

# UK: Government sponsored “integration” report an agenda for division

By Julie Hyland  
12 December 2016

The review by Dame Louise Casey into “Opportunity and Integration” is a misnomer. While it purports to look at “what could be done to fight the injustice that where you are born or live in this country, your background or even your gender, can affect how you get on in modern Britain,” it does nothing of the sort.

Growing inequality and social disadvantages are referenced only briefly, with no connection to the draconian austerity measures imposed by Labour, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats alike. Instead Casey claims, “In this country we take poverty, social exclusion, social justice and social mobility seriously ...”

Social “cohesiveness,” or its absence, is presented as the result of individual choices.

Casey has form. As a government official working in social welfare, she has been a favourite of successive Labour and Conservative governments for helping legitimise the assault on social and welfare programmes. Appointed by Labour’s Tony Blair as head of its misnamed Social Exclusion Unit, with a remit to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers, Casey infamously blamed charities and others aiding those on the streets for “perpetuating the problem.”

Her approach endeared her to the powers-that-be. In 2003, she took over as head of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit—tasked with ordering civil behaviour orders against “anti-social” individuals and was appointed head of Blair’s Respect Task Force in 2005 to deal with “problematic” families. When the task force was closed down after just two years, Casey moved into community policing and then was appointed Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses. In both roles, she attacked the legal system for favouring criminals and called for the limitation of jury trials.

In 2011, she was given responsibility for investigating the London riots in August that year. The actual trigger for the riots—the police killing of Mark Duggan—was passed over, to blame “troubled families.” Speaking on the subject, Casey asserted, “We are not running some cuddly social workers programme ... we should be talking about things like shame and guilt ... we have lost the ability to be judgmental

because we worry about being seen as nasty to poor people.”

In 2015 she oversaw the inquiry in child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, a result of which was the government’s decision that the local authority was “not fit for purpose.” Overall control was stripped from elected councillors and given to four government-appointed commissioners who continue to run the authority more than one year later.

Casey’s report on Rotherham was criticised by social work academics for its “lack of rigour and transparency in the methods used to gather and analyse data.” Likewise, her latest 200-page report is based on what she admits are outdated figures, bracketed by unsubstantiated hearsay and assertions. This is not a surprise. During a private Home Office after-dinner speech in 2005, Casey infamously decried the “obsession with evidence-based policy. If No 10 [the Prime Minister’s office] says bloody evidence-based policy to me one more time I’ll deck them one and probably get unemployed.”

Her disdain for “evidence” only endeared her more to the politicians she was supposedly railing against. As a BBC report mused on her latest report, “Perhaps Casey’s real value to politicians—and the reason she keeps being asked to produce reports on difficult social problems—is that she is able to say things in public that they think privately (that social workers are too ‘soft’ for example).”

In other words, Casey specialises in raw propaganda dressed up as research, and her latest report is no exception. Commissioned by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2015, its purpose is to legitimise the Prevent programme introduced by then home secretary, now prime minister, Theresa May. This so-called counter-terror strategy has been used to attack personal and political freedoms and increase the powers of the police and state under the guise of combating Islamic extremism. On this basis, Muslims have been cast as a virtual “enemy within.”

Casey’s report specifically attacks “an anti-Prevent lobby” which has been “successful in stirring up anxiety and concern without offering any constructive alternatives to

protect communities ...” She calls for leaders in “government, in public sector, and faith institutions, and communities—to stand up and be more robust on this.”

To give some semblance of balance, she drops in the occasional reference to “black boys still not getting jobs,” difficulties facing girls and “white working class kids on free school meals still doing badly in our education system.” The term working class is only used in reference to “white” kids. Everyone else is referenced only by virtue of their skin colour, sex or religion. But the overwhelming bulk of the report blames immigrants and Muslims in particular—who are referenced 249 times—for failing to “integrate.”

To cover her back, Casey claims that she “wrestled with what to put in and what to leave out,” because “I know that putting some communities under the spotlight—particularly communities in which there are high concentrations of Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage—would only add to the pressure that they already feel.”

The centrepiece of Casey’s report is her call for the promotion of “British values” and for immigrants to swear an “integration oath.” To argue for this, she focuses on two main areas: the “unprecedented pace and scale” of immigration over the last years which, “in a situation where the country has been through an economic downturn,” she claims, “it is understandable that the pace and scale of immigration has felt too much for some communities.”

Casey notes that the UK population has grown by 4.1 million between 2001 and 2011—half of which she attributes to immigration. Still eight out of 10 people identify as “White British” and 60 percent define themselves as “Christian.” But she presents as a significant problem the fact that the non-white population (“most notably Indian and Pakistani”) is increasing; that the birth rate amongst ethnic-minorities is higher and that the number of people identifying as Muslim “grew most significantly” to make up the non-Christian religious population in the UK at 2.8 million. (The number of those with no religion has also risen from 17 percent to 26 percent, although other surveys put this at almost 50 percent).

On this basis she asserts, “As a nation, we are getting older, more secular and more open about our sexuality” while the “growing ethnic minority population is younger and more likely to identify as religious ...”

Casey identifies as a central problem certain “mono-cultural” Muslim enclaves. The huge decline in social housing, and vast increase in house and rent prices, which have forced poorer people into certain areas, are passed over. Instead she repeats, again without evidence, various instances meant to prove the failure of Muslims to integrate. This includes citing, several times, one anonymous school where “pupils believed the population of

Britain to be between 50% and 90% Asian ...” There are no similar complaints at the majority of schools or areas that are overwhelmingly “White British” or “Christian.”

In the section “Domestic violence and abuse,” Casey notes that the overwhelming majority of female victims of domestic abuse are “White British” females, and that 92 percent of those prosecuted for such offences are “White British” males. Nonetheless, the rest of the section focuses on the “particular vulnerability of some immigrant or ethnic minority women” by virtue of their “lack of English language skills” and “social isolation and notions of honour or shame in some communities.”

Casey’s report has duly been welcomed by the government and large sections of the political establishment. In particular her complaint that “fear of being called racist” has prevented “society from challenging sexist, misogynistic and patriarchal behaviour in some minority communities,” and her condemnation of “right on” critics for “ignoring” the problem.

The government said it would act on the findings and both Labour and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) endorsed the report.

Echoing Casey, UKIP’s immigration spokesman, John Bickley, said it was an “excoriating critique” of “mass immigration, multiculturalism and political correctness,” which “the main parties have singularly failed to address ...”

For Labour, Chuka Umunna claimed, “The fact people live parallel lives in modern Britain has been swept under the carpet for far too long and deemed too difficult to deal with ...”

Umunna, who chairs the all-parliamentary group on integration, welcomed proposals requiring immigrants to pass English proficiency tests and similar courses.

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