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# Evaluation of the Think Project

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April 2011



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## **Acknowledgements**

This research was commissioned by the Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and was carried out by i-works research.

In particular, we would like to thank all of the young people, partner organisations and staff at EYST who gave their time to participate in this research and shared their experiences and insight with us.

## Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CF	Communities First Partnerships
CONTEST	UK counter-terrorism strategy
CSP	Community Safety Partnerships
EYST	Ethnic Youth Support Team
NEET young people	Young people not in education, employment or training
OSCT	Office for Security and Counter Terrorism
WECTU	Welsh Extremism & Counter Terrorism Unit

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Think Project aims to address racism and far-right extremism in young people in Swansea and forms part of the Welsh Assembly's response to preventing violent extremism and strengthening community cohesion in Wales.

The project is a pilot targeted intervention project offering disengaged young people in Swansea the opportunity to take part in a programme workshops giving young people the facts about race, religion and migration, and using these to challenge racism and to refute myths and stereotypes. It is run and managed by the Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST).

The project aims to:

- **Build mutual understanding and respect** by providing tailored targeted workshops to directly challenge and deconstruct racist views.
- **Promote acceptance and integration** by using experienced local trainers from BME youth backgrounds to deliver the workshops and giving the issues a human face.
- **Build community resilience to problems and tensions** by targeting the most disenfranchised young people within a community, and enabling them to have a positive influence on their own peers, families and communities.

### Young People – Their Views and Opinions

The Think Project's has four key outcomes that the young people who complete the programme will have increased:

- knowledge of the facts about race, religion and migration
- understanding and empathy for different racial, religious and migrant groups
- resilience to racist and far-right ideology
- confidence in expressing themselves.

It is clear from the point of view of the young people that the project has increased their knowledge and for the majority their understanding and empathy for different racial, religious and migrant groups. For some this increase knowledge may enable them to be more resilient to racist and far-right ideology where this knowledge has become more embedded. However, understanding and measuring this as an outcome is difficult. The section on lasting and long-term impacts that follows explores this further. In terms of

increasing confidence in expressing themselves, due to the open format of the sessions and the skills of the workshop leaders the project did enabled the young people to be confident in expressing themselves and particularly in front of someone who was from a BME background.

### **Perception of race, religion and migration, and vulnerability to extremism**

The young people who took part in the Think Project held largely negative views about different races, religions and cultures. Further to this, the majority of young people felt that there were racial or religious groups that were not liked by other people in Swansea. This suggests both that there are young people within Swansea who are in need of developing their knowledge and understanding of the facts about race, religion and migration, and that the project was effective in targeting the programme of learning to those who were most in need.

### **Learning about race, religion and migration – often for the first time**

All of the young people felt they had learnt something from the programme of workshops and for most, this was their first experience of learning about race, religion and migration.

### **Importance of open sessions and involvement of an ethnic minority youth worker**

The open nature of the sessions that enabled young people to express themselves, ask the questions they wanted answers to and have a response from someone who was from a different ethnic background was of key importance. In the case of learning about extremism having someone from a BME backgrounds was particularly helpful in dispelling religion and extremism linked myths.

### **Lasting and long-term impacts, and resilience to racism and far-right extremism**

It is difficult to know or measure what the long-term impact of the project will or will not be for the young people following the completion of the programme and return to their own communities. Attitudes and beliefs are influenced by a wide range of social factors and one single project will not fix all social problems. However, what is logical to say is that there are young people in Swansea who do share largely negative views of people who they perceive as different to them, and that these young people may be already disengaged in some way, for example not in mainstream education. Education and awareness raising is likely to be a useful first step for many towards tolerance and cohesion. It is also an important element in building community resilience against any form of extremism including far-right extremism.

## **What Can be Learnt from the Project**

The key learning points from the evaluation of the Think Project can be summarised as follows:

- There are young people in Swansea who have largely negative views on race, religion and migration. It may be that these views are stronger amongst the most disengaged young people.
- Education and learning is a part of the process of developing cohesion and resilience amongst communities. It has a logical part to play.
- The Think Project is a useful model in the process of formal and informal education and there has been particular value in people from ethnic minority groups delivering education about race, religion and migration.
- An effective working group and partnership is essential in developing the sustainability of both the issues the project has dealt with and the project as a model of education.

## **Taking Those Messages Forward**

There are a number of development activities that would be useful in enabling the key messages to be taken forward.

- Developing a clear outline of the strategic landscape to enable the Think Project to find 'best fit' and develop further partnerships.
- Mapping related existing resources, activities and events in Swansea to which the model of the project could offer added value.
- Using the model of the Think Project and the potential for adding value to existing education services to develop partnerships with other alternative education providers and targeted youth services.

## 1. Introduction

The *Evaluation of the Think Project* has been produced by i-works research ltd. on behalf of the Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST).

The Think Project is an innovative pilot project funded through the Welsh Assembly Government Community Cohesion Fund. The Think Project is designed to address the potential for racism and far-right extremism in young people in Swansea and forms part of the Welsh Assembly's response to preventing violent extremism and strengthening cohesion in Wales. It is delivered by the EYST on commission by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Community Cohesion Fund.

### 1.1 Research Aims

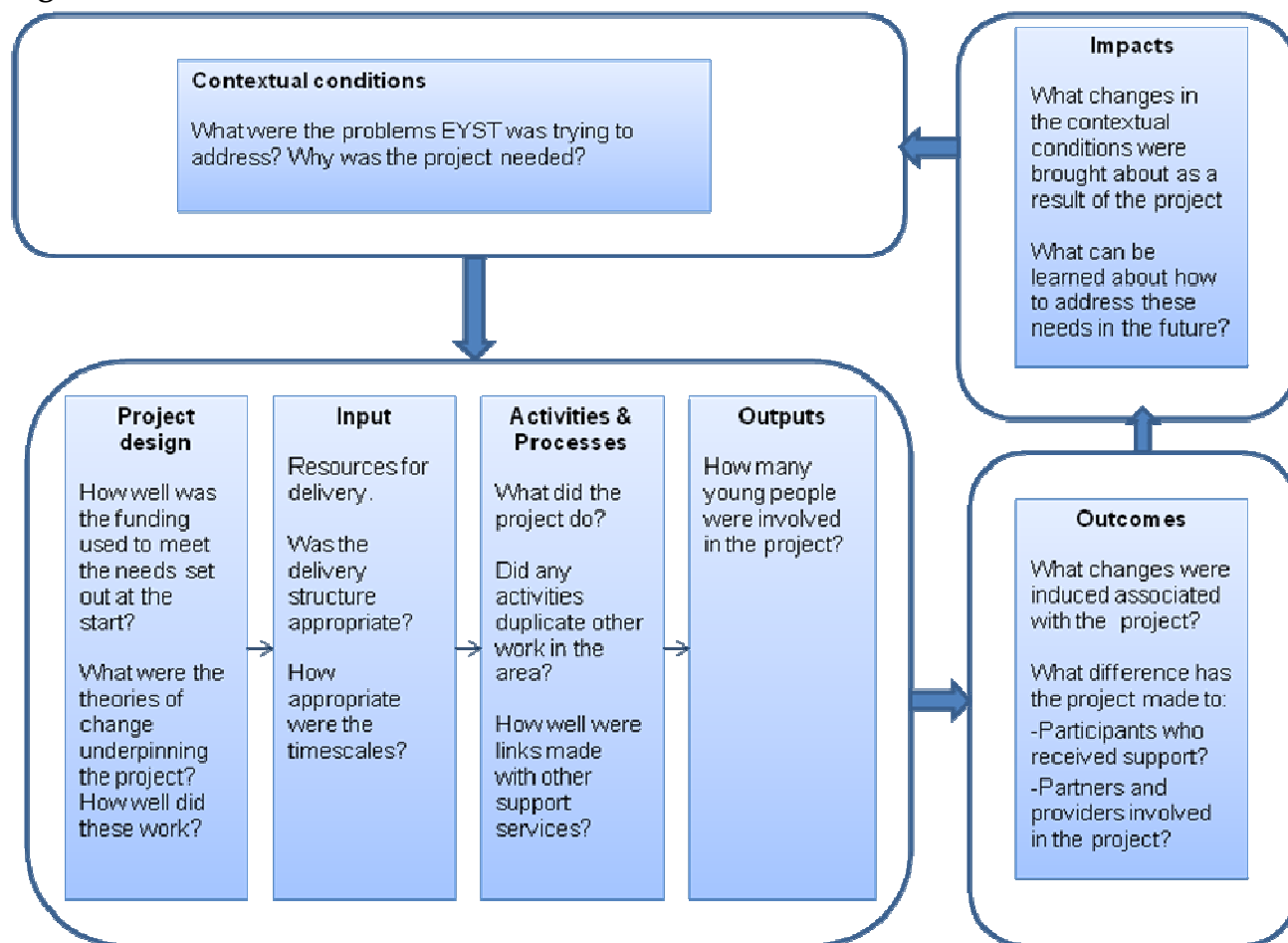
The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the Think Project. The key issues to be explored in this evaluation are:

- **Context:** How have the projects contribute to the objectives of the Community Cohesion Fund and strategy for Wales?
- **Delivery:** How has the project been delivered? What has been successful in terms of delivery? Are there any issues or gaps in delivery?
- **Output and Impact:** How many young people have been engaged in the project? What have been the key impacts of the projects and how/do they reach the objectives of the Community Cohesion Fund?
- **Added value:** What are the potential considerations for mainstreaming best practice? Has there been any added value for organisations? Have the projects brought together or developed effective partnerships?
- **Lessons Learnt:** What can be learnt from the projects to inform the strategies and agendas relevant to Community Cohesion in Wales?

### 1.2 Approach and Methodology

The evaluation methodology follows an approach that links the objectives and inputs of the project to the final outputs and outcomes. The process the methodology is outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Evaluation framework**



This evaluation uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the outcomes of the project. These research activities are summarised as follows.

- Desk-based review
- Project and partner interviews and Working Group meeting observation
- Analysis of young person pre and post project questionnaires
- Exit interviews with young people
- Analysis and reporting.

### 1.2.1 Desk research

Desk-based research activities included:

- Review of relevant Think Project documentation and management/progress reporting
- Review of case study or evaluation material collated by the EYST

- A short context review of the Community Cohesion Fund.

### **1.2.2 Project and partner interviews**

Qualitative research using semi-structured interviews informed the development of the evaluation framework including issues surrounding context, delivery, impact, added value and lessons learnt. Seven interviews were conducted with the following:

- Think Project staff
- Members of the Think Project Working Group.

In addition the second Think Project working group meeting was observed by the research team.

### **1.2.3 Work with young people**

Young people participating in the project were asked to complete pre and post project questionnaires that explored their awareness of different racial and religious groups, and attitudes towards asylum seekers and racism. Pre-project questionnaires for the core Think Project group were distributed right at the start of the project without ethnic minority workers being present, and before they had even met the ethnic minority worker – this was done in order to avoid desirability bias. The results from the questionnaires were analysed to assess what changes, if any, were evident between the young people's responses over time. The results of the analysis are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Further to the questionnaires with those young people taking part in the Think Project's eight week programme, two additional one off sessions were conducted with two further groups of disengaged young people in Swansea. These two groups completed the pre-programme questionnaire to gain further evidence of views and attitudes of disengaged young people towards asylum seekers and different racial and religious groups. Within this report this group is termed the 'non-Think Project group'.

In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with the two groups of young people who took part in the eight week programme at the end of their last workshop session to provide information about the impact of the project.

### ***A word on data quality***

Variations in the quality of the information gathered from the questionnaires is noted. The non-Think Project group had the questionnaire 'explained' to them by their teachers/ youth workers and further to this there were BME workers present at the

time. For the Think Project group there was no discussion or explanation preceding the questionnaire and there was no BME worker present.

This may have influenced some of the answers young people gave with a certain amount of positive bias towards what they felt was wanted. However, the views expressed in the questionnaires show both openness and frankness in the articulation of their views. This clarity of expression was also noted in the exit interviews conducted with the young people who had participated in the eight week programme.

### **1.3 The Report**

This evaluation report is presented five chapters. Chapter 2 outlines the rationale and context of the Think Project. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Think Project, it's aims and activities, and presents the key findings gathered from the young people. Chapter 4 examines the delivery of the project and the 'added value' for the organisations involved with the project. Finally, Chapter 5 bring the research findings together to outline what can be learnt from the project and how those messages can be taken forward.

## 2. Community Cohesion

This chapter provides an overview of the rationale of the Think Project in terms of the contextual backdrop of social beliefs and attitudes in Wales and the development of the project through the national policy agenda on the prevention of extremism and community cohesion.

### 2.1 Social Attitudes and Beliefs

#### 2.1.1 BME populations in Wales

The latest population estimates for 2009 show approximately 4.1% (124,000 people) of the population in Wales is from a 'non-white British' background.<sup>1</sup> Within Wales, population estimates show Swansea has the third largest black and minority ethnic (BME) population with estimates suggesting a non-white ethnic population of around 11,000 – 4.8% of Swansea's total population. Children of minority ethnic background represent approximately 8.2% of children and young people in Swansea schools, a greater proportion than across Wales as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The largest ethnic group in Swansea are the Bangladeshi community.

Home Office data for the end of May 2009 shows a total of 2,322 asylum seekers were living in Wales. Ethnic minority populations as well as those of asylum seekers and refugees tend to be concentrated within the South Wales cities and urban areas. Of the 2,322 asylum seekers over half (56.9%) were living in Cardiff, whilst Swansea had 562 asylum seekers (24.2%), Newport 364 (15.7%) and Wrexham just 74 (3.2%). Evidence suggests that the population of refugees and asylum seekers is drawn from a relatively limited range of nationalities and linguistic groups with nearly three quarters (71.1%) of those dispersed to Wales coming from nine countries of origin: Afghanistan, China, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Attitudes and beliefs

In October 2008 the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales published a report based on a major survey of attitudes in Wales towards race, religion, gender,

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (2011) Population Estimates by Ethnic Group 2002 – 2009. *Statistical Bulletin*, 4/2010.

<sup>2</sup> City and County of Swansea, *Swansea Statistics – School Census 2009*.  
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=30056>

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2009) *Refugees living in Wales: A survey of skills, experiences and barriers to inclusion*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly.

sexual orientation, transgender, age, disability and human rights.<sup>4</sup> The survey highlighted that the population of Wales is largely comfortable with people from different backgrounds. However, the survey did find that there were significant pockets of negative attitudes and prejudice. The survey found that more than a quarter of people interviewed were worried about ethnic minority groups coming to live in Wales, especially people from Eastern Europe (which worried 32% of respondents), Muslims (30%) and Black and Asian people (25%). 16% were worried about more English people coming to Wales. The most persistent negative attitudes were centred around four groups of people – those with mental health conditions, Gypsy Travellers, transgender people and asylum seekers and refugees.

Following the 2008 publication, the Commission in Wales published in 2010 follow-on research reporting the outcomes of qualitative research with 65 people across Wales within the four groups of transgender people, Gypsy Travellers, asylum seekers and refugees and people with mental health conditions.<sup>5</sup> The research found that many asylum seekers and refugees had had positive experiences in their communities and described Wales as a very welcoming place. However, some asylum seekers and refugees described a sense of resentment from some people within Wales and Welsh society. Some felt negative attitudes were often reinforced by media coverage depicting asylum seekers and refugees as living off benefits and taking up housing, health and education services. Some of the research participants had experiences harassment, bullying and abuse in their day-to-day lives which impacted on their self confidence and feelings of self worth.

The recent 2007 Welsh Assembly Government commissioned *Living in Wales* survey of approximately 7,500 households in Wales found 12% of all respondents said they had suffered some form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the last 5 years.<sup>6</sup> Almost a quarter of those respondents gave 'race' as the reason for their form of discrimination, victimisation or harassment. The survey further found the percentage of male respondents aged 16 to 29 who suffered some form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the last five years more than doubled between 2005 and 2007, going from 11% in 2005 to 24% in 2007.

When asking about social attitudes, the 2007 survey found that respondents living in 'workless households' were more likely to 'strongly disagree' with the statement on the

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<sup>4</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (2008) *Who Do You See? Living Together in Wales*.

<sup>5</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales (2010) *Not just another statistic*.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Living in Wales Survey 2007. Statistical Bulletin, 68/2008*.

whole, *'Muslims who live in Wales make a positive contribution to society than those respondents living in 'working households'*. Further to this, respondents working in 'routine occupations' were more than twice as likely to 'strongly agree' with the statement *'if a country wants to reduce tensions it should stop immigration'* (32%) than respondents working in 'higher managerial and professional occupations' (14%). This suggests that certain social attitudes are more prevalent in some socio-economic groups.

## **2.2 Community Cohesion Policy**

### **2.2.1 Extremism**

Preventing violent extremism forms part of the CONTEST strategy put in place in 2003 (revised in 2009) as a UK Government response to the threat posed by international Al-Qa'ida inspired terrorism. The Strategy has a four-pronged approach to tackling violent extremism: PREVENT, PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE. The PREVENT strand is concerned with stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. The PREVENT element of CONTEST has five main objectives:

- to challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and support mainstream voices;
- disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate;
- support individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists;
- increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism; and
- to address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.

The Wales CONTEST Board was established in March 2008 and is jointly chaired by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Cymru and the Welsh Assembly Government. The Board includes the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), Welsh Extremism & Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU), the Home Office, the Police Authorities of Wales, UK Border Agency and the Welsh Local Government Association. The Welsh Assembly Government believes that the work on CONTEST is ultimately about ensuring community safety and community cohesion. PREVENT promotes shared values and funding projects which involve cross-community activities that will strengthen community cohesion and develop capacity to resist support for violent extremism.

### **2.2.2 Taking Forward Community Cohesion**

The approach by the Welsh Assembly towards community cohesion is set out in the Community Cohesion Strategy *Getting On Together - a Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales*, part of the Welsh Assembly Government's *One Wales* commitments to achieve a fair and just society, in which all citizens are empowered to determine their own lives and to shape the communities in which they live.

Community Cohesion in the context of the Welsh Assembly Government reflects the UK Government's formal definition of community cohesion:

*"Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another".*

The Welsh Assembly vision of an integrated and cohesive community as set out in the Community Cohesion Strategy is based on three foundations and three key ways of working together:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities;
- people knowing their rights and responsibilities; and
- people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.
- A shared future vision and sense of belonging;
- a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside recognition of the value of diversity; and
- strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

The Welsh Assembly Community Cohesion Strategy also recognises the need to increase community resilience to all forms of extremism including far right extremism.

Work to support the Community Cohesion Strategy is being taken forward through the Welsh Assembly's Community Cohesion Fund. The Community Cohesion Fund is intended to strengthen links between local authorities, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and Communities First (CF) Partnerships in each area. The fund has been allocated to all 22 local authorities throughout Wales.

The purpose of the Fund has been to enable local partnerships to pump prime cohesion work in local communities in order to support the implementation of the Community Cohesion Strategy and to map community cohesion issues in their local area and draw up plans to tackle these.

The Community Cohesion Grant of £50,000 per year has been allocated to the four most ethnically diverse local authorities (Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham) until 2012 to effectively kick-start community cohesion activities and support local cohesion initiatives. Over the last two years (2009/10 and 2010/11) Swansea has been successful in being allocated funding from the Community Cohesion Fund for the implementation and support of the overall aims and objectives of the Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales. A number of community projects have been supported across the City and County of Swansea from this funding including the Think Project.

### 3. Think Project Activity

This chapter provides an overview of the Think Project, its aims and activities, and presents the key findings gathered from the young people questionnaires and the interviews with both young people, project deliverers and partners to consider the outcomes of the project's activities.

#### 3.1 The Think Project

The Think Project aims to address racism and far-right extremism in young people in Swansea and forms part of the Welsh Assembly's response to preventing violent extremism and strengthening community cohesion in Wales.

The project is a pilot targeted intervention project offering disengaged young people in Swansea the opportunity to take part in a programme workshops giving young people the facts about race, religion and migration, and using these to challenge racism and to refute myths and stereotypes. It is run and managed by EYST.

The project aims to:

- **Build mutual understanding and respect** by providing tailored targeted workshops to directly challenge and deconstruct racist views.
- **Promote acceptance and integration** by using experienced local trainers from BME youth backgrounds to deliver the workshops and giving the issues a human face.
- **Build community resilience to problems and tensions** by targeting the most disenfranchised young people within a community, and enabling them to have a positive influence on their own peers, families and communities.

The Think Project's measurable key outcomes are that the young people who complete the programme of activities will have increased:

- knowledge of the facts about race, religion and migration
- understanding and empathy for different racial, religious and migrant groups
- resilience to racist and far-right ideology
- confidence in expressing themselves.

#### 3.2 Project Activities

The Think Project programme of activity consisted of eight half-day workshops delivered over eight weeks giving young people the facts as well as an opportunity for

frank and open discussion. The workshops aimed to provoke and inspire young people to think through these difficult issues and to think for themselves.

The workshop sessions were based around core content mixed with open debate and practical tasks and covered a number of issues including:

- understanding identity and culture, looking at different identities and reasons behind choices.
- understanding diversity, different racial, ethnic and religious groups and respecting the right to dignity. The make-up of communities and what makes communities different.
- asylum seekers and busting the myths about benefits and jobs. Facts on migration, historical issues and how the media deals with migration issues.
- understanding extremism and the different types of extremism including Islamic and Far-right.
- visit to EYST and session with other ethnic youth workers.

The project engaged with two groups of 10 young people over the eight week programme from an alternative education provider that works with young people aged 14 to 16 needing additional support to remain in education, and who have been excluded from mainstream education.

### **3.3 Young People – Their Views and Opinions**

#### **3.3.1 Young people's initial opinions**

The initial views of the young people taking part in the Think Project were captured with a questionnaire. The young people were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of their first session that explored their awareness of different racial and religious groups, and attitudes towards asylum seekers and racism.

In addition, the questionnaire was completed by two further groups of disengaged young people in Swansea who took part in a one-off session – the non-Think Project group. These initial views of both groups of young people as outlined in their questionnaires are presented in this section. For a note on response differences refer to section 1.2.3.

#### **Racism was understood as being about being nasty or mean to someone about their skin colour**

The majority of young people were willing and able to provide a definition of racism and in most cases this was outlined in the terms of skin colour. Extremism was less well

defined by the young people with most unable or unwilling to define the meaning of extremism.

### **Nearly all young people said they had friends from different racial groups but many felt there were too many people from different racial or religious groups living in their communities**

Nearly three quarters of all the young people said they had friends from different racial groups. However, many young people felt that there were too many people from different racial or religious groups living in their communities. This is particularly the case amongst those young people engaging in the full eight week programme rather than those taking part in the one off sessions. Amongst the 'eight week' young people 80% agreed with the statement '*There are too many people from different racial or religious background living in my community*', and 90% agreed with that statement for Swansea as a whole. For those taking part in the one off sessions the majority (64%) disagreed with the statement. It should be noted that this wider non-Think Project group were from 'universal' provision (schools and youth groups), as opposed to the 'targeted' provision as per the Think Project group. This, together with differences in the way the questionnaire was distributed, may explain the differences in their responses (see section 1.2.3).

For those young people who agreed with the statement '*There are too many people from different racial or religious background living in my community*' reasons for their answers were focused on there being simply "too many" people for other backgrounds in their communities to those groups of people "taking all our jobs".

There may be many reasons for young people being comfortable with having friends from different ethnic groups but seeing different ethnic groups as a whole more negatively. It could be as a result personalisation of those friends away from their ethnic groups i.e. that whilst the friend is different that they are not like "them". This was something that came out of the Think Project group workshop sessions that were led by a youth worker from a non-white Welsh background. The young people were frequently noted as saying that "*you're alright but you're not like them*".

### **The views of those young people who took part in the full programme were more extreme than those who took part in a one-off session**

There are issues of data quality, particularly amongst one of the one-off session groups, as outlined in Chapter 1. Further to this, as the project is small in terms of size, it is difficult to categorically come to conclusions about the different groups of young people – those taking part in the Think Project and those participating in a one-off session. There is significant potential for desirability bias particularly amongst the

session groups. However, the grouping of the responses suggests that for the full eight week programme the Think Project engaged with young people whose views require the most challenging.

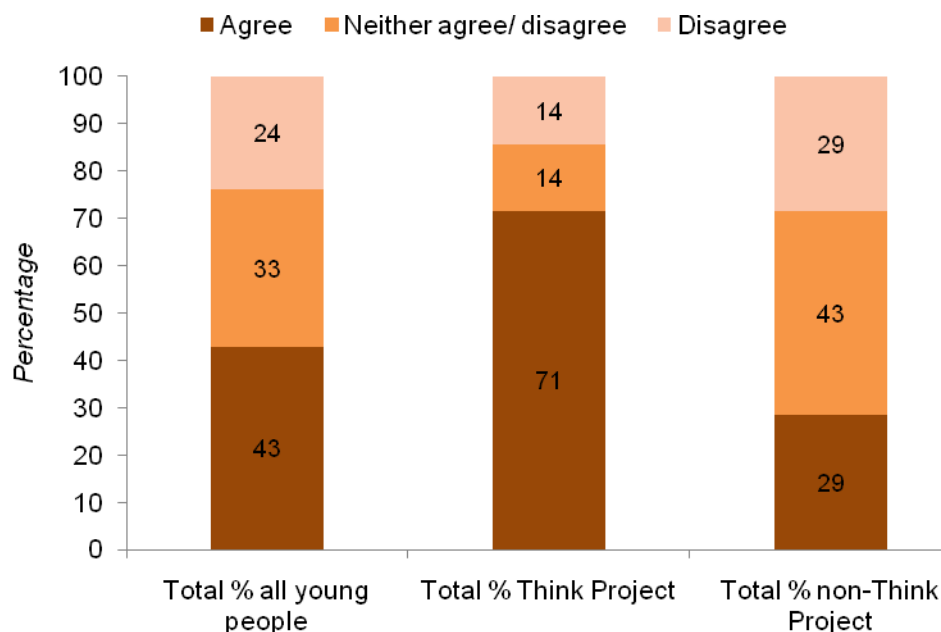
**Nearly all young people felt that some racial and/or religious groups people are not liked by other groups of people in Swansea**

Just over four fifths (81%) of all young people responding to the questionnaire agreed that there were racial or religious groups that were not liked by other people in Swansea. The figures are the same for both groups of young people.

**Many of the young people hold misconceived views about asylum seekers and their entitlements in the UK**

Just over two fifths (43%) of all the young people answering the questionnaire agreed with the statement “*Asylum seekers come to the UK to get benefits*”. Nearly three quarters (71%) of the Think Project young people agreed with the statement compared to 30% of the non-Think Project young people.

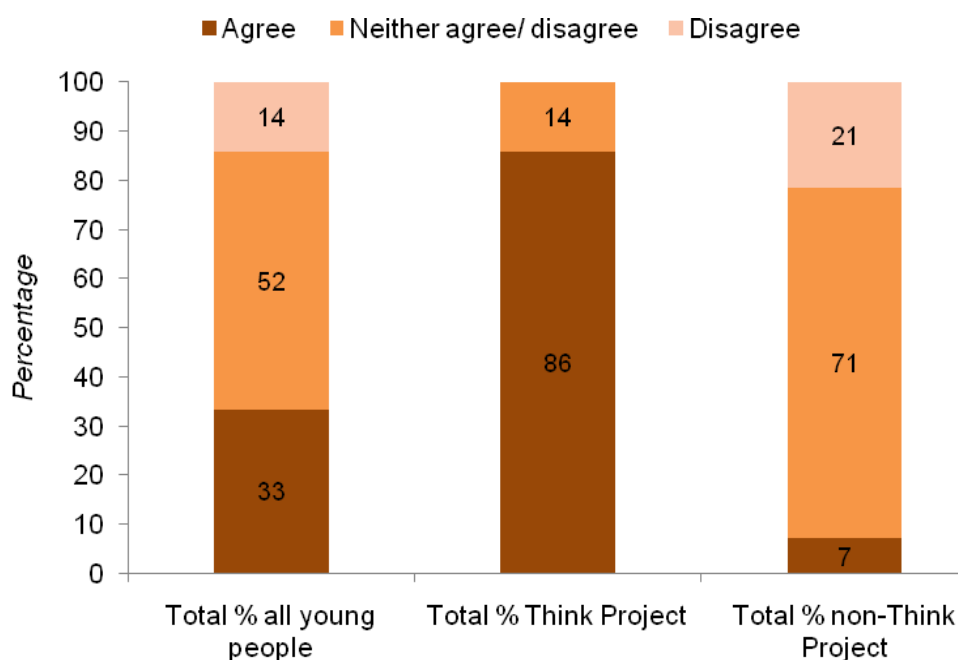
**Figure 2: Response to statement – *Asylum seekers come to the UK to get benefits***



Source: Young people pre-questionnaire, Think Project, 2011.

86% of Think Project young people agreed with the statement that “*Asylum seekers should be sent back to where they came from*” and none disagreed. Less than 10% of non-Think Project young people agreed with the statement and 71% neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Figure 3: Response to statement – *Asylum-seekers should be sent back to where they come from***



Source: Young people pre-questionnaire, Think Project, 2011.

When asked why they had agreed with the statements young people responded in a number of ways. Two of the young people felt that asylum seekers *“take all our jobs”* and five felt that either some or all asylum seekers come to the UK to get either benefits or money. One young person responded that they were not sure exactly sure what asylum seekers get but that *“some people say they get everything”*. Other responses include: *“Because they are immigrants”* and *“Because it’s not a British country no more”*.

### 3.3.2 Young people’s post-project opinions

Following the completion of the eight week programme of activity, the young people took part in a one-to-one interview and completed a questionnaire to find out about their experience of the Think Project. The interviews and questionnaires were completed by the seven young people who attended the final workshop session and their views are presented in this section.

**All of the young people felt they had learnt something from the course about racism, asylum seekers and extremism, and for most, this had been their first experience of learning about different cultures and religions**

All of the young people felt they had learnt something from the course and all felt they now had a better understanding of different cultures and religions in general and about asylum seekers and extremism in particular. In interview nearly all of the young people

revealed that before the course they had thought that extremism was about Muslims and that most Muslims were 'terrorists'.

For all but one of the young people the Think Project was their first experience of learning about different cultures and religions that they could remember. All of the young people taking part in the Think Project have had periods of absent from mainstream education and so have missed out on religious or cultural education.

### **Despite feeling that they had learnt something, for some young people the negative views of other races, religions and asylum seekers is deep-seated**

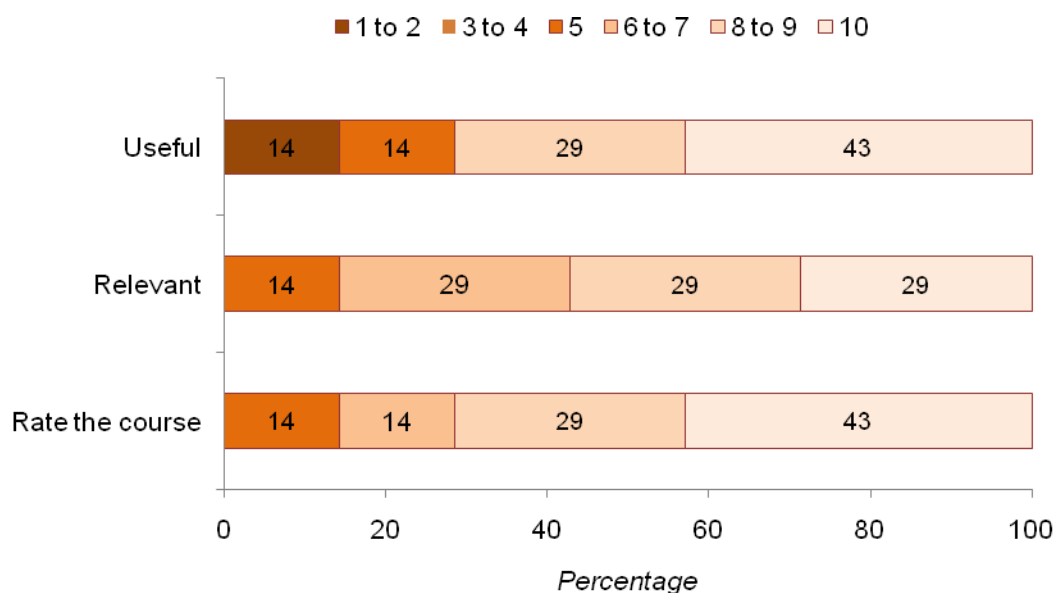
The project had a positive effect on the thinking of some of the young people who felt their understanding had changed and felt strongly that they were "okay" with having views that may be different to some of their friends. For other, whilst they felt they had learnt something, the learning had done little to change their views. One young person said that whilst having learnt about culture and skin colour and now not minding different people that these different people "*take all our shops and jobs...they come over to this country and the government given them jobs before whites*".

Negative views about race and religion are of course not a standalone phenomenon and they are learnt and affected by external influences such as family, peers, communities, news reporting and so on. Any change in view point is likely to evolve once a young person is away from the Project and back amongst their own community and peers. However, it is clear that exposure to learning about culture and religion can have nothing but a positive influence. These influences may be large or small and even the small ones can be significant steps: one young person with strongly negative views by the final session began to engage and talk freely to the BME youth worker where previously all interaction had been with the white-Welsh youth worker.

### **Generally, young people found the lessons they had taken part in relevant to them and useful and rated the course well overall**

Using a scale of 1 to 10 from negative to positive, just over half of the young people scored a 9 or 10 for the lessons being *relevant* and three quarters scored an 8, 9 or 10 for the lessons being *useful*. The remaining young people felt the lessons had been somewhat relevant (score or 5 and 6), one found the lessons somewhat useful (score 5) and one not useful (score 1). Five of the seven young people *rated* the course well (9 or 10 score) and two rated the course as somewhere in the middle (5 or 6).

**Figure 4: Think Project rating – young people**



Source: Young people pre-questionnaire, Think Project, 2011.

**Overall, the young people felt there was a need for a project like the Think Project for other young people in Swansea**

Five of the seven young people felt this to be the case and when asked why they had responded that way, they felt that the course helps people to better understand about different religions and cultures.

The young people who least felt the course was relevant or useful also did not feel there was a need for the project like the Think Project for other young people in Swansea. These were also the young people with the strongest negative views about other races, religions and asylum seekers.

**Positive effect of an ethnic minority youth worker taking the lessons and the open forum nature of the workshops**

The young people found it helpful to have someone from a different ethnic background to themselves involved in delivering the workshop sessions. This and the open forum nature of the workshops meant they could ask anything they wanted and get an authentic answer. The young people wanted to know the answer to many practical questions such as why people wear head scarves and how Muslims pray. Having someone from a BME background helped in conveying the answers. For some of the young people this was the first time they had been in direct contact with someone who was a Muslim. This had been key to the delivery of the project.

### **3.3.3 Summary – learning from the young people about the project**

The Think Project's has four key outcomes that the young people who complete the programme will have increased:

- knowledge of the facts about race, religion and migration
- understanding and empathy for different racial, religious and migrant groups
- resilience to racist and far-right ideology
- confidence in expressing themselves.

It is clear from the point of view of the young people that the project has increased their knowledge and for the majority their understanding and empathy for different racial, religious and migrant groups. For some this increase knowledge may enable them to be more resilient to racist and far-right ideology where this knowledge has become more embedded. However, understanding and measuring this as an outcome is difficult. The section on lasting and long-term impacts that follows explores this further. In terms of increasing confidence in expressing themselves, due to the open format of the sessions and the skills of the workshop leaders the project did enabled the young people to be confident in expressing themselves and particularly in front of someone who was from a BME background.

#### **Perception of race, religion and migration, and vulnerability to extremism**

The young people who took part in the Think Project held largely negative views about different races, religions and cultures. Further to this, the majority of young people felt that there were racial or religious groups that were not liked by other people in Swansea. This suggests both that there are young people within Swansea who are in need of developing their knowledge and understanding of the facts about race, religion and migration, and that the project was effective in targeting the programme of learning to those who were most in need.

#### **Learning about race, religion and migration – often for the first time**

All of the young people felt they had learnt something from the programme of workshops and for most, this was their first experience of learning about race, religion and migration.

#### **Importance of open sessions and involvement of an ethnic minority youth worker**

The open nature of the sessions that enabled young people to express themselves, ask the questions they wanted answers to and have a response from someone who was from a different ethnic background was of key importance. In the case of learning about

extremism having someone from a BME backgrounds was particularly helpful in dispelling religion and extremism linked myths.

### **Lasting and long-term impacts, and resilience to racism and far-right extremism**

It is difficult to know or measure what the long-term impact of the project will or will not be for the young people following the completion of the programme and return to their own communities. Attitudes and beliefs are influenced by a wide range of social factors and one single project will not fix all social problems. However, what is logical to say is that there are young people in Swansea who do share largely negative views of people who they perceive as different to them, and that these young people may be already disengaged in some way, for example not in mainstream education. Education and awareness raising is likely to be a useful first step for many towards tolerance and cohesion. It is also an important element in building community resilience against any form of extremism including far-right extremism.

## **4. Delivering the Think Project**

Using evidence from interviews with project managers and partners and Working Group meeting observation, this chapter examines the delivery of the project and the 'added value' for the organisations involved with the project.

### **4.1 Delivery and Organisation**

#### **4.1.1 Role of the youth workers**

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the key strengths of the project has been the project workers and having the presence of a worker from a BME background. The partnership of workshop delivery between a white-Welsh and a BME youth worker enabled young people to:

- engage with someone from a different background, particularly a Muslim background
- provide first-hand and authentic answers to questions
- show that people from different ethnic groups can work together and talk to one another.

#### **4.1.2 Open forum delivery**

Whilst the sessions were structured to cover certain issues during the workshops, there was an emphasis on keeping an open-forum. This enabled the young people to have the freedom to ask anything they wanted to and to share their views but, being an open forum, this also gave the opportunity for those views to be challenged.

#### **4.1.3 Dealing with complex issues**

Many of the young people taking part in the project had very complex and often chaotic lives. This meant that the project youth workers were at times faced with challenging issues linked to the personal and social lives of the young people. The clear communication between the project workers and alternative education provider meant that these issues were dealt with effectively.

The complex nature of the lives of the young people did have an effect on their attendance to the full complement of workshop sessions. There were a number of the young people who were unable to attend all sessions.

#### **4.1.4 Delivery timescale**

The short delivery timescale and running of the project, as is often the case with pilot projects, resulted in a number of particular issues:

- **Length of delivery** – a half day programme delivered over eight weeks is not enough for those young people who have the most strongly held negative views and there is a requirement for continued support for these young people, which is being provided by the alternative education provider.
- **Engaging partnerships** – the short turnaround from funding agreement to delivery has meant that potential working partners had to be brought in at the project delivery rather than project design stage. As a result, some organisations were initially unsure about the purpose of their input and the value they could add to the process.

## **4.2 Partnerships and Strategic Links**

### **4.2.1 Working group**

The Think Project has convened a working group led by EYST and comprising of representatives from local authorities, community safety agencies and the wider public and third sector. The group has set its role to work within the relevant strategic and legislative context, to identify and consider local patterns and evidence of racism and far-right extremism, and to seek to develop a coordinated response to the issues as they emerge. The working group is in the early stages of development having met twice to date and is set to meet quarterly.

Many of the member organisations have worked together before on different issues but this is the first time a group has come together in Swansea to talk about the specific issue of far-right extremism

It is evident from the working group meeting that there are a range of other organisations that are dealing with linked issues. The working group partnership is relatively small and there is potential, as the strategic links grow, for it to become a wider partnership.

### **4.2.2 Strategic fit**

Establishing a working group and beginning to develop a strategic home for the issue of far-right extremism has and will be essential to the issues encompassed by the Think Project being taken forward.

As evident from the working group meetings there are clear strategic links with a number of groups and networks such as the Safer Swansea Partnership and Youth and NEET Support Networks.

### **4.3 Sustainability**

#### **4.3.1 Integrating the Think Project ethos into other projects, programmes and initiatives**

Developing alignment and fit strategically will be a key part in developing the sustainability of both the issue of far-right extremism and intolerance in Swansea and the Think Project as a model for delivery of education as a tool to aid community cohesion.

One of the working group partners is taking forward the issues encompassed by the Think Project to develop their education offer to young people through running a GCSE Religious Education short course for their learners, commencing September 2011. The Think Project touches on many of the topics contained in the syllabus such as, Religion and War, Religious Expression, and Social Responsibilities. They are looking to have the sessions delivered by a BME trainer as they feel it would be beneficial to have their practical knowledge of different faiths and religions.

#### **4.3.2 Development of EYST**

The Think Project has had an impact on EYST as a whole in developing their thoughts and understanding of the needs of young people within Swansea. The project has given EYST an impetus to take the next step in developing a vision to become more inclusive, offering a service to all young people and an environment where young people from both white and ethnic minority backgrounds can meet and mix.

## **5. Learning from the Project and Making it Count**

### **5.1 What Can be Learnt from the Project**

The key learning points from the evaluation of the Think Project can be summarised as follows:

- There are young people in Swansea who have largely negative views on race, religion and migration. It may be that these views are stronger amongst the most disengaged young people.
- Education and learning is a part of the process of developing cohesion and resilience amongst communities. It has a logical part to play.
- The Think Project is a useful model in the process of formal and informal education and there has been particular value in people from ethnic minority groups delivering education about race, religion and migration.
- An effective working group and partnership is essential in developing the sustainability of both the issues the project has dealt with and the project as a model of education.

### **5.2 Taking Those Messages Forward**

There are a number of development activities that would be useful in enabling the key messages to be taken forward.

- Developing a clear outline of the strategic landscape to enable the Think Project to find 'best fit' and develop further partnerships.
- Mapping related existing resources, activities and events in Swansea to which the model of the project could offer added value.
- Using the model of the Think Project and the potential for adding value to existing education services to develop partnerships with other alternative education providers and targeted youth services.

## **Appendix 1 – Young People Questionnaire**

## The Think Project Questionnaire

This is a short questionnaire asking what you think about life in Swansea. It will only take about 10 minutes to complete.

All questionnaires are completely confidential - so you can be honest. We want to know what you REALLY think. If you don't want to answer a question then you don't have to.

### About You

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender (please tick)                      Male    Female  
                     

3. Which part of Swansea do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How would you describe your race/ ethnicity?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### What Do You Think?

5. What different racial and religious groups of people live in Swansea? (Try and list as many as you can).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you have any friends from different racial or religious groups?

Yes                                         No  

7. Please tick whether you agree or disagree with the statements below.

There are too many people from different racial or religious communities living in my area.

Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

There are too many people from different racial or religious communities living in Swansea.

Agree	Neither agree/ disagree	Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. What are the reasons for your answer?**

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**9. Please tick whether you agree or disagree with the statement below.**

Agree      Neither      Disagree  
                 agree/  
                 disagree

**Some racial/ religious groups people are not liked by other groups of people in Swansea.**

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**8. If you agreed with the above statement, who are these groups of people? And why do you think they are disliked?**

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**9. Please tick whether you agree or disagree with the statement below.**

**Asylum-seekers come to the UK to get benefits**

Agree      Neither      Disagree  
                 agree/  
                 disagree

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**Asylum-seekers should be sent back to where they come from**

Agree      Neither      Disagree  
                 agree/  
                 disagree

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**Please explain your answer:**

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**What do you think the following words mean?**

***Racism:***

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***Asylum-Seeker:***

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***Extremist:***

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End of the questionnaire.  
Thank you!



**4. Do you think there is a need for a project like this for other young people in Swansea?**

Yes

No

**5. If you said YES, what are the reasons for your answer?**

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**6. What do you think the BEST thing about the course has been?**

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**7. What do you think the WORST thing about the course has been?**

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**Is there anything else you want to say?**

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End of the questionnaire.  
Thank you!