and potentially creates issues of mistrust between state and citizen.

"Frightened to go out and do daily chores as Champion's statement has stirred racial tension once again (Man, Respondent ref 34) I don't trust politicians. Local MPs useless. Councillors do nothing either. (Woman, Respondent ref 4)"
"We have seen hate crime increase over the last few years and not one councillor has made an attempt to address these issues (Man, Respondent ref 165)"

Reports, both in the media and research commissioned by the state, seem to conclude that offenders from this particular section of the community were allowed to act with impunity in respect of sexual offending due to institutionalised political correctness or because politicians wanted to keep a "lid on it".

Moreover there have been a number of allegations made by Government appointed 'Tsars' that the community was to blame for not integrating, whilst deliberately sidestepping legitimate concerns relating to decades of institutional and direct discrimination that the BAME community in Rotherham will likely have been subject to, and how that might have had a significant impact on the question on integration and state responsibility.

These marches and demonstrations together with the comments from Sarah Champion have had a deeply detrimental and profound impact on both the Pakistani and broader community, particularly in the context of race relations on the ground.

"feel vulnerable, a target, basically living is a nightmare with Sarah Champion's hanging over your head (Man, Respondent ref 148)"
"Me and an Asian friend went shopping in Rotherham town centre. When a group of Caucasian men started calling us groomers. We felt really scared and thought they were going to attack us (Woman, Respondent ref 134)"

Putting it simply, the Pakistani / Kashmiri community in Rotherham has been under siege since the CSE scandal first broke, and arguably, subjected to suspicion in the court of public opinion, whether that be the media or the state.

"We get abused daily when we are traveling in the car or in town or in the supermarket (Woman, Respondent ref 124)"

From the findings of this survey, it is apparent that many have felt demonised and potentially criminalized, and arguably, even scapegoated. Media coverage is seemingly more focused on those perpetrators that are deemed to be of a Pakistani / Asian ethnicity, rather than white.

"I feel the media and the establishment are blaming the Pakistani community for the failings of police and state organizations"
Man, Respondent ref 110

This backdrop of feeling victimised / under siege and being treated differently and unjustly for the criminal actions of a few, puts the feeling of the Pakistani community in Rotherham into context, and explains why Ms. Champion's comments have had such a damaging impact. From the survey, it is evident that Ms. Champion was perceived by many local respondents as one of their own, as she was someone who the community had trusted and voted for.

"I feel our MP has turned her back on the Muslim community. Despite knowing the repercussions, she did not feel any sense of remorse and proceeded with her comments. She has isolated a whole community and left them open to attack. (Man, Respondent ref 160)
"Horried, humiliated and terribly let down by the very person I had voted for, who twice came and cold canvassed me at my home and asked me for my vote" (Man, Respondent ref 34)
"It was a racial comment didn't expect from Sarah Champion, it wasn't what we thought the outcome would be by voting her" (Woman, Respondent ref 67)

The survey identified, that there seems to be a sense within the community, that Ms Champion's comments, have somehow crossed a point of no return. The anger, hurt and sense of betrayal felt by the Pakistani community, and conveyed in the findings of this survey, has been palpable, as has been their bewilderment.

She brought shame upon Rotherham. She should no longer be our MP. (Man, Respondent ref 22)

When members of the local community approached and sought support from independent charities, namely JUST Yorkshire and Apna Haq to plan and undertake this survey, they did so because of trust, frustration, and betrayal issues. There seems to be a sense in the community, as frequently evinced by respondents in the survey, that elected officials and statutory agencies have withdrawn their democratic support, voice and safeguards for the Pakistani community of Rotherham.

"Justice delayed, is justice denied – we have come together not because of us, we have come together for our children and our grandchildren, we have to hope / make prayers that their lives will be better than ours – we have to make prayers for all victims – those we know of, and those that the state chooses to ignore" Project Group Member: Raja Khushnood Khan

Rather, the common view in the project group was that by association of their ethnicity and demography, and to an extent their faith, this community is being viewed by media and state agencies, through the same prism as pedophiles and sexual abusers, a prism that other communities / perpetrators that share ethnicity "or heritage/culture" with the abusers from Westminster, the Catholic Church, Football association or even Showbusiness are not subjected to.

"Why is it that the media and state are hell-bent on creating this warped narrative that pedophilia and sexual abuse is inherent and synonymous with just the Pakistani community, though the evidence and analysis of the actual statistics would state the complete opposite if the entire pedophilia spectrum was evaluated – it feels like 1930's Germany – pre the persecution." Group member – Abrar Javid

"Since the Jay report and the intervention of Government appointed commissioner's, local statutory agencies are more focused on reputational damage – rather than working with, or for the community, they all seem to have their head in a scrum – failing to see the bigger picture, that the first and last role of the state is to democratically serve and support the whole community – including the Pakistani community. The only goal these local agencies seem to have is to rid themselves of commissioner's – rather than understand that the Government just should have pushed them to develop better community relations not worse, that includes not isolating and criminalising the Pakistani community"
Shakoore, Group Member

One member of the project group stated that he still recalls the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner Alan Billings, stating at a hustling that faith should never have been referenced in profiling perpetrators as it condemns entire communities – despite this admission, the profiling still continues.

"The hurtful element is the impact it has on our children in schools, who are told that they have a problem with respecting women and are more likely to be pedophiles" (Man, Respondent ref 1)