

Build Bridges & Move Forward Together Feedback Report for Stakeholders



Community Meeting Facilitated by
Rotherham Muslim Community Forum

Community Meeting, Chair's Foreword

When Rotherham Muslim Community Form (RMCF), associate human rights charities¹ and local community individuals approached JUST Yorkshire to write the Temperature Check report, we did so because we felt all other routes of stakeholder engagement had failed, and for many Rotherham Pakistanis the final nail was the fallout from Sarah Champion's opinion piece in the SUN newspaper, and the series of interviews that followed. The hurt from that opinion piece and those interviews, including disappointment has been felt by us all, as evidenced in the recently published Temperature Check report². The notion, that reported and recorded hate crime fell after the publication of that opinion piece is, we believe, further evidence of impact and lack of community confidence in state agencies and democratic representation – this is because in Rotherham, the community survey we instigated for people to tell us about their experience, told its own story, a story which will lay bare the 'hate' impact over that period if stakeholders read the report carefully for themselves. If there ever was an indicator to measure public confidence amongst Rotherham's Pakistani community, this is it.

Commissioning JUST Yorkshire to undertake this work and collate evidence was not a decision that was taken lightly; we knew of the impact and magnitude of our decision, particularly for all stakeholders and Sarah Champion herself. At the time of (collectively) making this decision we had hoped that when we (the community) presented the evidence, stakeholders would be supportive and rush to engage in an attempt to build bridges; sadly not a single stakeholder of Rotherham wished to publicly engage when the report either was sent to them, or with the report's findings at the meeting on March 15 – ironically it is often minorities that are accused as being 'hard to reach', and so this lack of engagement was, extraordinary. Instead the community was presented with several different responses / counter arguments, such as, the words in the report were provocative, questioning of the methodology and the sample size etc. It was incredibly disappointing that not a single stakeholder even attempted to question the welfare and civil liberty impact issues that the report was clearly highlighting, ones which were recently covered by Big Issue North.

I am of Pakistani heritage, and I have lived and raised my family in Rotherham for 31 years, spending most of my professional life speaking out against the abuse of people, mainly young vulnerable girls and women including CSE survivors, holding people, mostly men, of all ethnicities and backgrounds to account, through either direct or strategic actions. I have experienced challenge, and years of cultural abuse for taking the stance that I do – all the women that work in this field, of my faith or none, including Sarah Champion would tell you exactly the same – the power and anti-abuse struggles of generations past, are still the same

¹ The Monitoring Group, Rotherham Taxi Association, Apna Haq etc
<https://justyorkshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Version-10--Final-Sarah-Champion-Impact-Report-Rotherham-.pdf>

struggles that we experience today, and CSE is no different, as articulated by Judge Penny Moorland³ when sentencing the Newcastle gang that abused vulnerable young girls.

Today, as someone who is rooted in the local multi-cultural community of Rotherham, I sense growing vulnerabilities and insecurities within that community, through no fault of their own, unless ethnicity, faith and geography are now pre-determinants of propensity to fault. I write this foreword because I can visualize this community on a split screen, knowing where this community is now, and where it potentially will be if the people in power do not engage and understand this community's hurt, and the multi-layered trust issues, that are seeping into the psyche of sections within sections of all communities of Rotherham. A failure to meaningfully engage, understand the impact of the last seven years, and build two-way relationships will leave voids and vacuums for hate, anger and radicalization to grow, as evidenced in Muhsin Ahmed's case. My fear is that Rotherham will by default, create segregated community enclaves divided by non-visible ethnic and faith lines, which once rooted will be difficult to weed out.

The meeting that I chaired on the 15th of March set out to do three things:

- a) Present the voice of the Pakistani community of Rotherham to Stakeholders;
- b) To re-engage the MP and for Stakeholders to fully understand the hurt being felt by the Pakistani community of Rotherham; and
- c) Stakeholders to take collective responsibility to commence the building of bridges so that everyone can move forward together.

The community meeting was hugely successful in unifying an already dis-spirited and frustrated community, though it was not helped by the fact that not a single stakeholder, nor the elected MP, Sarah Champion deemed it important enough to attend. Without question, many of the 200 people or so that did attend the meeting felt deeply disrespected, with people observing that ***'if we are not even worthy of having a meeting with, how can we even consider building bridges and move forward...'*** It was a sentiment, to which, none of the facilitators could provide a logical response; in fact, it further compounded the feeling of abandonment and trust issues expressed in the Temperature Check report by the community.

This community feedback report for stakeholders is a further attempt by Rotherham's Pakistani community to engage and encourage stakeholders to meet with constituents so that foundations to build bridges, can be planned and secured. It would be a complete and utter travesty given the work the community has undertaken thus far, to get to this point in evidencing impact of everything that has happened in Rotherham, including the cost to the

³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/newcastle-grooming-gang-asian-white-girls-not-targeted-race-judge-court-sentencing-rape-sexual-a7931276.html>

social fabric of this town, if we still cannot agree to develop a joint / co-produced strategy to move forward together.

For me, the community meeting on March 15 allowed people to breathe again, it was very moving, positive and productive; a report⁴ now exists that the community believe is their own watershed moment, that clearly highlights for the Pakistani community, the issues and impact of racialisation of the CSE scandal in Rotherham. Whether stakeholders agree with all the report's findings or not, one cannot ignore the impact racialization is having on ordinary people's lives, on children and by default on CSE survivors too. This feedback report for stakeholders contains a broad / draft proposal that requires the engagement and the coming together of people and Stakeholders, so Rotherham can move forward together.



Zlakha Ahmed MBE

Chair of Community Meeting, March 15
CEO Apna Haq / JUST Board Member

⁴ <https://justyorkshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Version-10--Final-Sarah-Champion-Impact-Report-Rotherham-.pdf>

Key Findings

Closed Stakeholder Meeting:

Attendees: Phil Turner, Professor Gus John, Nadeem Murtuja, Zaiban Alam, Abrar Javid, Shakoor Adalat, Dr Waqas Tufail, Maarya

- Apologies were noted on behalf of each stakeholder – no stakeholder sent a deputy on their behalf.
- Attendees felt it was very disrespectful that not a single stakeholder had the courtesy to attend the meeting, despite the several attempts and routes utilised to engage them – including sending a questionnaire, premised on the report, for feedback.
- Lack of attendance further confirmed the findings from the report in terms of representation and feelings of abandonment.

Apologies Received:

- Sajid Javid MP – due to parliamentary business – though wished the facilitators all the success;
- Alan Billings SYP PCC – Wished the facilitators all the success / JUST requested for a deputy to be sent instead
- Chris Read Leader RMBC – received the invitation and sent apologies, though sent a note of actions the Council is currently undertaking. JUST requested the Council to send a deputy.
- Sharon Kemp CEO RMBC – received the invitation and sent apologies, though sent a note of actions Council is taking. JUST requested the Council to send a deputy.
- Jayne Senior MBE – No feedback
- Dawn Butler MP – sent an apology and requested to be invited to the next meeting.
- Chief Constable Steven Watson – Received apology / JUST requested a deputy to be sent instead / or the District Commander – informed deputy is otherwise engaged.
- Sarah Champion MP – sent apology, can't attend – though sent a note via Labour members (see appendix A)

Action Point:

1. The attendees agreed that JUST Yorkshire should send out a press release, which includes feedback from the community to clarify all matters raised, and which should be encapsulated in a Stakeholder / Community Feedback report in a further attempt to engage local stakeholders.

2. All attendees agreed that all the points in Sarah Champion's note should be responded to fully (see appendix B) – though the emphasis from this point forward must be about building bridges and moving forward.
3. For the report to include an outline plan to commence the building bridges process.

Feedback on Temperature Check Report

Recommendations:

R1 / Public Inquiry:

Community Feedback:

Overwhelming support for a public / citizens inquiry – Hillsborough was used as an example to follow. There was a real emphasis on the importance of this being grass-roots led, not necessarily requiring central government permission, rather the focus should be on local stakeholder engagement and agreement. The emphasis and the focus of the inquiry must be on understanding impact, learning lessons and moving forward together.

R2 / Responsibility:

Community Feedback:

Overwhelming feeling amongst the community was / is that they would like all stakeholders to meet and engage with them.

R3 / Relationships (Build Bridges):

Community Feedback:

Overwhelming support from literally all the attendees that bridges and relationships need to be built and recognised as a key priority. The status quo cannot remain as it currently is.

R4 / Moving Forward Together:

Community Feedback:

Overwhelming support that everyone needs to move forward together – and unless we can all reconcile with the past, collectively learn lessons, this will be difficult to achieve. Through the publication of the Temperature Check report, the strength of community and self-organisation provides the community with a platform to build from.

Draft Proposal / For Discussion: Build Bridges and Move Forward Together

★ = Key Milestones

Milestones	May 2018 (M1)	June 2018 (M2 / 3)	July 2018 (M4)	Aug 2018 (M4)	Sept 2018 (M5)	Oct 2018 (M6)	Nov 2018 (M7)	Dec 2018 (M8)
Phase 1: Prepare and Reconcile								
Establish (interim) small working group / involve local people (M1)	★							
Agree Terms of Reference for (interim) small working group (M2)	←→							
Review report recommendations and reconcile work under way by stakeholders – draft a single plan for engagement and consultation purposes with Pakistani / BME community / agree a timeline (M3)	←→	★						
Phase 2: Coming together of people and stakeholders								
Facilitate community meetings / workshops / discuss single plan that includes a commitment to develop a community governance structure that can feed into Council / partnership decision making structures and is rooted / connected to existing (diverse) community pathways. Invite all stakeholders to meetings (M4)		←→		★				
Draft report from consultation / community meetings / workshops underway / redraft single plan / present proposal for governance structure and agree methods of sharing information and communications with the community (M5)		←→		★				
Disband small working group (JUST Yorkshire exits) Bring together new project board – draft a detailed / fully resourced project plan focusing on key themes / agreed priorities (M6)				←→	★			
Facilitate community conference / present work undertaken thus far / ensure all stakeholders attend under the principle of Building Bridges and Moving Forward Together / Celebrate local talent and success (M7)				←→	★			
Phase 3: Mobilisation / Implementation								
Launch of Project Board					←→	★		
TBC					←			→
TBC					←→			→
TBC							←→	★

Appendix A: Sarah Champion, MP response to report including apology:

Dear Friend

I am writing to make you aware of a report being launched today by Just Yorkshire titled "Understanding and assessing the impact of Rotherham MP, Sarah Champion's comments in the Sun Newspaper on 10 August 2017". It is referring to the interview I gave on Radio 4 and the article I wrote in response to the conviction of the Newcastle child sexual exploitation grooming gang in August 2017.

I was mortified that The Sun twisted my article and then the following day referenced it in a hate-filled article by Trevor Kavanagh. As a consequence, I stepped down from my Shadow Cabinet position and circulated an apology (included below) through the Council of Mosques to members of Rotherham's Pakistani community as I was deeply sorry for any hurt or adverse reaction I had inadvertently caused them.

My article was seven months ago. The report by Just Yorkshire is based on an extremely limited survey, distributed and promoted through networks that are not made in any way clear in the report. It lays the blame for the hate crime faced by the Pakistani community, past and present, at my feet. They are entitled to their opinions but it is disappointing they did not consult with me over their findings or give me the right to reply before the report was circulated.

I am elected to represent all of Rotherham and I am very proud that the town has once again united as one community after we discovered the full horror of child sexual exploitation. I do not see how a report using highly provocative language against me aids us as a town or aids me to represent all of my constituents.

I am expecting a strong response to the report, which is why I wanted to contact you directly. Please be assured that I will continue to be your representative. I will not cease my fight to prevent all forms of child abuse, nor my opposition to hate crime and racism. I will continue fight to bring justice for the victims and survivors in our town and to strengthen our community.

kindest regards

Sarah Champion MP
Member of Parliament for Rotherham

A column appeared in my name in the The Sun last Friday following on from the conviction of child abusers in Newcastle. My aim was to try and open the debate about a very specific form of child sexual exploitation, on street gang grooming and abuse.

However, The Sun decided to make the headline and opening sentences highly inflammatory and they could be taken to vilify an entire community on the basis of race, religion or country of origin.

I did not write the headline or opening sentences, which were stripped of any nuance about the complex issue of grooming gangs, which have exploited thousands in my constituency.

I apologise for the offence caused by the extremely poor choice of words in The Sun article. The article should not have gone out in my name and I apologise unreservedly that it did.

The Sun followed the piece up with a repulsive and extreme Islamophobic column by Trevor Kavanagh.

I am ashamed that he made positive reference to my own piece. We must always stand up against racism and prejudice, whatever form it takes.

I am concerned that my continued position in the Shadow Cabinet would distract from the crucial issues around child protection which I have campaigned on my entire political career. It is therefore with regret that I tendered my resignation as Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities.

I am particularly sorry for the hurt I know the piece has caused the Rotherham British-Pakistani community, with whom I have always valued my strong and positive relationship. I do hope this clarification and my sincere apology will go some way to healing these wounds and that we can continue to work together for the betterment of our community

Appendix B

Sarah Champion Note:

- Sarah Champion's note was shared with all attendees at the closed stakeholder meeting – all the attendees strongly disputed the content of the note, particularly in relation to the assertions that the report used provocative language, and that Sarah Champion was being blamed for past and present hate crime. The following reference / paragraph was highlighted from the report that fully counter-acts the assertions:

2.4 JUST accepted the request to analyse and write this report (for free) 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; and
 - c) In that context, it is incredibly difficult to assess if the impact of Ms Sarah Champions 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 report at best – providing the local Pakistani community a platform to respond directly to Ms. Sarah Champion's comments and have their voice 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.
- Sarah Champion makes the point in her note that *'The report by Just Yorkshire is based on an extremely limited survey, distributed and promoted through networks that are not made in any way clear in the report'*. Attendees were disappointed that nowhere in Sarah Champion's note does she raise concerns about the impact on the Pakistani community, including children, women and men, cited in the report – rather the focus is to question the methodology;
 - Sarah Champion makes no reference to the fact that she has a duty/responsibility to have directly engaged with local constituents in the planning for / or the immediate aftermath of the publication of the SUN article.
 - Attendees confirmed on 15th March 2018, that at least 3 members of the Rotherham Council of Mosques had no knowledge of Sarah Champion's apology that she circulated in August 2017. Attendees asserted that as the local MP, Sarah Champion has a democratic responsibility to speak and engage with constituents particularly on issues as important as the Sun article, which evidently caused significant hurt, a hurt which Sarah Champion acknowledges in her apology.
 - Attendees shared that the report clearly provides steps / recommendations for Rotherham to move forward.

Sample Size / Methodology:

- With regards to the sample size, Nadeem Murtuja confirmed the thematic analysis of the sample size was done in blocks of 50. The first two sets were compared to identify common themes; this was then compared to the third block of fifty, which demonstrated that the themes identified in all 3 blocks, apart from odd disparities (like the 1% that felt Sarah Champions comments were Islamophobic / or agreed with Sarah Champion) were the same. The analysis provided satisfactory evidence, that irrespective of how many times that particular set of questions is asked, the answers would likely remain the same. This in research terms, is called the saturation point⁵ and it is a principle accepted and utilised in academia. NM also confirmed that this **is a temperature check report** and should be used by all stakeholders from that perspective.

⁵ <https://www.quirkos.com/blog/post/saturation-qualitative-research-guide>