



# Interfaith Report

November 2008

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# Executive Summary

**The latest figures from Beatbullying, the UK's leading bullying prevention charity, show that one in four young people of all faiths have been bullied, often violently, because they have a religious position or their peers think they represent or practice a particular religion.**

Furthermore, the research indicates that there is little or no support, few outlets and limited provision provided for young people to talk about their faith. Almost half of young people do not talk about religious or faith issues at all. Disturbingly, and perhaps as a result, there is still a level of religious segregation and intolerance. Twenty percent of the young people surveyed said their friendships are largely comprised of people from the same religious or faith background. A small minority even reported that their family does not like it when they mix with other people from different faith backgrounds.

The consequences are far-reaching. Many of those young people bullied could not concentrate in class, lost confidence, became scared or angry. Others self harmed, or found themselves drinking alcohol or taking drugs as a consequence. Being bullied made many feel ashamed of their religion, or made them question their faith.

## Beatbullying's Intervention Programme

Beatbullying's Interfaith Programme encourages young people from different faiths to identify a common humanity, working to reduce and prevent incidents of faith-based bullying, bigotry, sectarianism and intolerance. By raising awareness and increasing understanding of religious issues, Beatbullying develops positive relationships and community cohesion.

Outputs to date:

- Faith-based bullying has been reduced by up to 45% in participating schools.
- 84% of the young people graduating through Beatbullying's Interfaith programme, who were being bullied, harassed or abused because of their faith or race, are now not being bullied.
- 91.8% of the young people participating are reporting a "big" increase in their understanding of other religions, cultures and customs.

## Beatbullying's recommendations

- Beatbullying's work proves that by providing outlets for young people to discuss the issues that matter to them, we can effectively reduce anti-social and violent behaviours between young people. As a result, the Government must continue to fund innovative faith-based anti-bullying programmes, as well as encouraging and resourcing faith community organisations who are working with local, regional and central Government to promote social cohesion, tolerance and commonality.
- The Government must undertake a comprehensive piece of research to map the extent and depth of faith-based bullying between our young people, and publish guidance on dealing with faith-based bullying to be disseminated to all schools in England and Wales.
- Faith-based bullying must be included as a category when the Government legislates to require schools to record all incidents of bullying across their school communities.

## Beatbullying's Definition of Faith-based Bullying

**Being taunted, excluded, or abused physically, emotionally or verbally on the grounds of your religious beliefs, affiliation to a given religion, perceived religious identity, or sectarian view by others, including those of other religious groups or belief systems.**

(This definition has been created by young people participating in Beatbullying's Interfaith Project)

## Introduction

According to the census conducted in 2001, 76.8% of adults in the United Kingdom identified themselves as having a religious faith. The population of the UK is one of the most religiously diverse in Europe and includes Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and more. With over 170 distinct religions counted in the Census, the religious make-up of the UK is diverse, complex, multicultural and at times surprising. In 2003, the Office of National Statistics revealed that 18% of the British public was a practicing member of an organised religion, but 66% of the population had no connection with any religion or church.

In 2006, 33% of the British public described themselves as religious, 63% said they were not, (*The Guardian 2006, "Religion does more harm than good" – Poll*). Not unexpectedly, and of course depending on your audience, the religious terrain of the UK population is complex, sometimes contradictory, but always fascinating.

What we do not know much about is the depth and breadth of our young peoples' understanding about faith, organised religion, or their peers' religious views and experiences. Beatbullying has been funded by the DCSF and City Bridge to open consultation with young people on issues relating to faith-based bullying and religious intolerance, and this report presents a snapshot understanding and extended commentary on the issue, through adopting both a universal and approach to understanding faith-based bullying and conflict.

The universal approach takes the form of an online survey, allowing extended reach into the extent and depth of the issue, and further enabling generalised findings to emerge. The approach, working directly with young people in school and community based workshops via our Interfaith bullying prevention programme, explores the issue in more detail, enabling us to gain an essential depth of understanding with respect to the negative implications and subsequent consequences reported by young people who have experienced faith-based bullying and high levels of religious intolerance.

This report does not pretend to present a complete answer to faith-based issues facing young people today. It provides a snapshot understanding and insight into the problem, asking some probing questions and proposing some recommendations. It holds the views and experiences of more than 1,000 young people and signals the beginning of a debate between young people, which will contribute to the wider and on-going debate about faith and faith-based conflict in the UK.

This report intends to make a positive contribution to Anti Bullying Week 2008 and its theme of diversity.

**"We don't care about a dude's religion or bully them. How stupid is that?" (Alistair age 14)**

**"[they called me] terrorist, f\*\*\*ing terrorist and a mop head." (Khan age 14)**

**"Oldies are so vexed about religion...chill peoples." (Auodo, age 14)**

# Headline Findings

## The Not So Good News

Faith-based bullying is an issue which needs to be addressed in our schools and communities. One in four young people from across all religions have been bullied, often violently because they have a faith or are perceived to be a member of a particular faith community.

Those who have a faith experience name calling and verbal abuse, harassment and stereotyping. They are racially abused, physically attacked, spat at, isolated, mugged, stolen from, beaten with makeshift weapons and stabbed because of their faith. They find themselves depressed, truanting, have trouble eating, their confidence plummets, some even have suicidal thoughts. Others question their faith, stop talking about their beliefs, or even feel ashamed of their faith or their families for having a faith.

- 23% report being bullied because of their faith
- 9% have been bullied because of the religious symbols they wear or present
- 13% believe they were bullied because of religious stereotyping

**"I am an atheist, so people were calling me a devil and the anti-christ" (Zak age 13)**

Religion, faith or perceived faith background arguably mediates peer relationships and interactions. 1 in 5 young people report friendships with people largely from the same religious background, arguably indicating a level of segregation and religious intolerance.

- 19.1% said their friendships are largely of the same religious or faith background

There is little or no support, few outlets and limited provision provided for young people to talk about their faith. Almost half of young people do not talk about religious or faith issues at all.

- 48.2% said they don't talk about religious issues at all

The role of the family plays an important role in peer relations. A small minority of the young people surveyed reported familial disapproval with regard to relationships with other young people from different faith backgrounds.

- 5.6% said their family doesn't like it when they mix with people of other faiths

## The Good News

According to the findings in this report, young people do hold religion, faith and the faith of their peers in high regard. It can indeed act as a bridge between communities, and help to build strong, tolerant and cohesive communities in a society that is supposedly more secular.

Young people seem to practice their religion in larger numbers than their adult counterparts. 4 in 10 young people practice their religion, whilst only 18% of adults report doing so. A further 8 in 10 young people believe in a "God". Only 35% of young people had no religion, in comparison to the 63% of adults who describe themselves as having no religion at all.

- Half of all young people subscribe to a religion
- 8 in 10 believe in a God
- 4 in 10 practice their religion
- The majority of our young people have friends from and mix with young people from all religions

The majority of young people are tolerant, interested in each other's religion and feel strongly about their own faith. The majority have never been bullied because of their faith or what they believe, their families encourage them to mix with young people from all religions and they feel comfortable discussing faith, religion and God with their peers, in schools and with their families:

- 6 in 10 young people have an understanding of their peers' religion
- 55.9% have friends from, and mix with, young people from all religions
- 56.3% of families are tolerant and allow their children to have a mixture of friendships
- 71.1% said they can choose their own friends irrespective of religion

Beatbullying acknowledges that the research presents both negative and positive findings. The negative findings are a clear cause for concern, but we can also build on the positive elements and responses from our young people. Providing a forum to discuss some of the issues prescribed above and engaging with our young people to further understand their religious views, and those of others, is crucial if we are to reduce faith-based bullying and incidents of conflict and violence.

# Methodology

Beatbullying's Interfaith survey was commissioned following extensive consultation between Beatbullying development workers and 60 young people age 11–16. Some detailed their experiences of faith-based bullying on video and on tape; others used art or drama to explore their feelings.

A seven question survey of both closed and open-ended questions was delivered on-line and by paper to 819 young people between April and July 2008, enabling a universal diagnostic of the issue, investigating the extent of the problem of faith-based bullying and conflict.

The results indicate that faith-based bullying exists across all faith community groups, irrespective of faith. It was deliberately decided not to record data by religion, as the purpose was not to suggest that bullying is a particular problem for one faith over another, but rather a problem that concerns all young people, including those of faith, or of no faith at all, those who are perceived to be part of a particular faith community, and those who subscribe to other belief systems. The qualitative material recorded further indicates that this is the case.

A more targeted approach was also undertaken in six London boroughs. Young people from Lambeth, Ealing, Hounslow, Redbridge, Bromley and Brent were invited to participate in Beatbullying's Interfaith programme, enabling us to gain an essential depth of understanding with respect to the feelings and experiences reported by young people who had experienced faith-based bullying. Beatbullying's Interfaith programme also provided an outlet and environment for these young people to discuss their faiths and the faith-based issues they face. Furthermore, it opened a debate on what we can do to tackle the problem of faith-based bullying and conflict.

**"Jesus freak. I am called Jesus freak every day." (Emeline age 15)**

**"They were shouting 'Jews killed Jesus'. All of them. Some of them were my friends; they didn't know I was Jewish" (Esther age 14)**

# Survey findings - Universal

## Introduction

This section highlights the findings collated from Beatbullying's core universal survey. The findings suggest our young people's sense of faith, how they practice, their inter-faith mix of friends and their innate sense of tolerance and interest in other young people's faith or belief system is equally as complex as it is surprising.

Moreover, our young citizens discuss religion openly with their peers and their families, they have differing faiths, but they are faiths that they are proud of and want to protect. However, they also want to reach out and discuss difference, their commonality and their sense of community that can be and are cohesive and tolerant.

## Emerging themes and key findings

### Belief systems & practice

We wanted young people to tell us about their beliefs and whether they practice a religion. The results were surprising. Close to 50% had religious beliefs, 37% or nearly four in ten practice their religion. These figures are considerably higher than the adult population.

### Key Findings

- 48.4% of the young people surveyed subscribe to a religious belief
- 38.3% do not have any religious beliefs
- 13.3% were unsure about their religious beliefs
- 37% of the young people surveyed said they practiced a religion
- 56.5% said they do not practice a religion
- 6.2% were unsure as to whether they practiced a religion

**"People just took the piss because I believe in Jesus and the Bible, it just went on all the time."  
(Patrick age 15)**

## **Friendship groups and faith**

Beatbullying also wanted to find out whether young people generally have friendships of the same religious or faith background. Asking; “are your friendships generally with people of the same religious or faith background?” we wanted to understand how young people chose their friends and did they care about religion when making friends? Is faith an indicator of friendship groups? Do young people even care about the religion of their friends?

### **Key findings**

- 19.1% said that their friends are largely of the same religious or faith background
- 13.9% said that their friends are not of the same religious or faith background
- 55.9% reported a mixture of friendships
- 11.2% were not sure

## **Talking faith**

Beatbullying wanted to find out where, if at all, young people talk about religious issues. We wanted to clarify if young people are at all interested in discussing religion, and if they did, what environment best suited this discussion. Close to 50% report discussing religious issues and their faith. However, a maximum of 34.6% report discussing religion and faith at schools, and even fewer (a maximum of 28%) talk about religious issues at home. Nevertheless young people do seem to be talking about faith in surprising numbers.

### **Key findings**

- 14.6% said they discuss religious issues at school
- 6% said they discuss religious issues at home
- 22% discuss religious issues both at home and at school
- 9.1% said somewhere other than those mentioned above
- 48.2% said they don't talk about religious or faith issues at all

## Mixed friendship groups

Beatbullying also wanted to ask if young people knew anything about the faith or religious beliefs of their friends and peers asking, “Do you know anything about the religion or faith of your friends?” The findings suggest that only 17% don’t know anything about their friends’ religions. The majority, 60%, know a lot or a little about their friends religions. Although this is only a snapshot survey, these findings suggest that young people are not only talking about faith, but are interested in knowing a little or a lot about their friends religions.

### Key findings

- 23.5% reported knowing a lot about their friends’ religion
- 40.1% reported knowing a little about their friends’ religion
- 17.5% said their friends’ faith is not important to them
- 93 (17.9%) don’t really know anything about their friends’ religions

“We talk about stuff on telly, you know Iraq and that, how Muslims feel about stuff”

## Faith, friendship groups and family

Understanding the role of the family in young people’s experiences of faith and religion was also important to Beatbullying. In particular, understanding how friendship groups are influenced by family in relation to faith was something we wanted to explore. Encouragingly, young people reported that their families were relaxed about the faith mix of their friendship groups. For the majority of young people, their parents and siblings did not mind if they had friends from different backgrounds. Others reported it to be “no one else’s business but theirs” and that they felt free to choose their own friends. Worryingly, however, 5.6% reported familial disapproval with regard to peer relationships with other young people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

### Key findings

- 5.6% said their family doesn’t like it when they mix with other people
- 56.3% said their family doesn’t mind if they have friends from different backgrounds
- 71.1% said they can choose who their friends are
- 34.1% said it’s no-one else’s business who their friends are

**“No man... I don’t care what me mum thinks, we are tight.” (James age 14)**

### **The extent and depth of faith-based bullying**

Of those young people who practice a religion (47%), 23% reported being bullied because of their faith. One in four young people reporting faith-based bullying, although no higher than the national trends concerning other aspects of bullying, is worryingly high when you consider our base is the 48% of young people who reported subscribing to a religious belief and the 37% who practice.

### **Key findings**

- 23% said they have been bullied because of their religion or faith
- 9% said they have been bullied because they wear religious symbols
- 19% said they have been bullied because of their skin colour
- 13% have been bullied by religious stereotyping

**“These two girls knew that we were fasting, they got me in the toilets and treid to force crisps down my throat...they were all laughing their heads off.” (Fullan age 13)**

**“...one day I told my friends my mum talks in tongues when we are at church. It all kicked off and they went on and on, they are not my friends anymore.” (Kisha age 15)**

**“A bus driver wouldn’t let me on a bus once, he called me a f\*\*\*ing Musso shithead.” (Faraz age 16)**

**“The asianz and the afrikanz are always fighting each other at our skool, they just get each other then the white boyz start on the asianz.” (Tino, age 13½)**

# Panel Findings - Targeted

## Introduction

This section highlights the findings gathered from a tailored intervention, via Beatbullying's Interfaith programme. Working with 251 young people in six London boroughs, the work aimed to provide an outlet to discuss the faith-based issues facing young people, seeking to address and effectively reduce faith-based conflict and religious intolerance. We acknowledge that this is not the ideal sample size for generalised findings to emerge. However, it is a sufficient approach that begins to evidence the benefits of intervening early before levels of intolerance and anti-social behaviour escalate into more problematic, violent and criminal behaviour.

## Demographic data

**Total field sample: 251**

Geographical Location:

20.5% Brent  
36.4% Bromley  
9.3% Ealing  
14.6% Hounslow  
12.6% Lambeth  
6.6% Redbridge

Gender: 47.7% Male  
50.3% Female  
2% Missing

Age range: 11 to 16 year olds

Disability: 6.3% report a disability

Ethnicity: 52.3% White  
5.9% Mixed heritage  
17.9% Asian or Asian British

21.1% Black or Black British

1.4% Chinese

1.4% Other

Religion: 34.4% Christian  
6.6% Hindu  
1.3% Buddhist  
9.2% Atheist  
12.5% Muslim  
3.3% Sikh  
1.9% Jewish  
1.3% Jain  
29.5% No affiliation

Here are some of the things young people say about their faith. It is often complex, rewarding, honest and forthright:

“When I found out that cows are scared (sacred) to Hindus, I knew me and Shafia had tons to talk about.” **(Sarah, age 14)**

“Our festivals are kicking. All my friends come with me now.” **(Aapti, age 14)**

“They called me a Jesus freak. If believing in Jesus makes me a freak, then I am proud to be a freak.” **(Rochelle, age 15)**

“I respect other guys religions, why do they not respect mine, we don’t go doing war because of our religion.” **(Hassan age 13)**

“I love god, god is my heart, he makes me happy.” **(Rocheen, age 15)**

“Sometimes I get worried, why do some people say the Koran says kill people? I never read that.” **(Yeganeh, age 14)**

“I am proud to be Jewish. Really proud. I don’t care what anyone says... and so is my family.” **(Judith age 14)**

## Emerging themes and key findings

Just over 70% of those who participated in Beatbullying's interfaith programme reported subscribing to a particular religion or belief system.

13.9% have been bullied because of their faith or religion. This finding is closely aligned to the universal findings, although we acknowledge that this is not a statistically significant figure; we therefore purposely decided not to extrapolate findings to the wider population.

The most common forms of bullying were verbal (19.9%) and psychological or emotional (17.3%). Young people also report high levels of physical bullying (11.3%). Cyber bullying seemed to be the least common (6%), although if the study was replicated with a larger sample we would expect to find an increase in levels of cyber bullying in correlation with general national trends.

Here are some of the experiences young people told us about:

"...they pushed me down the stairs, kicked me, dragged me by [my] hair, broke my tooth and hit me with a chair. They said my dad did 7/7." **(Jagatveer age 15)**

"They would call me Paki, tell me to go back to Paki land and live with Osama." **(Mavish age 13)**

"They would say I am not from God and they didn't like me speaking in my own language." **(Kumbi age 14)**

"They would call me 'black shit' or say 'go back to your country, you don't belong here'." **(Shafia age 13)**

"I got called a Paki and told that my religion was stupid" **(Jabeen age 12)**

"I know people at my school who just call Jewish people yids all the time. I just don't say anything. I feel shamed though." **(Enoch age 16)**

"Sometimes I hear boys laughing about bombs in Iraq. They do it in front of me, laughing that more muslims have been blown up." **(Aruni age 13)**

# Living with the consequences of faith-based bullying

Young people of faith, of all faiths and of no faith in particular, are being bullied, abused and harassed because they have a religious position, or they talk about their religion, or their peers think they represent or practice a particular religion.

It has left them feeling bad about being themselves and feeling their confidence slip. Many had trouble sleeping as they lay in bed terrified of going to school the next morning. Many of those who reported being bullied comfort ate, self harmed, or found themselves drinking alcohol or taking drugs, to deal with the fear or unhappiness of being bullied, or to try and fit in with their bullies.

Moreover, young people reported being constantly frightened, unable to concentrate at school, angry and stressed out. Just fewer than 15% felt they did not want to go to school, whilst 5.3% truanted to escape their bullies. Some of these young people felt so isolated and frightened by their bullies, they contemplated suicide.

Some young people, as they traversed the bullying, ended up resenting their parents for making them “have a religion”. Others questioned their religion, or felt ashamed of their faith. Some young people told us they began to doubt there was a God, or they just stopped talking about their faith anywhere unless they were sure it was safe to do so. Amidst all this, however, many young people who were being bullied and felt excluded because of their faith, felt stronger about their faith and belief systems, it made them felt sure they believed in their God. Many never stopped standing up for their religion, even though it meant they may be bullied. This does not justify bullying behavior as a young person should not be bullied to make their faith stronger, but it is an interesting finding.

## Overview

- 21.2% found it difficult to concentrate and pay attention
- 18.6% had lowered self-esteem and my confidence was low
- 12.9% didn't feel like eating
- 6% felt like eating more than usual
- 6.6% thought about self harming
- 6.6% had suicidal thoughts
- 17.2% said the bullying made them feel stressed out
- 15.2% said the bullying made them feel scared
- 17.3% said the bullying made them feel angry
- 14.5% didn't want to go to school

- 12% didn't want to contribute in class
- 11.9% said the bullying made them feel ashamed of their faith
- 7.3% said the bullying made them question their faith
- 14.6% said the bullying made their faith feel stronger

"A thick Jew I was called, again and again...I am dyslexic and Jewish." (Sarah age 15)

"People are changing to Muslim because they think they can kill someone and god will forgive them." (Asante age 15)

# Tackling Faith-based Bullying

## Beatbullying's Interfaith programme

### BB Interfaith – Interim Results

The BB Interfaith project arose as a result of the wider concerns relating to issues around sectarian and related cultural and racist bullying. The project takes into account the fact that young people may be becoming increasingly secular and do not necessarily have strong, or indeed any, religious views, but still identify as belonging to a particular religious group for family and wider cultural reasons. The project uses the BB Mentoring approach (a form of peer mentoring) but has a particular focus on faith-based and related cultural/racial issues. The project is a pilot programme and is being rolled out in 12 London boroughs over 36 months. To date, Beatbullying has covered six London boroughs: Lambeth, Ealing, Hounslow, Redbridge, Bromley and Brent.

The BB Interfaith approach is one that recognises and celebrates differences and suggests that all faiths should be positively endorsed. BB Interfaith aims to encourage young people from different backgrounds to work together for the common good and to recognise that behind different backgrounds there is a common humanity and civic identity. In doing this, BB Interfaith hopes to build bridges between people of different backgrounds with a view to overcoming faith-based bullying, bigotry, sectarianism and intolerance. To build harmony and a world where faith-based bullying is unacceptable, it is necessary to examine the sources of bullying and disharmony, understand what is to be examined, then create an approach which, while recognising the value of diversity, assists young people, schools, youth groups and their communities to work together to

avoid sectarianism, faith-based conflict and bullying through key learning and issues addressed via this project.

Key learning:

- Understanding what the opportunities and challenges are for young people living in a multi-faith society
- Discovering how BB Interfaith can build better understanding between young people with different beliefs, so disagreement and diversity can be discussed without conflict, anger or violence
- Challenging young people to discuss and explore different beliefs and value systems and understanding how they impact young people in relation to living and being at school together
- Understanding what is the experience of young people in relation to religious or faith-based bullying. What are their experiences of assimilation, exclusion, sanitization, of bias and tokenism, asking what about these experiences may lead to faith-based bullying?

The BB Interfaith pilot programme will work with 600 young people directly, and up to 6,000 young people indirectly. The project respects the cultural wishes of differing faiths and offers workshops to groups of girls, groups of boys and mixed gender groups. It highlights the differences experienced by young people of differing faiths, those who are new exiles and those who are seeking asylum. The project outputs will cascade back into the communities in which we are working through our peer education system, led by our newly trained inter-faith anti-bullying ambassadors/leaders. These young leaders will, as with all of Beatbullying's prevention work, then have the skills and tools to educate, mentor and support (with the assistance of experts) the next tranche of young inter-faith leaders and ambassadors.

- As with all our intervention/prevention programmes, BB Interfaith explores issues around faith-based bullying and sectarian bullying, and creates awareness programmes using a variety of innovative mediums including art, drama, creative writing, music and new media. Beatbullying development workers will provide expert support and advice. Once working policy, educational material and solutions are developed by each individual panel, education awareness programmes are then rolled out to the wider community groups, organisations and schools where peer mentoring, peer listening and the Beatbullying prevention model and literature is delivered to thousands of young people.

- The BB Interfaith pilot will provide anti-bullying training and tool kits to the professionals working in a minimum of 270 agencies.
- The pilot will develop a bespoke BB internet portal and e-learning suite. This will be fully accessible to the communities in which we are working, fully translated into the various languages and fully interactive providing youths, professionals, carers and parents with accessible anti-bullying resources, which are accreditable via the e-mentoring scheme.
- The pilot will promote faith-based anti-bullying work. Good value and best practice in the field will lead to a consistent approach and then, as always with Beatbullying's work, this will be shared with hundreds of schools and organisations.
- Beatbullying will work with 10 organisations from each of the 12 boroughs in each cycle period. Each group of 10 organisations comes together to work at each panel meeting. Once the work and campaigns have been produced, the trained Beatbullying Interfaith ambassadors will cascade their work back out into the community: into their schools, their youth groups and beyond. The ambassadors will also present their campaigns to businesses and political and community leaders in order to achieve sustainability of the work.
- A professional feature length film will be rolled out with supplementary educational material. This will be fully accessible to partner schools, relevant stakeholders and organisations participating in the project. The film includes the real life experiences collated through the approach. This film is available from November 2008.



They would call me Paki,  
tell me to go back to Paki  
Land and live with Osama

# Cohesion - Meeting the challenge

BB Interfaith is rooted in four key characteristics in an attempt to secure community cohesion and community conflict resolution:

- A common vision and a sense of belonging.
- The valuing of diversity.
- Similar life opportunities for all.
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in the schools and in neighbourhoods (Communities and Local Government).

Every school, whatever its intake and location, is responsible for ensuring that our children and young people are educated about the diverse make up of British society and in particular its diversity in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, religions and beliefs. From September 2007 schools were required, for the first time, to show real evidence of what they are doing to promote community cohesion.

The BB Interfaith programme is meeting that challenge and providing schools in some of the most deprived areas in the UK not only the tools to meet that challenge but to reduce faith-based conflict and bullying.

- 1) The BB Interfaith programme is designed and is successfully delivered to ensure schools can evidence with robust outputs their commitment to promoting cohesion and reducing faith-based conflict.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** Faith-based bullying is being reduced by up to 45% in participating schools. 89.6% of participating young people said they have learnt how to stay safe and avoid trouble.

- 2) The BB Interfaith programme enables young people to work together to establish a common vision. Moreover, the programme recognises and celebrates diversity as all different faiths are positively endorsed, thus enabling an insight into the positive aspects of diversity.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** Young people representing 17 religions / belief systems have participated in BB Interfaith to date enabling 54.1% of young people to feel more valued and confident with respect to their faith and its place in a wider secular society.

- 3) The BB Interfaith programme facilitates the development of positive relationships in schools, empowering young people to cascade and sustain these relationships in the wider community. Therefore all characteristics that determine community cohesion are embodied in our Interfaith programme.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** 84% of the young people graduating through BB Interfaith who were being bullied, harassed or abused because of their faith or race are now not being bullied. 39.8% report helping others who have been bullied because of their faith.

- 4) Young people graduating from the BB Interfaith programme are learning about the diverse national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, groups and communities in the UK, and the connections between them. Similarities are emphasised, and differences are debated and respected.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** myth-busting education is especially helpful. 91.8% of the young people participating are reporting a “big” increase in their understanding of other religions, cultures and customs.

- 5) The BB Interfaith programme links participating schools and organisations locally and pan London, providing opportunities for young people to sustain their work across broader communities.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** BB Interfaith has already linked up 60+ schools and organisations. They are sharing best practice, disseminating information and refining and sustaining their faith-based anti-bullying strategies across London.

- 6) The BB Interfaith programme takes potential language barriers into account. The programme has the ability to effectively break barriers within the community, as previous myths can be explored, challenged and broken.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** BB Interfaith ambassadors speak 138 languages between them. They will be translating the BB Interfaith web site, to ensure language and people from across the world are represented.

- 7) The BB Interfaith programme is essentially community-led ensuring young people are the key decision makers, enabling young people to maximise the experience and expertise of Beatbullying.

**Demonstrating cohesion:** To date 251 BB Interfaith ambassadors have graduated from the programme, all of whom are mentoring their peers in their schools and communities, spreading the anti-conflict / pro tolerance message and representing their communities in the media, within their councils and to local politicians.



They called me a Jesus freak. if believing in Jesus makes me a freak, then i am proud to be a freak

# Recommendations

## Building mutual respect in our schools

- The government must undertake a comprehensive piece of research to map the extent and depth of faith-based bullying between our young people.
- Guidance, similar to the DCSF guidance on homophobic violence and cyber bullying, must be published and disseminated to all schools in England and Wales.
- Faith-based bullying must be included as a category when Government legislates to require schools to record all incidents of bullying across their school communities.
- The DCSF should continue to fund innovative faith-based anti-bullying programmes. Beatbullying has proved that cohesion does matter and through providing outlets for young people to discuss the issues that matter to them, we can effectively reduce the majority of behaviours described above.
- The Government should open a debate between our young people, asking what sort of society our young people want to live in and how they view their faith and the faith of their friends and peers. Debates around knife and gun crime have demonstrated the importance of including young people in formulating policy and legislation. We can replicate this for tackling faith-based bullying and conflict, and gain an invaluable insight into the experiences, thoughts and needs of our young people.
- The Government should encourage Local Authorities to introduce Citizens Day which include all school communities: For example, hugely successful citizen events have been established in Southwark, bringing together schools from across the borough.
- The Government should also encourage schools across England and Wales to run Citizens' days in their schools. Emphasising shared values, tolerance, compassion, justice and commonality.
- Schools must have an integration and cohesion policy, which outlines not only how they are promoting social cohesion but how they intend to sustain inter-faith relations, promote tolerance and shared values in their schools.

- Religious literacy learning should be piloted in schools.
- There should be continued encouragement and resourcing of the faith community organisations who are working with local, regional and central government to promote social cohesion, tolerance and commonality
- Bullying prevention training is necessary for all school staff, particularly those delivering religious studies. Where information is shared during lessons, without appropriate intervention skills, many teaching staff delivering RE will not be able to act swiftly to diffuse any bullying that can arise from discussions about religious belief systems and faiths that are attributable to peers who are subsequently bullied.
- Citizenship needs to be addressed as part of a much wider curriculum that is Humanities based, where equalities/inequalities, peer to peer relationships, self awareness, gender awareness, sexual relationships, faith and belief systems and activism are taught through dynamic and outcomes-based learning methodology



The asianz and the afrikanz are always fighting each other at our skool, they just get each other then the white boyz start on the asianz

# Conclusion

Faith-based bullying is an issue which needs to be addressed in our schools and communities. One in four young people from across all religions are being bullied because of their religious beliefs, perceived religious identity, affiliation to a religion, or their sectarian view or other alternative belief system by other young people of identical or opposing belief systems.

This inevitably holds negative implications and subsequent consequences. Young people who experience high levels of faith-based bullying and religious intolerance are racially abused, physically attacked, spat at, isolated, mugged, stolen from, beaten with makeshift weapons and stabbed because of their faith. They find themselves depressed, truanting, have trouble eating, their confidence plummets, some even have suicidal thoughts. Others question their faith, stop talking about their beliefs, or even feel ashamed of their faith or their families for having a faith.

By intervening early with a approach and providing outlets for young people Beatbullying has proved that we can effectively reduce the behaviours prescribed above. Moreover, cohesion is important to young people and by providing outlets and environments where young people can discuss their views, and learn, understand and tolerate other views, cultures and backgrounds, we can effectively improve community cohesion.

This report must only be viewed as the beginning of a debate on faith-based conflict, which needs to be widened further and taken up more in our schools and communities.

To achieve this end, Beatbullying's recommendations need to be addressed and acted on, for much more work and investment is needed if we are to succeed in tackling faith-based bullying and improving community cohesion.

# Case Studies

## Roshan

Roshan was considered very shy by his teachers and parents, and although he was not at risk of exclusion, he was withdrawn and introverted at school and made no real contribution to the pastoral or cultural life of the school. In summary, Roshan is very bright but lacked confidence. Much of his low self-esteem is related to a series of mugging/bullying he experienced, perpetrated by a group of non-Muslim young people at his school. During the incidents, Roshan was taunted, spat at and abused, called a “Terrorist”, “Paki”, and “Murderer”. For reasons perfectly rational to Roshan, he decided not to report the muggings.

Upon becoming involved in the BB Interfaith programme, Roshan developed in the most extraordinary way. Considerable effort means that he has written anti-bullying scripts and plays for Beatbullying and his school. He leads at many of the workshops and has been interviewed twice about Beatbullying by the BBC Asian Network.

According to Roshan his “main aim is to become a BB Interfaith ambassador”. As a result of his new confidence, Roshan has just been asked to become a prefect at his school and wants to become a member of the youth parliament.

During the second month of Roshan attending BB Interfaith, the same boys from his school mugged and abused him about his faith him again. Empowered by the Beatbullying process, and armed with the tools to cope with the incident, Roshan spoke to other young people who were also being mugged by this gang. Together they spoke to their teachers and reported the behaviour. Consequently, and to their credit, and with the assistance and support of Beatbullying, the school has dealt with the issue promptly and fairly. Not only is Roshan not being mugged, not being abused because of his faith or bullied anymore, nor are his peers.

According to Roshan he “gets BB...it’s a gang thing, but a gang that does good things”.

## Jamie

Jamie experienced quite severe and sustained bullying due, surprisingly, to the fact that he is an atheist. Attending a Unitarian school, Jamie had his own identity, perspective on life, and opinions

on reasons why young people bully. Quite an individual and with a strong sense of self, this was no protection from being by bullies. A mixture of his own belief system and his individuality meant that he was noticed by bullies and their attention on him was sustained for over a year. Jamie's appearance also played a big part in this experience, leading to him being physically and verbally bullied for a period of a year. The effects were seemingly disproportionate to his experience of being bullied because of his personal beliefs, yet they were painful and had considerable impact on his young life; the bullying made him truant, consume alcohol, feel compelled to carry a weapon, fail to contribute in class, comfort eat and generally feel withdrawn. As a member of the Lambeth Interfaith panel, Jamie drew on all these complex feelings and emotions, took a hold of what was happening and worked with his peers to find positive ways of engaging with one another about difference and why being different is okay! Having moved on considerably now, Jamie holds his head high, has overcome these negative experiences and can work with his peers, some of whom are bullied because of their identity, and help them through these challenging experiences.

## Jabeen

Jabeen, age 12 and Hindu, joined our Ealing Interfaith group not just because of her experience, but because she was a committed ambassador for her school and for Beatbullying. Jabeen clearly understood that bullying based on faith and what you believe in is as damaging as any other form of bullying. For Jabeen, the bullying happened on the way to and from school, at break times, whilst hanging around in her neighbourhood and whilst going about everyday normal things such as going to the shops. Jabeen clearly understood she was being bullied because of her faith, her outward appearance and her cultural identity. Jabeen was racially abused, called a Paki, and told that her religion was stupid. Jabeen felt angry and her experiences made her frustrated. Through her dedicated work on the panel, she felt personally stronger, which also contributed to making her faith stronger. With an increased understanding of bullying, particularly this form of bullying, she was able to help others around her who were also affected; she understood how to report it, the consequences, and how to avoid trouble and stay safe. Jabeen felt strong enough and confident enough to tell her teacher, and importantly, to share with her parents what had happened and ensure it stopped. Taking a role in the BB Interfaith film, Jabeen has been able to assist many more young people affected by intolerance and bullying through her message.

## Shafia

Shafia, age 13, firmly believed that her experience of faith-based bullying was grounded in her ethnicity, not just in her beliefs as a young Muslim. Left feeling sad, lonely, uncomfortable, and

excluded as a result of the bullying that happened on the way to and from school, at break times, during classes, out on the streets of west London and at her after school club, Shafia had plenty of experiences to share with her peers. The bullying happened every day for months, and she endured awful prejudice, being called a 'black \*\*\*\*' or told to 'go back to your country, you don't belong here!' Her experience and time with the Beatbullying panel meant that she felt stronger, being able to understand and listen to the experiences of others in the group and contribute to making a real difference.

## Maia

Maia, from Brent, felt she was bullied by people of other faiths because she is Jewish. Her experience left her feeling very angry and upset, and left her with low self-esteem. The bullying was verbal and was, she feels, racist – zoning in on her religious and cultural identity. The significance here is also that, through her work with BB, Maia recognised that she also bullied other people, not necessarily because of their faith, but due to the fact that all of us possess, in her words, 'accidental prejudices'. This is an interesting point and added real value to her work on the project, something that can now be shared and disseminated widely across her peer groups.

## Salim

Salim is 13 years old and an African male. His family strongly follows a Christian faith and go to the Life Oasis Church. He takes his faith seriously and was upset that some of his friends were making hurtful comments about him in class, saying things like 'Salim can't come out tonight after school, he has to go home and meditate with his mum'. As they were saying these things, he noticed others laughing and finding it amusing. When the teacher asked them to be quiet, they began to write silly notes in a burn book. Salim saw the things they wrote and was very upset that his own friends could be so cruel. Some of the things they wrote about him included: 'Salim is God's slave', 'Salim ain't got no friends, only God', 'He's so boring, doing his homework and listening to his religious songs' and 'Hell to Oasis, it ain't even a real religion, it's just something his mum made up to make him be good.'

Even though it only happened a couple of times, Salim was upset about it and found it difficult to sleep at night, the comments and laughing running through his mind. He even bunked off school one day because he just couldn't face going in to be laughed and jeered at.

His mum confronted him one day after finding lots of empty crisp, sweets and chocolate wrappers hidden in his wardrobe. He ended up breaking down and telling her that he had been comfort eating at night because he couldn't sleep. He told her what had been happening and that he felt stressed out and angry that he had been treated this way. He said he was angrier with himself though for letting it bother him, admitting that he had even questioned his faith. His mum told him to remember how Jesus was mocked when he walked the earth and that these things will make his faith stronger – he should be proud of who he is and what he believes. She told him he should pray for the people that were being cruel to him and ask Jesus to bless them.

Salim didn't have any more incidents at school, but continued to pray for those that had hurt him. Working with Beatbullying was challenging for Salim. He didn't always grasp what was happening around him but he stayed with it. His faith got stronger as a result of what happened and for that he thanks God.

## Manjit

Manjit, age 14 from Hounslow, is a young Sikh. Participating in the Hounslow work and coming from a SEN school, Manjit took to the process with gusto. Naturally mischievous and always testing his teachers, and indeed his peers, he thinks life is about living! However, Manjit experienced quite severe bullying because he is a Sikh. He suffered verbal bullying, with comments about his appearance, his beliefs, principles and values. Every day he suffered taunts at the hands of his bullies. Whatever they did or said, the effect on him was substantial and ranged from affecting his eating habits to making him feel stressed out, not wanting to contribute in class, feeling scared and angry and sometimes having suicidal thoughts as a result. This would happen in the school changing rooms or out in the playground, and being bullied made him truant from school. The bullies were both people he called friends and other students at his school. Although Manjit stated he had never bullied anyone himself, in relation to this kind of bullying, he had witnessed it, reported it and had also taken part in it. That's why he is part of the Hounslow work; Manjit wants to learn about other people's cultures and religions, how both of these are perceived, learn about the similarities and the differences, increase his understanding of bullying based on faith and religion, to help others and to gain new skills. Manjit is getting there and credit to him for sticking with it! His journey is not over and he is working with Beatbullying right up till Anti-Bullying Week!

# About Beatbullying

## Who we are

Founded in 1999, multi award winning Beatbullying empowers young people to lead anti-bullying campaigns in their schools and local communities, and builds the capacity of local communities to sustain the work. Beatbullying has directly and indirectly worked with 1.5 million young people over the last five years, assisting and supporting young people that are being bullied, re-educating and changing the behaviour of young people that bully and preventing bullying in schools and communities across the UK.

## What we do

The Beatbullying programme utilises and implements “BB Mentoring”. This is much more than peer mentoring; this is empowering students to campaign and decision-make to ensure their school is a safer, bully free school and community environment. It is not simply for them to feel an obligation to intervene in bullying or report incidents in school. Beatbullying’s highly expert Development Officers and counsellors utilise myriad mediums to engage young people, including: sport, new media, life and campaigning skills training, drama and music. When Beatbullying intervenes, our proven prevention model will reduce incidents of bullying by an average of 39% in UK schools; reporting of bullying and child-on-child violence goes up by 60% as young people feel more able to seek help. Schools are also reporting between a 14% and 21% decrease in the levels of truancy. The Beatbullying programme also greatly assists Heads, pupils and teaching staff in their continued quest to create a more respectful and inspiring environment where young people’s ability to learn and meet their potential is recognised and celebrated.

## What we believe

Beatbullying believes that bullying contradicts the basic British values of fair play, of social justice, of aspiration, of opportunity, of respect - it is something the whole nation must act collectively to eradicate, so we can really support the millions of young people who lay in bed at night terrified to go to school the next morning. Young people who are being bullied at school are not able to make the most of themselves and their talents, because their ability to learn, to contribute, to be happy and just be a child, is undermined and sometimes lost forever by bullying. The introduction of progressive bullying prevention programmes in the UK will reduce bullying, reduce truancy levels, increase attainment and reduce the incidents of racist and homophobic violence and abuse in our schools.