After The Riots Forum:
From Blame to Positive Action

Held on 1st February 2012

FINAL REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

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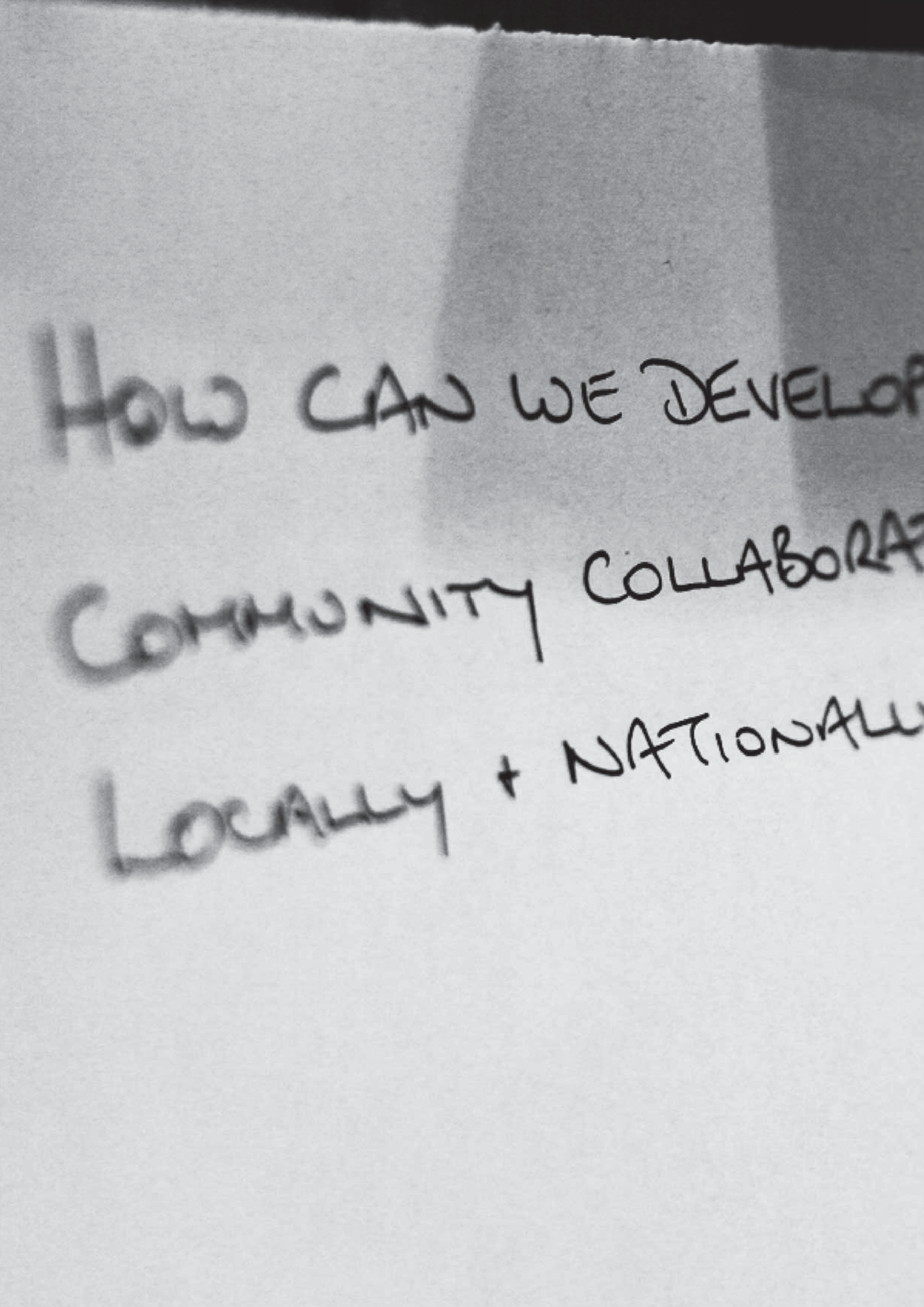
Contents


HOW CAN WE DEVELOP
COMMUNITY COLLABORA
LOCALLY + NATIONALL

Organisers' Impressions

THE RIOTS that shook London and other cities in England in the summer of 2011 affected everyone. Though there has been a lot of discussion and debate about the riots, there has been hardly any focus on how we can individually and collectively move forward from blame to positive action to address the root causes.

We take pride in jointly sponsoring and organising a forum that looked specifically at how grassroots organisations responded and should respond to such an incident, taking into account the moral and values-based dimension of the problem. There was a ready response from people from all walks of life to participate in the event and particularly share success stories and best practice. Inner city communities bore the brunt of the impact of the riots.

The forum brought together some of the principal players who were involved directly with the riots ,either as perpetrators, victims or people who prevented the riots taking place in their communities. We were also fortunate to have people who are involved with making real changes within their communities participate.

We knew that bringing together such a diverse range of stakeholders would be challenging, but we were keen to find a space for sharing ideas, networking and providing a chance to engage with the youth. This was perhaps one of the successes of the forum, as young people were given the chance to air their views and opinions on the riots and related issues in an open and safe environment and candidly expressed their frustrations about various issues; the relationships with authorities, such as the police, and the lack of job opportunities.

Our efforts will be meaningless if the outcomes only benefit those who participated at this event. We agreed to publish what was discussed and what emerged as outputs from the forum. This document summarises impressions from the work streams which have identified areas as worthy of consideration for future engagement.

Steering Group Members

Initiatives of Change
The Cordoba Foundation
Civil Society Forum
Burning2Learn

Participants' Impressions

It is our pleasure to have been able to participate at the 'After the Riots Forum: From Blame to Positive Action'. We also had the privilege of facilitating work stream discussions on different themes exploring issues related to the riots and the response to the riots, where participants freely expressed their own assessments and perspectives on the causes of the riots, identifying some factors that could address some of the concerns and challenges. These factors were later presented at the plenary session and are summarised in this document.

We believe that the riots that took place in London and other cities in the summer of 2011 cannot be viewed or solved in isolation, without taking into account the wider picture. At the heart of the crisis is the frightening failure of integrity in society. In addition, we need to look at issues related to lack of opportunities for youth, regarding employment and education, the relationship between the police and youth and the numerous cuts in funding to critical youth services. We need new insights and alternative solutions to the root causes of the riots.

The young participants who attended the workshop were candid in identifying that some aspects of negative youth culture, misuse of social media, a breakdown of respect within society, and a lack of purpose were important issues to be addressed. This was also reaffirmed by Dr Peter Selby, in his keynote address, where he talked about a need to attune our moral compasses and move away from a 'system of disregard' that had emanated from the top of society and had made its way to the bottom. He pointed out that adults also participated in the riots, signifying wider societal issues.

This is not the time to despair. Throughout Britain, there are seeds of hope. These are sown by community groups and organisations. Out of the bankruptcy of failed regeneration efforts, a new set of organisations are emerging in inner cities. Change and development is taking place at the local levels.

One of the key segments in the forum was the sharing of initiatives of change, led by individuals and communities. We heard case studies of how, against all odds, individuals and communities have created small projects – some even big ones – to tackle issues such as poverty, gun culture, drugs and unemployment. All efforts to tackle the root causes of unrest need to take into account these experiences. Solutions to problems abound. The challenge for all of us, particularly decision makers, would be to ensure that such initiatives are sustainable and facilitate similar positive action throughout the country.

We, therefore, recommend wider circulation of this document, which may prompt new debates to get people out of the present 'hurting' and 'blaming' stalemate. If this happens , our efforts at this forum would have served their purpose.


ISSUES

Responses from Young People

"Over the course of the forum I gained a new appreciation for the businesses that take part in community wellbeing. I was also greatly inspired by the fact that so many were so inclined to listen to us. All that was said in that room affected me in some way. Begging me to think more outside the box then I ever have in quite some time. Now I realize what I can do as part of this community."

"The most interesting thing was the amount of attention paid to us by the audience and how happy they were to have youths involved in the conference. Whilst I have debated a range of topics, not once have I had the ability to contribute and potentially cause a change."

"This feeling has led me to want to become a pro-active part of these kinds of events; instead of being a commentator just taking part in a debate, I want to be a contributor. So I would like to thank your company for being able to provide my group and I with this experience and I believe we would all enjoy and benefit from any future contact with Burning 2 Learn."

From Blame to Positive Action

The riots of August 2011 devastated communities across England and left people across various sectors of British society scrambling in the aftermath trying to find explanations for the disturbances. No doubt there have been many and various explanations given and many more suggested prescriptions to address the causes of these riots, with many debates and discussions on the topic taking place across Britain.

Despite all these discussions and debates regarding the riots and its root causes, we have been acutely aware that very little is being done to move from blame to positive action. In particular, very little has been done to engage with grassroots and faith communities to collectively address the root causes of these events. More significantly, most discussions have avoided the issues of tackling the degeneration of moral values in society and focussed instead on policy, funding and policing.

Initiatives of Change (IofC) UK, together with Burning2learn,the Civil Society Forum and The Cordoba Foundation, jointly held this one day national forum to understand different perspectives on the underlying civic, moral, political and social challenges and explore what could be done collectively moving forward. The purpose of this national forum was not only to bring together various stakeholders from across Britain to discuss these issues, but also to bring the various on –the- ground on-the-ground organisations together for the first time in such a way that would help facilitate networking and a larger sense of working together to address these various societal issues.

As the forum took place, it was very clear to participants that morals and a values based discussion had so far been non-existent in reflections on the riots.

Background

To enable participants to be better prepared for the forum, Saalik Haleem, researcher, The Cordoba Foundation and Don de Silva, Head of Programmes, IofC UK, prepared a background document for the event.

The document deals with a number of issues, including the background, causes and government responses to the riots, key findings of various research and panels, positive actions undertaken by individuals and communities to deal with the riots, a presentation on what could be done, and a discussion on the values and morality dimension of the fallout from the riots in communities across Britain. The document was distributed well in advance, and provided the necessary context to the forum.

Events on the Day

The forum was attended by some 100 participants. The day's proceedings began with a moving song, "Prayer", by Razia Aziz.

Welcoming participants on behalf of the organising committee, Don de Silva, Head of Programmes at IofC UK, said the event would be a listening forum. He continued: "Many of the individuals here have hands on experience in dealing with critical issues, such as social

exclusion, family life, youth offending and community cohesion. The forum aims to bring the values dimension into the riots debate. It will provide a space for dialogue. We will avoid any points scoring. We hope that the forum will encourage everyone to start with themselves, look at their own responsibilities, not just that of the others. We need both personal and systemic change to make a lasting difference."

Burning2Learn students then took to the stage and expressed their own personal views on the Summer Riots 2011. In the weeks building up to the event, the forum was already beginning to stimulate thriving debate within schools. The young people taking part in these debates were from London, Kent and Wolverhampton and raised important issues about the riots and the impact they had within society. Their presentation at the forum focussed on possible causes of the riots and included quotes from young people and the media. It dealt with youth despair, police "Stop and Search" methods, relations to authorities such as the police, the quality of education, lack of job opportunities, and the lack of resources to develop facilities for the youth in their areas.

Seventeen-year old Maria Peters said: 'It is fairly obvious that what has happened has had some really damaging and lasting effects on the persons involved; those who took it upon themselves to vandalise and steal shouldn't be allowed to get away with it. Do we really have the time to be processing each and every case? Surely, our time would be more productively used ensuring that it doesn't happen again.'

Group work

The seating was organised in an informal cafe-style setting.

Led by Esther Ridsdale, founding Director of the Civil Society Forum, the first inter-active session, started with personal introductions around each table.
Participants were asked to discuss two questions:

- *What is my interest in attending the forum?*
- *What questions do I want to explore today?*

The written response cards from each table were posted on walls for the benefit of the participants.

Experience

Three speakers related their experiences in mitigating the impact of riots.

Maxine Cockett, from Nottingham, works with the Renewal Trust as a Youth and Community Development Worker in the multicultural St. Ann's and Sneinton areas. Maxine inspired the establishment of the 'Holding Hands Around St. Ann's'. She trains young mentors as part of her Children's Society job:
Maxine told how she had been part of earlier riots in the 1980s. When the riots of last August reached Nottingham, she urged the rioters to go home before the police found them. 'We can do something positively,' said Cockett, one of the organisers of an annual 'Holding Hands Around St Ann's' demonstration of community unity.
"Every generation needs opportunities. Too many

young people leave school at 14with no stake in their communities".

She wanted to work together with others in the community to 'find solutions' so that young people are not marginalised and don't riot. 'I hope there won't be any more riots. But I wouldn't be surprised if we have riots again,' she said

Clasford Stirling, MBE, is a Youth and Projects Development Officer for the London Borough of Haringey. He is a community developer, particularly working in the Broadwater Farm Estate area. He is a trusted friend of the Duggan family and was involved with mediation between the family, the police and local government authorities.

He said: "The system doesn't provide for young people. We have four youth groups to deal with 100,000 people. It can't happen. We need 20 youth clubs.'

The rioters had come together in protest against the police following the shooting of 29-year-old Mark Duggan in Tottenham on 4 August. At first the rioters found it 'a sense of fun. The looting came afterwards. When you are having fun you don't care.' That fun had criminalised them. Politicians hadn't always obeyed the law either and 'the rich get richer because they steal'.
Charlie Ryder is a director, producer, performer, writer, dancer, songwriter and puppeteer and an artist. Charlie is also an ex-political prisoner. (Repetition of below)

He told how he had served eight months in jail for taking part in a violent demonstration outside a BNP bookshop in 1993. His father's drinking had had a bad effect on his upbringing, he said. He told the forum that young people needed a sense of forgiveness and healing to retain their sense of self-worth. He now works with the chaplaincy at Wormwood Scrubs Community Chaplaincy, and has collaborated with the Forgiveness Project.

Keynote address

The keynote address was given by Dr Peter Selby, President of the National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards. He was formerly Bishop of Worcester and Bishop to HM Prisons. Bishop Selby pointed out that custodial sentences and bail provisions for some of the rioters of last August had been punitive. He criticised a 'system of disregard' for the wellbeing of disenfranchised young people, which had led to the riots.

'I am seriously worried that you blight somebody's whole life for one night of foolishness by handing down prison sentences for minor crimes', said Bishop Selby. With 1,400 people in the system still awaiting prosecution and sentencing, 'there are real grounds for concern. The punitive response to individual rioters, resort to constraint and control and the use of prison disproportionately for the poorest add to up a system of disregard for their and society's welfare, ' he said.
(see Appendix item 1 for full text)

Afternoon session: Sharing Positive Action

Most discussions on the riots have been long on analysis and short on action. Throughout the UK, many concerned individuals, groups and communities, particularly faith groups, are involved in successfully dealing with social issues. They have a rich body of experience which often is not widely known, particularly to decision makers.

Anas Altikriti, Chief Executive of The Cordoba Foundation, led the session, where several people from different parts of the country shared their personal experiences of bringing about transformational change.

The contributors were:

Howard Grace: After studying physics at University in London, he spent the next 14 years working with Initiatives of Change on a voluntary basis, mainly overseas in India, Australia and South Africa. He had to leave quickly when he fell foul of the security police there, and ended up back in the UK training to be a teacher at the age of 40. After fourteen years of teaching, he launched the Initiatives of Change Schools Service.

He pointed out that the riots were a symptom of a deeper malaise in our society: "Sixteen years ago I was teaching maths in a comprehensive school with 700 students in the Sixth Form. I was also responsible for Sixth Form Current Affairs, and what grew in my spirit was the need of these young people finding a strong values foundation in their lives. Eventually I decided to leave formal teaching and launch out on a programme going to Sixth Forms around Britain to stimulate thought on purpose in life and motivation. Since that time, with teams of young people, mostly from other countries, we've facilitated about 800 sessions in a huge variety of schools. All have focussed on the inner struggle, we all have in one form or another, between 'living on the give' or 'living on the get'. Our sessions were 'interactive', not prescriptive, in the spirit of enquiry. Can we create a sort of coalition of schools programmes to lay a firm moral and spiritual foundation in the lives of young people for our society to be built upon. There is a very big need and challenge in our schools. No one organisation can address this, though we can all play our parts. It is something that many grassroots one word groups need to take on . Could this be one initiative to emerge from this Forum?"

Greg Davis founded the United Estates of Wythenshaw project in Benchill in Manchester. He began working the doors of the pubs and clubs in Manchester in 1986, when he was 19 years old and the Rave scene was just beginning to appear in some of the underground clubs. At 21, he started his own agency supplying door staff to the pubs and clubs of Greater Manchester. He is also a part -time Methodist l preacher. Should this be lay preacher?

He spoke about the inner-city cultural community centre, which helps to 'foster a sense of belonging,

education and training'. The problem with youth clubs is that they are 'nice places' for 'nice kids', he said. 'The kids who most need the support of a youth club are the ones least likely to go. There are issues of class, ethnicity and gender. They need youth clubs for kids who don't go to youth clubs.' In the previous generation, traditional figures of respect were teachers, parents, police and faith leaders. Now they faced abuse from kids. 'Those who can relate and garner respect are now more likely to be sports coaches and dance teachers.'

Ann Edwards trained as a secretary. She worked in South America with Initiatives of Change for many years – then married and lived in Jamaica working on community projects and involved in the food processing business set up by husband Roddy. She now lives with her family in the village of Wenhaston, ? Suffolk. She is a former school governor and currently parish councillor and working at her local specialist plant nursery.

In her presentation, she said that Suffolk had many of the most deprived areas of the country. 'Small, simple ideas can have a big impact on the community in the countryside; how can you engage to make a difference?' she posed. In Wenhaston, the villagers had safety concerns about children skateboarding on the main road through the village. Residents located an unused area where they created a skateboard park for the children. This gradually developed to accommodate the needs of the community. £144,000 was raised for a new sports complex, which has tennis and skateboarding facilities integrated for all ages and backgrounds. They also revived a youth club. There has been almost no vandalism as it was very much a community generated project in which everyone took pride. ' Already been said Her personal inspiration had come from 'taking time for quiet reflection every morning, listening for direction and seeking inner peace'.

Mason West, from Alabama, represented EYES (Engage Youth Empowerment Services), based in Wolverhampton. Colour, caste and religion were used as reasons to divide, he said. 'We need resources to pull together and invest in youth, raising their expectations, empowering them, giving them confidence, helping them to find their voice and engage. Once they are plugged into the system they can change it. Then there's no need to worry about them being radicalised or rebelling.'

Sally Simpson, has retired from her part-time teaching of biology in mainstream education. She is pastoral co-ordinator in the local community-focused church, a founder member of the two-acre Community Garden, and Editor of Bowthorpe News which goes free to all 3,600 homes in the area.

Sally reported on three projects in her area, the results of applying faith to action. She continues to work in Norwich alongside people with learning difficulties and the physically disabled in a small woodcraft workshop. The project provides skills training and enables people to find work. Regeneration is more than bricks and mortar.

A Community Garden has been established to provide an attractive space for inter-action. Schools and local organisations participate with the community in developing and maintaining the Community Garden. A social enterprise scheme has been created to help people who have been in prison.

Jonathan Taiwo is from Norwich and is a Mental Health Nurse by profession. He is the Project Coordinator of Families United of Norwich (FUN), a charitable association for empowering especially Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BMEs) in Norwich and Norfolk.

He said: "When I moved into psychiatry, I had to do a lot work with the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. I worked with youth offenders. I saw the lives of many young people ruined. They got caught up in the criminal justice system and get ruined. It is a vicious cycle. Most come out mentally damaged. I saw potential in many young people. The punishment did not fit the crime. I wanted to do something about it. The main cause goes down to family breakdown. That is why we started Families United of Norwich to take collective action to help young people. We have helped a number of them to get back to work."

Ian Monteague is Chairman of the Glasgow charity FARE (Family Action in Rotherfield and Easterhouse), an innovative programme dealing with inner city issues. He describes himself as a serial entrepreneur and uses his business acumen to assist in establishing community programmes.

He described how he had grown up in the Gorbals slum area of Glasgow. It had 'the worst housing project with razor gangs and there was a lack of hope and vision', he said. As a teenager he had thought, 'I can't change them but I have to do something. Am I my brother's keeper? Yes!' Going into education, he launched a community newspaper 'to irritate those who should be doing something'. Twenty years ago, the council gave six flats to use for a community project.

The young people took the responsibility for this space. Eighteen months ago the entrepreneur Duncan Bannatyne, of the *Dragon's Den* TV series, contributed. They now had assets of £2 million. 'There is money and there in this room!' commented Montague. 'We have to find who has got it!'

Insights from the Work Streams

Amjad Saleem from The Cordoba Foundation facilitated the afternoon inter-active session. Participants divided into several work streams, which explored and discussed specific issues of relevance. The participants explored and sought ways to take individual and collective action.

D.1 Work Stream 1: How do we develop values and address the culture of consumerism

We need an education process to counter consumerism. Values that can counter consumerism will have to be built through individual training, family and community.

The challenge is to create opportunities, where deep public discussions are held on unbridled consumerism. These discussions should include topics, such as values and consumerism.

The group recognized that the task of changing attitudes was enormous, as the economic system which influences us was so deeply entrenched and its influence is pervasive.

The group tentatively concluded that we had to aim to change the current economic system. A model of never-ending growth seemed incompatible with the resources of a finite planet.

Punitive responses to the rioters are no solution. These kinds of responses worsen the situation. We need to address the widening social gaps between generations and income classes.

How do we move to systemic and functional growth? Focus on two areas: a) improving economic prospects, b) changing the public climate around dealing with young people towards a shared belief that 'all children belong to us all', to deal with the ingrained anti-young, especially ethnic young, prejudices.

Restore a wider social and relational context beyond family and school. That entails re-opening up a safe 'public, political and ethical dialogue space'.

Faith groups have got themselves entangled in various forms of institutional power politics. Create awareness about how individuals can take action and make a positive difference in society.

Stimulate dialogue about values. Create information flows of positive action from social groups, such as church clubs, community centres, schools, to counteract the 'politically and ideologically hijacked' public media.

D.2 Work Stream 2: What can be done to include people at the margins?

We need to communicate with marginalised communities. We need to first define who we mean by the marginalised, so we can begin to interact effectively with them.

To do this, it is vital to identify key 'gatekeepers' who have influence within marginalised communities such as teachers, former gang

members and religious leaders, depending on the community you are trying to reach, and to engage with them effectively.

Utilise best practice methods from different communities to address common issues, but again every region will differ on specific prescriptions.

Develop a best practice toolkit for dealing with youth for practitioners which can be replicated and distributed, and Cordoba are looking into this.

There is also a need to create opportunities and enhance skills, among youth, which are marketable.

Adopt sustainable practices.

D.3. Work Stream 3: Parenting and family-life

The discussion split into issues and solutions.

Parents primarily, but also other important figures like religious leaders and teachers, need to give greater attention to problems and challenges faced by young people.

Family breakdown needs to be addressed, where parents need to care for their children.

Parents should have natural right to deal with children how they feel is right.

Children and parents should learn about their rights and responsibilities to each other.

Encourage teachers and parents to work together to help young people.

Encourage stronger communities, for example, sports days and events.

D.4. Work Stream 4: Education, aspiration and motivation

There is little scope in the school curriculum to provide young people with a big enough purpose in life.

Importance of 'out of school' experiences, working and serving in the community.

The group discussed ways of motivating young people. Faith leaders and role models alike can play a part.

Teachers need to be better trained in helping young people to find a purpose in life.
Identify best practice in schools. Budget cuts are making funding difficult for schools.
We need to allocate funds to establish volunteering schemes for young people. Create enterprises and careers to serve? society, with young people.

D.5 Work Stream 5: Reshaping the criminal justice system

There needs to be a shift in general from a focus on criminal justice to a focus on social justice.

Services are not focussed on collectives, necessarily, rather on individuals
Stop and Search is a controversial area. There is a real need for reform. Many feel humiliated by the process and direct their resentment towards the police into disruptive action. For example in Wolverhampton, many youth pointed to Stop and Search, specifically as a motivating reason to join the riots.

D.6. Work Stream 6: Using social media for positive action

The work stream was focussed on social media, but the participants reported back on the media as a whole. Integrity in the journalist is the most important quality. The point was made forcibly that alongside the transformational change in individual journalists, there was the need for a 'systemic' change in the media industry. The current culture and climate forced journalists to accede in many cases to practices which they did not subscribe to.
The group considered an effective local media campaign: the recent success of anti-racist groups in preventing the EDL from marching through East London. Spell out EDL for clarity

Social groups need media training. Organisations wishing to get accurate reporting in the national press needed to train a staff member in the art of presentation. An amateur approach never works.

A couple of examples were also given on how we bring about change. Through writing to newspapers' letters' page to get readers to think about the issues. And to look at other channels. The media industry has a powerful opportunity to change the climate of blame through reporting solutions to problems.

A couple of examples were also given on how we bring about change. Through writing to newspapers letters' page to get readers to think about the issues. Another example is to look at other channels.

The media industry has a powerful opportunity to change the climate of blame through reporting solutions to problems.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

THE FORUM RECOGNISES THE FOLLOWING KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Communities must recognise that the solutions to their challenges lie first with themselves and then in the work in changing the system of disregard.
2. Youth are the drivers of the future, they need support, advice and guidance.
3. Parents must re-prioritise the focus on their children, in order to provide care, guidance and acceptance.
4. Decision makers must increase real engagement with communities through regular consultations with community leaders, groups and schools. There needs to be space and confidence established for this engagement to take place which can lead to the creation of stronger communities.
5. Schools and parents must take proactive steps to tackle real issues of lack of aspirations and motivation among young people.
6. Faith-based organisations must take a lead in enabling youth to find meaning and purpose in their lives.
7. Reconsider actions, such as Stop and Search, in order to reduce resentment and increase co-operation between the police and communities.
8. Identify, create and sustain spaces and opportunities, where people can come together, identify issues and share knowledge in their own constituencies.
9. Increase opportunities and programmes to motivate and engage with youth and provide opportunities for them to express their concerns.
10. Develop a toolkit to provide guidance on engaging with youth. Conduct events to engage with schools and youth clubs that will include media training, campaigning and lobbying, career guidance and leadership skills.
11. Produce videos and publications on community solutions to tackle youth problems.

Appendices

1. Peter Selby Keynote
2. List of Attendees

1. Peter Selby Keynote

"Live again by a system of regard"

EXTRACTS OF THE KEYNOTE SPEECH BY DR PETER SELBY, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS. HE WAS PREVIOUSLY BISHOP OF WORCESTER, BISHOP TO HM PRISONS AND A CHURCH COMMISSIONER. HIS BOOK, GRACE AND MORTGAGE, OPENS PEOPLE'S EYES TO THE CORROSIVE EFFECT OF DEBT ON THE POOR AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

Thank you very much.

As you've just been told I'm a retired clergy person – and it shows! My contribution today is called the keynote address. That wasn't my word: I need to explain that I'm here by accident. That is to say I had come here for a meeting, because I hadn't checked my emails that day and didn't know that the meeting was cancelled. So the moral of that story is: do check your emails before you go out in the morning or you too might find yourself having to give a keynote speech! We started with music this morning, and keynote is of course a musical term. So what's the keynote that we need today?

In this amazing gathering, we – I want to say "you" but we all are an amazing gathering – it's a huge tribute to the steering group, really, that such an amazing gathering has been brought together.

What's going to be the keynote? That was the task that was given to me, and the musical keynote I would like to suggest for today, is Honesty. The slogan that governs that keynote is "Get Real". Let's be real with each other. We have had amazingly clear messages from speakers who had direct personal involvement with the people we are talking about.

I thought, how could I sound the keynote? Now you've been asked to get out a piece of paper of your packs. It's actually called After the Riots Forum.

What make this rage and spite? Can you see that? That's the piece of paper – it has some notes in the front.

The best bit on the piece of paper is on the back; if you turn it over you'll see that there is a remarkable thing on the back and that's a completely creative blank space! And I'm going to give you an exercise now and we are going to take about two minutes silence to do this exercise.

Please take a pencil and on the page that's blank please write in not more than five words, why you did not join in the riots. If there is anybody here who did and the question here doesn't apply, write why you did, but I think nearly everybody here can answer the question.

Why did you not join in the riots? Five words and remember the keynote is honesty. OK, I'm not going to ask you to bare your souls to one another, but if I may suggest it you should keep before you what you've written for the rest of today. What I hope is an honest statement of why you didn't join in.

In preparing to come to you, I put down five words for myself and then I didn't actually think they were right so I did another five words and another five and I've got four lots of five words and I'll tell you what they are:

"It never entered my head"

"I'd be far too scared"

"My anger is frightening enough" (meaning, without having to get alongside all the other angry people)

And last I put, "I might lose self control"

So those were some reasons that went through my mind as to why I didn't join in the riots. Does anybody think they have five really significant words they want to shout out now? [A number of the participants shared their five words.]

That might give us some sense and I think, since there might be journalists present, I need to place on the record, one always has to on these occasions, which is dreary, but you do, I'm not in favour of the riots. I just need to say that, because I'm anxious about that head line that says "Bishop Urges Rioting"! I speak from experience. About a week after I was appointed as Bishop of Worcester, a pamphlet came out from the Christian Socialist Movement who had asked me to write an introduction about prayer. My introduction dealt with the question, "Is it proper for a believer to pray for election victory?" and my article was on this. It could have been on the Conservative manifesto, LibDem manifesto, whatever. The next day the headline was "Bishop Says, Pray For A Labour Victory". It didn't help my entry into Worcestershire!

So I'd just like to say, as a matter of fact, I am not in favour of riots. However, I think we need to be rather clearer about riots than simply not being in favour of them. I have been deeply impressed both by the briefing paper, you have, about the riots, which is a really very comprehensive summary of what other people have said about the riots . It was a really fine piece of work, to collect all that together and I'm really impressed again by the speakers we had this morning, who have given really searching accounts of what this phenomenon was. I had moments where – I'll be quite candid – in listening to people who are really on the front line on this, I felt pretty redundant and that you don't really need me.

But I think if I'm to strike the keynote of honesty, of getting real, there are some things we need to look at. I'll also tell you – and this might be controversial, and I hope it is in a way, because we need to argue it out – I incline to the systemic explanation of things. That's my personal inclination. That means that I do not believe that the world would be cured by every individual becoming a better person. I'm not against, by the way – I must say this too – journalists please write this down – I am not against people becoming better people. I think it's a good idea. However, I think there are some other things we need to notice, some of which have been mentioned, and they are systemic. And on your piece of paper you will see three little paragraphs each of which ends with the words "a system of disregard".

How does that system manifest itself? Here we have individual acts of looting and robbery, resistance to authority and ultimately violence against persons, add up to a system of disregard. And what is a system of disregard? What do I mean by that strange set of words, perhaps you might not think it very explanatory. What do I mean? I mean a system under which what you can have now is more important than the long term consideration of the consequences. And every time we hit a problem, somebody comes up with a proposal for how we are going to deal with it now and disregards the longer term.

Let me give an example from my book (Grace and Mortgage) that's been mentioned. I got into writing about debt because at the point at which student debt started to become an issue, I had a son at university. That's the best reason for thinking about things, when they affect you. I then did some research about students in universities and debt. What I discovered was that most students went into university thinking that it was wrong to get into debt. By the end of the first year – this was before we had upfront payments – by the end of the first year they thought; actually I'm in debt so it must be OK. You cannot spend your whole life thinking that something you can't avoid is wrong.

At the end of the second year, the debt was bigger and they were more convinced that debt was OK. And by the last year they had completely changed their attitude – which was very fortunate because when they left university and wanted somewhere to live, the ideal that was held out to them was another means of getting further into debt.

And my point was that we think that we are getting students an education and we don't notice that we are actually getting them two educations at once. They learn about physics or French or politics or philosophy or all the things they get their degree in, but they learn something else too, which is how to be a debtor. And they learn that and they learn that's OK. We don't think about the morality that we are teaching by the systems that we adopt.

That's what I mean by a system of disregard. We have already had mention of this, but I'd like to emphasise it. The background to the riots was that ??, lived through individual acts of over-indulgence at the top. You know what I mean: the expenses, crisis and so forth. People, who did it big time were told it was OK, if they gave it back, which is not what was said to the people who looted last August. People, who committed acts, that they thought were OK, that is in most cases not against the rules, just the best way to bend the rules to your interest, and that was a system of disregard. Because quite apart from whatever an individual might do, what they did not think about was what was the morality they were propagating by acting in this way. So the long term consequences were not in their heads. That is a system of disregard.

Now, if you listen to the political debates about what is going to put our world economy to right, you will hear that we cannot possibly regulate or tax successful people, otherwise they will go and do what they do in the Caymen Islands or somewhere else. That is what we are hearing. In the process, we are not thinking about the long-term consequences of a system that went completely out of control, and achieved the near breakdown of the economic civilization, such as that we had, and has damaged, in some cases irrevocably, the lives of the poorest people. That is a system of disregard. It allows people to make high-flown moral pronouncements, without noticing that the system, which they erect, actually propagate the reverse of that morality. So, that is the background.

It has been mentioned that I preside over the National Council of Independent Monitoring Boards. These monitoring boards exist in every prison and place of immigration custody. Our task is to monitor fairness and respect for people in custody, which I sometimes, in my worst moments, think is a contradiction in terms. But if it is not a contradiction in terms, the one thing that is absolutely clear is that our society is bent on a course, which in the long run, means more and more people will be imprisoned. When I working as a Bishop in London, sometime ago, there were 41,400 people in prison. The numbers are going up. Now, we are well over double that figure.

That's a system of disregard. It is not just a system of disregard about those people, to whom we say we are sending a strong signal, it is a system of disregard of all of us. We are all paying for it. We are all deciding that this is the way forward, and we are all propagating punitive responses to people, in disregard, of what that actually does, not just to them, but to us. The great attraction of prison is that you can put numbers on it. When somebody gets four years, it means that the person has done something worse than somebody, who gets two years. It's got numbers. But the numbers don't actually tell you anything. What they are is a system indulgent of punitive attitudes, in disregard of what those punitive attitudes will do, to the future and well-being of our society, and our children's society. By the way, I want to say, quite rightly and helpfully, there has been a strong focus today on young people and our attitudes to young people. But it is really quite important that we don't forget that a lot of the people involved in the riots weren't young people at all. It is possible to delude ourselves, that the problem doesn't exist among people who are as old as me or younger. This is not a just a problem of youth. What do I want to say in relation to the keynote of today? As I am a clergyman and a theologian, my mind goes back to the part of the inheritance that I deal with all the time. It is actually the shared inheritance of the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, of Christianity and of Islam. It is a Psalm. Whether you joined in, like most of us didn't, or whether you did join in, riots are us. Riots are the world we inhabit. Riots are the economy of disregard we have created. Riots are all those things. Whilst I am behind practical steps, such as those that are taken by people representing various organisations in this room, they must go alongside a reflection on what are the systemic dimensions of the disregard, which we have actually built in to our society. The Psalm, I present before you, is an ancient poem, from a time when people didn't think that there was one God, but thought there were several, but that there was one in charge.

The setting is a courtroom scene, in which the one who is really in charge calls the others to account. And what He says to the others is, you represent systems of disregard. You represent, for example, in our world, money. You represent growth. All the idols, before which our civilization bows. That is who you represent, you gods. What you don't do is that you do not look after the poor, the fatherless and the widowed. And since you don't do that, you have not got what it takes to be a god and I am declaring you to be sentenced

to death. In words that could well describe the riots of last August, but also the financial crisis of two years ago that is still with us. It says that the foundations of the Earth will be shaken. My point in this. It is, of course, really important, that we attune our moral consciousnesses.

Psalm 82

God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgement:
'How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?
Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk around in darkness;
all the foundations of the Earth are shaken.
I say, 'You are gods,
children of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
and fall like any prince.'
Rise up, O God, judge the earth;
for all the nations belong to you!

It is really important that we live virtuously. Of course that is important. But the most important thing is to recognise that we live in a moral universe. That is my religious belief. That is to say we live in a universe where if you propagate a system of disregard, you are acting against the plan.

You are acting outside the instruction book. You are misusing the appliance and your guarantee will be no longer valid. And, therefore, what you need to do is recognise, whether it's convenient to you or not, what is the morality that is built into the universe and which has come to haunt us, not just last August, but every time we failed to notice that we have intended to live in a system of regard, in a system that takes account of those people whom other people don't take account of. And if we live by systems of disregard, the foundations of the world will be shaken, the moral, the spiritual, the physical, the economic foundations of the world will be shaken.

And, last August, was if nothing else, a call to live again by a system of regard for which we were made.

2. List of Attendees

No.	Name	Surname	Organisation
1	Irfan	Akram	
2	Dean	Alfred	Director- Calibre Minds
3	Anas	Altikriti	Research/Policy- TCF CEO
4	Kofi	Asiedu Aboagye-Berchie	Community Business
5	Burjor	Avari	Manchester Metropolitan University
6	Noshir	Avari	Tax consultant
7	Azad	Ayub	Business(company director)/social change
8	Razia	Aziz	Director, The Equality Academy
9	Sandra	Beeton	
10	Alan	Dean	Burning2 Learn organisation
11			Burning2 Learn organisation
12			Burning2 Learn organisation
13			Burning2 Learn organisation
14			Burning2 Learn organisation
15			Burning2 Learn organisation
16			Burning2 Learn organisation
17			Burning2 Learn organisation
18			Burning2 Learn organisation
19			Burning2 Learn organisation
20			Burning2 Learn organisation
21	Gary	Chrichton	Metropolitan Police
22	Toby	Clarke	Head of Performing Arts at Creative Youth
23	Maxine	Cockett	Project worker- Childrens Society Nottingham
24	Teddross	Dalhouse	Teacher/ Tutor. Interest in Diaspora issues
25	Greg	Davies	United Estates of Wythenshaw
26	Sandy	Davis	community links
27	Puck	De Raadt	Churches Refugee Network.
28	Don	de Silva	Head of Programme Administration, IofC UK
29	Alan	Dean	Burning2Learn
30	Yusuf	Desai	Deputy Director- Forward Thinking
31	Andrew	Deuchar	Director of BUILD
32	Brenda	Drummond	MLB Solutions
33	Roddy	Edwards	Community / IofC
34	Ann	Edwards	Community/parish councillor/IofC
35	Mason	West	EYES
36	EYES	EYES	Young People
37	EYES	EYES	Young People
38	EYES	EYES	Young People
39	EYES	EYES	Young People
40	Abdullah	Falik	Research/Policy- TCF Head of Research
41	Livingston	Gilchrist	MLB Solutions
42	Susana	Giner	NGO(Director Youth Media Agency)
43	Howard	Grace	IofC Schools Service

No.	Name	Surname	Organisation
44	Althea	Grant	MLB Solutions
45	Anjali	Guptara-Khera	Journalist
46	Saalik	Haleem	Research/Policy- TCF Researcher
47	Tricia	Hartley	Chief Executive - Campaign for Learning
48	Richard	Hawthorne	Secretary, Nottingham Inter-Faith Council
49	Amina	Khalid	Somali Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy
50	Colin	Lambert	St Giles Trust
51	Iftikhar	Latif	Diapsora Volunterring Alliance
52	Abi	Levitt	Tomorrow's People, Marketing and Communications Director
53	Ghin	Liew	Kaylight
54	Chamila	Liyange	Researcher radicalisation & political violence
55	Larry	Logan	Olympics Police
56	Vanessa	Lucas	Student
57	Jack	Lynch	Founder, Lynchpin Productions
58	Ian	Monteague	Chairman- Fare
59	Alan	Murray	AFAN inter faith group
60	Michael	Murray	
61	Amaani	Niyaz	Research/Policy- TCF
62	Hugh	Nowell	IofC
63	Mizgin	Oktem	Kaylight
64	Shamsideen	O'muyiwa	Area Manager, The Leys Pharmacy
65	Miles	Paine	IofC
66	James	Plunket	Social Investment Group
67	Natasha	Reid	Volunteer
68	Peter	Riddell	Convenor, Agenda for Reconciliation, IofC UK
69	Su	Riddell	Co-ordinator, Creators of Peace UK
70	Karen	Ridley	Advisory Group member, Creators of Peace UK
71	Esther	Ridsdale	Civil Society Forum
72	Joshua	Ross	Research Assistant, Tomorrow's People
73	Charles	Ryder	Prison Chaplain
74	Amjad	Saleem	Research/Policy- TCF Head of Communications
75	Peter	Salter	VAT specialist
76	Dr Phyllis	SantaMaria	Founder Director, Microfinance without Borders
77	Dan	Scrimgeour	
78	Peter	Selby	President, National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards
79	Rajesh	Sharma	Volunteer- bringing people together
80	Mohamed	Sheikh Mohamud	Community Specialist
81	Michael	Smith	Smith Head of Business Programmes, IofC UK
82	Sally	Simpson	Pastoral Co-ordinator, Bowthorpe Church
83	Mark	Steer	
84	Clasford	Stirling	Youth and Project Officer
85	Jonathan	Taiwo	Projects Coordinator – Families United of Norwich (FUN)
86	Caroline	Thatcher	CARAT Manager – Manager of Substance misuse service in Feltham Young Offenders
87	Prof. Richard	Tomlins	Director, Cohesia Ltd
88	Maliha	Yaqub	Bringing People Together.