

<p>1 Friday, 15 May 2020</p> <p>2 (10.30 am)</p> <p>3 THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Day 6 of</p> <p>4 this public hearing. Please go ahead, Ms Scolding.</p> <p>5 MS SCOLDING: Good morning, chair and panel. This morning</p> <p>6 we will hear from three individuals representing</p> <p>7 organisations, particularly addressing issues within the</p> <p>8 South-Asian community. That's Ms Pragna Patel from</p> <p>9 Southall Black Sisters, Ms Natasha Rattu from</p> <p>10 Karma Nirvana, and Ms Sadia Hameed of</p> <p>11 Gloucestershire Sisters. Mr Hughes, please could you</p> <p>12 ask those individuals to either swear or affirm?</p> <p>13 MS PRAGNA PATEL (affirmed)</p> <p>14 MS NATASHA RATTU (affirmed)</p> <p>15 MS SADIA HAMEED (affirmed)</p> <p>16 Examination by MS SCOLDING</p> <p>17 MS SCOLDING: Good morning, all, and thank you for coming.</p> <p>18 We are hearing your evidence together, as it touches</p> <p>19 upon similar issues, and we felt it useful to have your</p> <p>20 collective wisdom as one.</p> <p>21 As there are three of you, and only one transcriber,</p> <p>22 I am going to ask you questions individually. I will</p> <p>23 then ask the others to comment, as we can only have one</p> <p>24 person speaking at a time. The system doesn't allow</p> <p>25 more than one person to speak.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 But if there is anything you do want to come in on,</p> <p>2 please, in the time-honoured fashion, raise your hand,</p> <p>3 and I will try and get to you as soon as I possibly can.</p> <p>4 I will, however, direct my questions to a particular</p> <p>5 individual.</p> <p>6 Just some other preliminary matters. Firstly, this</p> <p>7 isn't a test of memory. You can use any notes you have</p> <p>8 made and refer to at any time, but we would ask that</p> <p>9 during the course of your evidence you do not confer</p> <p>10 with anybody else, and that during any breaks or</p> <p>11 lunchtime you do not discuss your evidence with anybody.</p> <p>12 We can have a break at any time -- again, hands up</p> <p>13 if you need one -- but we will be having a break, in any</p> <p>14 event, at 11.30 am. You should all have paper bundles</p> <p>15 in front of you with your witness statements and</p> <p>16 relevant exhibits and material. If I mention a document</p> <p>17 and I would like you to look at it, it will come up on</p> <p>18 screen. You just need to wait about 10 to 15 seconds.</p> <p>19 So please feel free either to use your bundles or to</p> <p>20 look at the screen; whatever you find easier.</p> <p>21 May I turn, first, to you, Ms Patel. Please could</p> <p>22 you give me your full name and job title?</p> <p>23 MS PATEL: My full name is Pragna Patel and I am director at</p> <p>24 Southall Black Sisters.</p> <p>25 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, at tab 4 of the bundle we have</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 a witness statement from you which is 38 pages in</p> <p>2 length. Could I ask you, on the back page, can I ask</p> <p>3 you to confirm that you did sign this witness statement?</p> <p>4 MS PATEL: Yes.</p> <p>5 MS SCOLDING: And it is true, to the best of your knowledge</p> <p>6 and belief?</p> <p>7 MS PATEL: Yes.</p> <p>8 MS SCOLDING: And you have had an opportunity to read it</p> <p>9 recently?</p> <p>10 MS PATEL: Yes.</p> <p>11 MS SCOLDING: Ms Rattu, may I now turn to you. Could I have</p> <p>12 your full name and job title, please?</p> <p>13 MS RATTU: Yes. Natasha Rattu, and I'm the executive</p> <p>14 director at Karma Nirvana.</p> <p>15 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much. Just in order so that we</p> <p>16 can be absolutely clear, you are, in fact, related to</p> <p>17 Ms Sanghera, who gave evidence yesterday. Is that</p> <p>18 correct?</p> <p>19 MS RATTU: That's correct.</p> <p>20 MS SCOLDING: Thank you. Just so everything is open and</p> <p>21 transparent in that regard.</p> <p>22 We have a witness statement from you behind tab A3.</p> <p>23 Can you confirm that you signed this witness statement?</p> <p>24 MS RATTU: I can, yes.</p> <p>25 MS SCOLDING: Is it true, to the best of your knowledge and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 belief?</p> <p>2 MS RATTU: It is, yes.</p> <p>3 MS SCOLDING: Have you had an opportunity to read it</p> <p>4 recently?</p> <p>5 MS RATTU: I have.</p> <p>6 MS SCOLDING: Ms Hameed, we have a witness statement from</p> <p>7 you behind tab 1. Again, could you please give your</p> <p>8 full name and job title?</p> <p>9 MS HAMEED: My name is Sadia Hameed. I'm the director of</p> <p>10 Gloucestershire Sisters.</p> <p>11 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask you to turn to the last page of your</p> <p>12 witness statement, which is page 30. Can you indicate</p> <p>13 that you signed this witness statement?</p> <p>14 MS HAMEED: Yes.</p> <p>15 MS SCOLDING: And is the information contained therein true,</p> <p>16 to the best of your knowledge and belief?</p> <p>17 MS HAMEED: Yes.</p> <p>18 MS SCOLDING: Have you had an opportunity to read this</p> <p>19 witness statement recently?</p> <p>20 MS HAMEED: I have.</p> <p>21 MS SCOLDING: Returning now to Ms Patel, Ms Patel, can you</p> <p>22 tell us a little about what Southall Black Sisters is</p> <p>23 and what work in particular it's done with survivors of</p> <p>24 child sexual abuse?</p> <p>25 MS PATEL: Southall Black Sisters was established in 1979 as</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 an organisation to advise and advocate on the needs of 2 black and minority women. For 40 years, we have been 3 operating front-line services, providing advice, 4 advocacy support to women, to BME women, black and 5 minority women, who need assistance. 6 Over the 40 years, what we have found is that the 7 majority of the women who come to us, particularly from 8 South-Asian backgrounds -- meaning women from Indian, 9 Pakistani, Bangladeshi backgrounds -- have presented 10 with issues of abuse in the family and community. 11 The forms of abuse that they present with include 12 domestic violence, but also other more specific forms 13 of -- cultural forms of abuse, such as honour-based 14 violence, forced marriage, FGM, polygamy, dowry-related 15 abuse, and so on, and related to those issues of 16 poverty, homelessness, immigration difficulties, and 17 mental health and trauma matters. 18 So our advice/advocacy service is aimed at 19 supporting women to exit from abuse, to make them safe, 20 to secure safety for them, to secure protection for 21 them, and to help inform them and advocate for them in 22 order to help them assert their fundamental rights to 23 equality, to justice and to protection. 24 That front-line work has also fed directly into our 25 policy and campaigning work, so for the last 40 years we</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 5</p>	<p>1 have challenged the kind of structural barriers that BME 2 women face in achieving equality and justice. 3 That includes challenging institutional barriers, 4 both at the state level, but also within the community. 5 We have found that, in the course of supporting women, 6 in relation to tackling all forms of gender-related 7 violence and abuse, perhaps the area of abuse that has 8 been the most difficult to challenge and the most 9 difficult, in terms of supporting victims and survivors, 10 is the area of sexual abuse. 11 Women and children are very, very reluctant to 12 disclose sexual abuse. So when they come to us, it 13 often takes us a number of engagements, a number of 14 interviews and a long period of engagement before they 15 feel confident, before they feel secure, before they 16 feel that they can trust us to disclose issues of 17 particularly a sexual nature, whether it is marital 18 rape, sexual abuse, child sexual abuse in families and 19 communities, and that includes in religious settings. 20 These are all very, very difficult areas and it takes 21 a certain amount of courage from survivors before they 22 feel able to disclose, even to organisations like ours, 23 which provide a safe and secure space for disclosure to 24 take place. 25 But it is an area that is particularly difficult to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 6</p>
<p>1 address, both at the individual level, in terms of 2 advocacy, but also at the level of challenging the wider 3 community attitudes that endorse and allow that form of 4 abuse to take place. 5 This is a particularly taboo area, which is why it 6 is so difficult for survivors to disclose and why it is 7 so difficult for groups like us to challenge. 8 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful. You refer in your 9 witness statement to a case review. Danny, would you 10 mind getting up SBS000001_004, which you say identifies 11 countless examples of abuse and unequal treatment of 12 women enacted in the name of cultural and religious 13 values. So this, in fact, I think, comes from the 14 Casey Review: 15 "In many areas of Britain, the drive towards 16 equality and opportunity across gender might never have 17 taken place. Women in some communities are facing 18 a double onslaught of gender inequality combined with 19 religious, cultural and social barriers preventing them 20 from accessing even their basic rights as British 21 residents and violence against women remains all too 22 prevalent." 23 It then says: 24 "A similar picture is seen for lesbian, gay and 25 bIsexual groups."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 7</p>	<p>1 It says: 2 "Throughout our review, we have encountered 3 countless examples of abuse and unequal treatment of 4 women enacted in the name of cultural or religious 5 values or as a reaction to those values." 6 Obviously, I think we have to be careful here. Our 7 terms of reference relate to children and the sexual 8 abuse of children. Would you say that the gender-based 9 violence and what Dame Louise Casey in this review -- 10 which I think reflects a lot of the research you have 11 given us as part and parcel of your witness statement, 12 do you think that then translates in particular to abuse 13 against girls in the context of religious settings and 14 organisations or in the context of child sexual abuse? 15 MS PATEL: Absolutely, I do. What is particularly 16 disturbing, I think, in Dame Louise Casey's comments 17 there about the plight of many Asian women and girls is 18 that we're talking -- she was talking about 2016. So 19 this is not, you know, 20 years ago or 15 years ago or 20 40 years ago. We are talking about modern-day Britain, 21 in which what she was describing and what we see in our 22 work on a daily basis is the ways in which religion and 23 cultural -- religious and cultural values have been 24 used -- are so embedded in family life in South-Asian 25 communities that -- and that give rise to the forms of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 8</p>

<p>1 abuse that women and girls are experiencing now at this 2 particular moment, and the ways in which those same 3 cultural and religious values erect barriers to 4 disclosure, barriers to protection, for women and girls. 5 The situation could not be any worse. I would say 6 that, having worked in this area for 40 years, if I did 7 not know what time, you know, Dame Louise Casey was 8 referring to, I would have thought she was talking about 9 40 years ago. 10 The fact that she is talking about the situation now 11 for many Asian women and girls is what should be seen to 12 be the most disturbing part of what she is saying. It 13 certainly chimes with our experience, and it translates 14 not just in terms of experiences and barriers in respect 15 of women and girls, but also children and subgroups, 16 including members of LBGT groups. 17 What she is talking about are some of the most 18 powerless, some of the most marginalised, groups in our 19 communities who are increasingly made even more 20 invisible by the rise of religious and cultural values 21 that actually erect incredibly powerful barriers to 22 protection. 23 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful, Ms Patel. What we're 24 going to try to do in the evidence is run through those 25 barriers as you perceive them, and then try and look for</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 maybe some solutions to overcoming those barriers, as we 2 go along this morning. Thank you very much for that. 3 Ms Rattu, can I turn to you. Could you tell us 4 a little about what Karma Nirvana is, what it does and 5 what work, if any, it does with those who are survivors 6 of sexual abuse? 7 MS RATTU: Absolutely. Karma Nirvana is a national charity. 8 We were established in 1993. We existed at that point 9 to support women who were affected by honour-based abuse 10 and BAME women of domestic abuse in a very small 11 community in Derby, and it was very difficult then to 12 talk about such issues that actually we went under the 13 guise of being a mental-health-related charity because 14 we just couldn't talk about honour abuse and domestic 15 abuse. To date, we have grown. We are now delivering 16 the national helpline for honour-based abuse and forced 17 marriage, commissioned by the Home Office to deliver 18 that, and we have reconstituted ourselves to support men 19 and women affected by these issues. 20 Last year, we had 13,000 contacts, just over 13,000 21 contacts, to and from our helpline and online service, 22 and we support anybody affected by honour-based abuse 23 and forced marriage. 24 We support victims and survivors directly, but we 25 also support professionals who are supporting the same.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 10</p>
<p>1 So police officers, social workers, teachers, health 2 professionals that might be identifying this in their 3 day-to-day practice, so offering a resource and guidance 4 to them too. 5 MS SCOLDING: Ms Rattu, can I stop you there? What do you 6 mean by "honour-based abuse"? I know obviously part of 7 our remit as a public inquiry is to talk to the public. 8 I know the three of you are steeped in this language, 9 but just explain, what is honour-based abuse? 10 MS RATTU: So honour-based abuse is where you have a victim 11 who is being abused, often by either an individual, 12 family members or communities, for the perception that 13 this victim has dishonoured the family. So they have 14 caused some shame to the family name. And the family 15 will seek to remedy this by issuing a punishment to the 16 victim, and that punishment could be a physical 17 punishment, it could be disowning that victim. So it is 18 about the perception that the individual, the victim, 19 has done something that has breached the family's code 20 of honour, the family respect. So that's what we are 21 talking about. 22 It is very much about having power and control over 23 the victim, as we understand in the dynamics of domestic 24 abuse, but it is also about the need to uphold the 25 family honour and the family respect.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 11</p>	<p>1 MS SCOLDING: I think, later on, we are going to unpack 2 issues of family honour and family respect and how they 3 might interrelate with religion, because I think one of 4 the issues that comes out is the sort of interplay 5 between culture, religion, family, kinship and the way 6 that they may or may not relate to each other, which 7 I think we will talk about in a moment. But that's very 8 helpful, Ms Rattu, thank you very much. 9 Ms Hameed, you represent Gloucestershire Sisters. 10 Can you tell me about the work you do with victims of 11 child sexual abuse? 12 MS HAMEED: So Gloucestershire Sisters was set up in 2016. 13 So my professional background is in the women's sector. 14 I worked for a specialist domestic abuse service that 15 used to support BME women in the county that lost all of 16 its funding in 2014 and completely closed its doors 17 then. At that time, I was working with the local 18 domestic abuse service and for the sexual violence 19 services, and what we were finding was there was little 20 to no engagement at all from the local BME community 21 with any of those services. The hope was that after the 22 service that closed, basically vanished, that they would 23 end up being picked up by the more generic services 24 rather than the specialist service, which didn't happen. 25 What I was hearing a lot of was that "This community</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 12</p>

<p>1 doesn't engage with us" or "They are a hard-to-reach 2 community". So Gloucestershire Sisters was created to 3 bridge that gap between the existing services and that 4 community, and also upscale not just domestic abuse and 5 sexual violence services, but already existing services 6 in the county, upscale them in how to work with victims 7 and survivors and those needing support within the 8 community. 9 So, for example, rather than thinking about 10 community need, we would deliver information and advice 11 and support in how to support the victims and survivors 12 within that community, and being more victim and 13 survivor focused rather than community focused. So, for 14 example, understanding the barriers that victims and 15 survivors might face, rather than the kind of generic 16 issues of the community, the stigma of the community, 17 because, from our perspective, that's actually 18 irrelevant. What you want to ensure you're doing is 19 supporting the victim and the complexities that might 20 arise in their lives as a result of engaging with the 21 service, rather than what might happen in the wider 22 community generally. So that's part of what we do 23 presently. And also we work closely with the police and 24 existing services at the moment to ensure that they 25 continue doing their job effectively.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much. 2 Ms Patel, do you do any work with religious 3 organisations at all, whether umbrella groups or 4 particular places where faith is expressed? 5 MS PATEL: No. No. 6 MS SCOLDING: Is that out of choice or is that a deliberate 7 sort of choice that you have made? Or is it simply 8 because you have knocked on the door and haven't been 9 allowed in? 10 MS PATEL: There is a little bit of both, actually. There 11 is a deliberate choice that we have made, which is, as 12 an organisation that's trying to reach out to the most 13 vulnerable, what Sadia talked about is the hard-to-reach 14 communities, those who have been left behind, actually, 15 those who are left with no voice, it is incumbent upon 16 us to have autonomous spaces, safe spaces, in 17 communities where people feel that they can disclose, 18 that they can, you know, talk about their -- as one 19 woman put it -- innermost feelings, and without fear 20 that confidentiality would be breached, without fear 21 that others in the community would get to know. 22 So at one level, it is about creating alternative 23 safe spaces that are autonomous, that are free from the 24 kind of community institutions that exist that exert so 25 much pressure and control over women's lives.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 14</p>
<p>1 So our position would be severely compromised if we 2 were seen or perceived to be linked to religious 3 institutions in any shape or form because people would 4 not -- particularly women and girls, those from LGBT 5 backgrounds -- feel comfortable or trust us. So that is 6 an issue of choice. 7 Having said that, we have had occasions when we have 8 tried to knock on the door of religious institutions and 9 ask them to at least consider informing their 10 congregations that we exist, that our services exist in 11 the community, and I can give you two examples of 12 the responses that we've received when we've tried to do 13 that. 14 We operate in conditions of immense hostility. 15 Sadia said earlier, and it is so very true, that the 16 climate, the communities, in which we operate are one of 17 immense hostility. We are seen as a threat to the 18 political status quo, to the religious status quo, to 19 the cultural status quo. We are seen as a threat to 20 community/family values as defined by religious 21 leaderships. 22 So, you know, in that context, they, themselves, do 23 not want to be seen to be closely connected with us. 24 The two examples I want to give, the first one considers 25 a local gurdwara, which is a Sikh temple, to which</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 15</p>	<p>1 I went and it was at a time when there was an increased 2 influx of undocumented migrants in the area, 3 particularly students. You know, when the bogus 4 colleges that had been set up had been shut down, a lot 5 of students found themselves destitute, homeless, 6 penniless, living on the streets of Southall; young 7 women and boys. 8 I had gone to this particular gurdwara and saw that 9 they were operating a helpline for young homeless people 10 on the streets of Southall. I had asked them about that 11 helpline and the kind of support they were giving to 12 people, and they said, "Oh, it's a helpline just for 13 women and girls", and I said, "Really? But what we are 14 seeing is that, actually, on the streets there's a large 15 male population that's destitute", and they said, "No, 16 no, they're better able to care for themselves. We're 17 more worried about the young girls, the young women, who 18 need help". So I said, "What do you do when they make 19 these calls to you?" This was the Sikh Awareness 20 Society. "What do you do when these calls are made to 21 you?" They said, "Well, we hook them up, we link them 22 up with families in the community that they can stay 23 with". So I said, "Do you vet those families? Are 24 these trusted places?", and they said, "Yes, they are". 25 I said, "Well, do you also think about referring them to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p>

<p>1 Southall Black Sisters, we are literally hundreds of 2 yards away, for support and help? They said, "No, no, 3 we don't need to do that. We can cater for their needs 4 in our communities". 5 The point about that is, if you are not aware, you 6 would think, on the surface, that they are doing some 7 good. But, actually, what it is about is about 8 controlling female sexuality. They were particularly 9 interested in young Sikh women not being on the streets 10 and forming relationships with people from other 11 backgrounds, religious backgrounds. So it was policing 12 female sexuality and placing them in families so they 13 can be inculcated with family values. 14 Their argument was that there's street grooming 15 going on of these girls. But that was coded. When they 16 talk about grooming -- and this is true of Hindu 17 fundamentalists as well as Sikh fundamentalist 18 organisations, which many of these are. What they are 19 talking about, when they talk about sexual grooming and 20 the need to protect young women and girls, is the 21 policing of female sexuality and the need to prevent 22 interfaith relationships. 23 So they're particularly concerned about so-called 24 grooming of young Sikh girls and preventing them from 25 forming relationships with, particularly, men from</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 Muslim backgrounds. This needs to be understood 2 because, if they were really interested and if they had 3 their interests at heart, they would be referring to 4 organisations like Southall Black Sisters. So that 5 tells you what the real agenda is. 6 Another example was in a more recent example where 7 we were trying to get a particular mosque to put up 8 posters about services in relation to domestic and 9 child abuse and trying to get the mosque to understand 10 that child protection issues and protection of 11 vulnerable adults is incredibly important because 12 there'd been a homicide of a woman who was a frequent 13 visitor of that mosque. They were very, very reluctant 14 to engage with us, to talk to us, to even put up 15 posters. Their argument was, "We can't put up these 16 posters because it would prevent our congregation from 17 coming to us". 18 They said they wouldn't put up the posters in 19 prominent places. We finally got them to agree to put 20 up posters in a side room. Whether they did it or not, 21 we don't know, but their argument was that they couldn't 22 do it because it would upset their congregation. What 23 I take away from that is the fact that they show no 24 leadership at all on these issues of child protection, 25 on the issue of protection of adult vulnerable people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 18</p>
<p>1 Why would you be afraid of your congregation? You are 2 in positions of leadership. You should be leading and 3 providing the moral -- you know, the kind of moral -- 4 setting the moral standards that are required, and 5 instead they were putting up the fact that their 6 congregation might not like it as a barrier to doing 7 anything. 8 These are just two examples -- I can give you plenty 9 more -- of how difficult it is to work with cultural and 10 religious institutions who are part of the problem as 11 far as women and girls are concerned and as far as their 12 experiences of violence and sexual abuse is concerned. 13 So it's very hard for us to have these relationships. 14 The third thing I would say is, I would rather not, 15 because what we are focused on is working to provide the 16 spaces and the resources needed for survivors, to help 17 them overcome their trauma, to help them feel validated 18 in terms of what their experiences are, to help them 19 gain access to remedies that will make them feel that 20 justice has been delivered. That is our key priority, 21 and it is really important that we do not lose focus of 22 the fact that what this is all about is making sure that 23 the voices of those who are not heard are heard. That 24 is my focus. That is the focus of my organisation. And 25 that remains our focus. If religious institutions want</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 19</p>	<p>1 to join us, they join us on those terms. 2 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, I suppose what could be said -- and 3 I think it is just an example -- is, you have been 4 a very powerful force for the equality of women and 5 girls and raising issues of honour-based violence and 6 domestic violence, but I suppose, as I said to one of 7 the survivor groups earlier in the week, one may 8 characterise your style as kicking the door down rather 9 than politely knocking and asking to come in. 10 Do you think that religious organisations perceive 11 you as wanting to sort of tear them down and that's why 12 they don't want to work with you, or do you think that 13 that's an unfair characterisation? 14 MS PATEL: It's a completely unfair characterisation. 15 Because we're talking about, you know, 70-odd years of 16 the key migrations to this country from South Asia, from 17 other parts of the world. We need to see change. We 18 need to see progress in areas -- you know, in our 19 communities, in relation to violence against women, in 20 relation to cruelty against children, in relation to 21 discrimination against LGBT groups. We have not seen 22 that progress. 23 The reason we don't see that progress is because we 24 come up again and again and again with powerful 25 institutional obstacles, community obstacles, who</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 20</p>

<p>1 themselves endorse and legitimate and create climates 2 conducive to abuse and violence and injustice. 3 I make no apologies for the fact that my job is to 4 challenge these institutions because I am advocating for 5 those people who cannot advocate for themselves. I will 6 be very polite in the way I do it. I will be most 7 respectful in the way I do it. And I will be very 8 appreciative when, you know, we get the response that we 9 need. But I will not shy away from challenging 10 institutions that have for so long tried to put a lid on 11 these issues and have tried to silence and gag voices of 12 dissent from within our communities and who use their 13 power, abuse their power, to prevent us from raising 14 issues that need to be raised from stopping the kind of 15 oppression that we are seeing in our communities. 16 So I make no bones about that. That is what they 17 don't like. You know, what we are talking about here, 18 at the end of the day, is accountability. If you are 19 appointing yourself as self-styled leaders, 20 responsibility comes with that. The responsibility, 21 moral responsibilities, political responsibilities, 22 legal responsibilities, come with that. So to argue 23 that they -- you know, these are powerful people. These 24 are not the vulnerable in our society. So for them to 25 argue that we are shouting too loudly when they have</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 21</p>	<p>1 shouted the loudest and got the resources and 2 monopolised the resources and monopolised the seat at 3 the public table, then I have no choice but to try and 4 stand up and shout even louder. 5 So, no, it is not about being polite. Being polite 6 is not what the name of the game is. It is about making 7 sure that there is accountability. You are setting 8 yourself up as a leader. You show accountability. 9 Because no-one has elected you. No-one has put you in 10 a position of power. You have to respond to what are 11 injustices in our communities and deal with them. And 12 if your job is to put a lid on that and to hide and deny 13 those, then you are not doing your job and there has to 14 be people in the community that make you stand up and 15 explain yourself publicly. 16 They would like nothing better than for us to sit in 17 rooms and have cosy chats with them. That's not what 18 accountability is. What accountability is, is having 19 public debates about this; using the legal arena, if we 20 have to; using other public spaces, if we have to. But, 21 you know, what I find is that that's always -- somehow, 22 we face a backlash. We are seen as the problem. We are 23 seen as the troublemakers when we raise these issues. 24 It's not new for us. But if we hadn't done this, we 25 would never have had the laws on forced marriage; we</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 22</p>
<p>1 would never have had the laws on honour-based violence; 2 we would never have talked more freely, as we have been, 3 around domestic abuse. It is because of the stance that 4 we have taken. It is our job to do this, and we will do 5 it. 6 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much. Ms Rattu, turning to 7 you, have you done any work with religious organisations 8 or have they approached you for advice, assistance or 9 help in the services that you provide? 10 MS RATTU: We haven't been sought after for the services 11 that we provide by religious organisations or 12 communities, dare I say, and we have tried. We have 13 tried all best endeavours to engage with community 14 leaders, to engage with religious leaders, because we 15 perceive and understand that, actually, they would be 16 far more effective at drumming home the messages that we 17 want to bring into communities than we are, but there is 18 a real reluctance in doing that. There is a real 19 challenge. 20 Interestingly, you know, we support men and women, 21 and we do have men that work in our team, and it is an 22 interesting observation that, when the men have 23 endeavoured to have those conversations, they have got 24 a lot further along the lines than some of the women in 25 our organisation. So that's an interesting observation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 23</p>	<p>1 But we have really struggled. And, like Pragna was 2 saying, for us, this is about the empowerment of women 3 and girls. You know, we are very limited on resources 4 to do what we do. And whilst it would be great to have 5 the community singing in harmony with us and saying the 6 things that we are saying within those communities, the 7 reality is, since we have existed, they have never done 8 that and are reluctant to do so, because it is very 9 taboo, they are not going to have their followers, their 10 congregations, listening. There's fears about what 11 might happen. There's fears that, you know, girls may 12 become empowered, they may start to make decisions where 13 they leave communities or they break away. Those fears 14 are real. 15 So, for us, it's a challenge. You know, we have 16 tried, but it is, how far do you keep trying when you're 17 limited on resources, and, really, this is about 18 empowering people in very vulnerable spaces to make 19 decisions and choices in their own right. So, yeah, it 20 has been very, very difficult for us to engage with 21 those communities, and we have had backlash in doing so, 22 in terms of safety being compromised, where we have had 23 to relocate because the community haven't been happy 24 about the work that we do, insofar that we are 25 empowering people to leave these abusive situations. So</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 24</p>

<p>1 it is a huge challenge for us.</p> <p>2 MS SCOLDING: Ms Hameed, you have talked about the fact that</p> <p>3 you work -- largely, your space works as a sort of</p> <p>4 conduit between statutory services and other</p> <p>5 individuals. Can you identify whether any religious</p> <p>6 organisations have sought you out and, if you have</p> <p>7 sought out any religious organisations to try and do</p> <p>8 work with them, what the response has been?</p> <p>9 MS HAMEED: So, no, is the answer to that. One of</p> <p>10 the reasons, I think, for that, from our perspective,</p> <p>11 is -- and it does tie in to what both Ms Rattu and</p> <p>12 Ms Patel have said -- that if we engage with religious</p> <p>13 organisations, victims are watching, survivors are</p> <p>14 watching, within those organisations. What we have are</p> <p>15 very, very tight-knit communities that will be speaking</p> <p>16 to each other.</p> <p>17 We are bound by confidentiality with our clients.</p> <p>18 These organisations -- these communities aren't bound in</p> <p>19 the same way by confidentiality. They will speak to</p> <p>20 family and community members, further endangering those</p> <p>21 individuals that wish to disclose. So for us to have</p> <p>22 relationships -- sort of, you know, cosy relationships</p> <p>23 with these faith leaders within the community will put</p> <p>24 victims and survivors -- you know, it would make them</p> <p>25 very uncomfortable. They wouldn't want to engage with</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 25</p>	<p>1 us. And, actually, we saw a little bit of this on</p> <p>2 Wednesday, you know, just two days ago, when we had</p> <p>3 MINAB and Faith Associates giving evidence.</p> <p>4 What both organisations were talking about was that,</p> <p>5 even when a victim or a survivor would disclose to</p> <p>6 them -- I think Faith Associates more specifically said</p> <p>7 one of the first questions that they would ask is why</p> <p>8 they didn't speak to the organisation that the incident</p> <p>9 happened within, and they would try and find out about</p> <p>10 the policies and procedures that exist within those</p> <p>11 organisations, which, for us, would be the wrong line of</p> <p>12 enquiry. The line of enquiry would be, you know, what</p> <p>13 happened and how we can best support the victim or the</p> <p>14 survivor seeking us out for support.</p> <p>15 So with women's organisations, one of the reasons</p> <p>16 they get disclosures and why they come to us is because</p> <p>17 we are victim focused, we are survivor focused. We are</p> <p>18 not organisation or community focused. That, in itself,</p> <p>19 becomes a huge barrier to them coming to somebody within</p> <p>20 those faith organisations. So I think independence and</p> <p>21 impartiality from those organisations puts any</p> <p>22 organisation supporting victims and survivors in</p> <p>23 a stronger place.</p> <p>24 So although if those religious organisations came to</p> <p>25 us and asked us for advice and information and wanted to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 26</p>
<p>1 work with us, we wouldn't say no. The problem is that</p> <p>2 that relationship has to simply be a professional one</p> <p>3 about information and advice, but they never come to us.</p> <p>4 They want to try and deal with everything in-house, and</p> <p>5 that is an issue for us in itself.</p> <p>6 MS SCOLDING: All three of you have basically said that</p> <p>7 victims and survivors would not want to report to the</p> <p>8 religious organisation. Because we have obviously been</p> <p>9 speaking to religious organisations about their</p> <p>10 reporting mechanism.</p> <p>11 Ms Hameed first, and then Ms Rattu and then</p> <p>12 Ms Patel. So, Ms Hameed, why don't victims and</p> <p>13 survivors want to report to the religious organisation?</p> <p>14 MS HAMEED: One, I think because of the lack of</p> <p>15 confidentiality within the organisation. There is no</p> <p>16 assurance that that information is going to remain with</p> <p>17 the person or the organisation that you are disclosing</p> <p>18 to.</p> <p>19 Two, because of the kind of community web.</p> <p>20 Everything is intertwined. So the imam might also be,</p> <p>21 you know, working with local businesses or tied in to</p> <p>22 the local community in other ways. That is guaranteed</p> <p>23 to be happening, in fact. So there is no protection of</p> <p>24 that victim or survivor that is reporting.</p> <p>25 And, also, the informal manner that allegations are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 27</p>	<p>1 dealt with. We have heard of victim and perpetrator</p> <p>2 being spoken to at the same time in the same room.</p> <p>3 Things like that would, in itself, be a huge barrier for</p> <p>4 victims and survivors.</p> <p>5 MS SCOLDING: Ms Rattu, what's been your experience about</p> <p>6 why victims and survivors don't want to report within</p> <p>7 the community and using the religious organisations and</p> <p>8 community settings?</p> <p>9 MS RATTU: The difficulty about child sexual abuse in</p> <p>10 particular is the shame of recognising that this has</p> <p>11 happened, and very often, in our experience, victims</p> <p>12 don't own that this has happened to them. It's their</p> <p>13 fault. You know, they must have -- and that's how they</p> <p>14 have been conditioned to believe. So to then go and</p> <p>15 talk to somebody in a religious organisation, the shame</p> <p>16 and stigma associated to that is absolutely massive.</p> <p>17 When we are talking about honour dynamics, the fact</p> <p>18 that you're making such a disclosure, how that would</p> <p>19 damage the reputation not only of the girl but of</p> <p>20 the family and within the community is massive.</p> <p>21 In our experience, where girls, in particular, have</p> <p>22 come forward to report, they have been encouraged to be</p> <p>23 silent about the issues, to not talk about it, in the</p> <p>24 hope that it will go away, and then, actually, it's been</p> <p>25 the trigger for them to be married, because they're</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 28</p>

<p>1 viewed as damaged goods or they're viewed as, you know, 2 somebody without shame and without honour. So it makes 3 it very difficult and -- 4 MS SCOLDING: -- (overspeaking) -- subject to sexual abuse, 5 you have had examples where people have maybe been 6 sexually abused by a family member, they will then be 7 the subject -- they will then be married off, so to 8 speak, on the basis that they have to be managed in some 9 way because it's their fault? 10 MS RATTU: Yes, (interference) like that. We have survivors 11 at Karma Nirvana who speak and give testimony in the 12 hope that it can inform and change things in the future, 13 and we have had survivors that have gone -- I'm thinking 14 of one survivor in particular, from a Sikh background, 15 who was sexually abused by the Sikh priest. When she 16 came forward to talk about that to her family, after 17 many years of being abused as a child, she was then 18 encouraged to get married to her partner, and it wasn't 19 a -- she doesn't call it a forced marriage, it was 20 somebody that she was in a relationship with in secret 21 that the family discovered, but now that the lid was 22 going to be lifted on this abuse, it was a good and 23 opportune time for her to get married, and she then 24 experienced domestic abuse in that relationship, it 25 wasn't the right relationship for her to be in, but she</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 29</p>	<p>1 was pressurised into that, the trigger being that she 2 came forward to talk about sexual abuse. So it can be 3 a catalyst for things to happen. 4 We have other examples. There is one other example 5 that I wanted to share of, on the helpline, we have had 6 a young boy -- we don't know his age, he didn't disclose 7 it on the helpline, but he spoke about being sexually 8 abused by a family member, and we are certain that he 9 rang pretty soon after the incident had taken place, 10 because he was in a lot of pain, and he had disclosed 11 that he had attempted to go to the mosque and talk about 12 the abuse and make a disclosure, and he was actively 13 encouraged to not talk about it, and, actually, he was 14 told that he shouldn't be bringing this upon himself and 15 he should be silent about it because of the shame. 16 So often, in our experience, in terms of some of 17 the religious institutions, they're not necessarily gate 18 openers for children to openly disclose and talk about 19 abuse. They are gatekeepers to hide the abuse, keep it 20 under the carpet, so as to not affect the reputation and 21 status of a family, an individual or a community. So 22 there are many barriers, and, where people have sought 23 that help, they haven't been welcomed to come and openly 24 talk about it and for that to be reported appropriately. 25 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, and Ms Hameed, I know you wanted to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 30</p>
<p>1 come back. Ms Patel, is there anything you wanted to 2 add to that which Ms Rattu and Ms Hameed have said about 3 the difficulties disclosing to a religious organisation 4 and their response to that? 5 MS PATEL: No, I would endorse what others are saying. 6 I think what we are talking about here are cultures 7 shrouded in secrecy, shame and denial, and so, in that 8 context, it is very, very difficult to talk about issues 9 of sexuality and sexual abuse. 10 What I would say is that, you know, one of 11 the revealing things about South-Asian cultures -- and 12 by "culture", I also mean religious values -- is the 13 fact that there is no language within which to talk 14 about these things. There is no terminology for 15 "sexuality", for "sexual abuse", for "rape", for sexual 16 organs -- the vagina, the penis. There is no 17 terminology, there is no vocabulary, which itself forms 18 a significant barrier to disclosure. 19 MS SCOLDING: Is that all South-Asian languages or -- 20 MS PATEL: It is very true, it is across the board, it is 21 across the board. In all the South-Asian languages -- 22 and probably wider in other minority cultures too -- 23 what we're seeing is one of the difficulties we're 24 grappling with is how to talk about these things. It is 25 not an accident. It is part of a patriarchal structure</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 31</p>	<p>1 that deems sexuality and sex as something distasteful, 2 as something, you know, that you don't talk about, you 3 don't reveal, because the culture, the patriarchal 4 culture, is very much about maintaining women's sexual 5 purity. 6 There is a very clear alignment between the lack of 7 language and the policing of female sexuality here, and 8 the two often go side by side. So, you know, 9 ultimately, the reason why it is difficult for people to 10 disclose and talk about sexual abuse is because sexual 11 abuse is enacted, reproduced and sanctioned socially, 12 sanctioned by religious cultural values, sanctioned 13 through community and family institutions, and that is 14 the key problem here, that what we are talking about are 15 institutions who sanction through values, religious 16 values, cultural values, through language, that -- 17 cultures of silence, denial, shame, secrecy, and we have 18 seen that, we have seen the way in which women are 19 blamed, young girls are blamed every time they disclose: 20 they must have done something wrong; it's the way they 21 have dressed; it's the way they have looked upon a man 22 or a young person or another person. So this kind of 23 constant blaming, constant attribution of blame, on 24 women is also a way of policing and safeguarding their 25 sexuality. It must be -- the root cause of this must be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 32</p>

<p>1 something to do with their sexuality rather than the 2 fact that, you know, what we are talking about are 3 structures of power, male power, patriarchal privilege 4 and power and dynamics. 5 MS SCOLDING: Can I just follow up on two things, and then, 6 Ms Hameed, I will come to you. 7 Firstly, you are talking about that women in these 8 communities are seen to have brought it upon themselves. 9 MS PATEL: Yes. 10 MS SCOLDING: That dynamic is not exclusive to the 11 South-Asian community. One only has to think about date 12 rape cases, for example, or cases where people know each 13 other where there is an excessive -- people still think 14 about the way people dress, the way that they behave, 15 how much they may have had to drink, their previous 16 sexual history, when you're talking about that. How far 17 is the dynamic within the South-Asian community 18 different from the dynamic which exists within our 19 culture generally in respect of women being seen to be 20 responsible for their own -- for sexual violence which 21 is intimidated against them? Is there a qualitative 22 difference? Is there a quantitative difference, or is 23 it the same thing? 24 MS PATEL: Of course there are parallels and there are 25 commonalities, but I would argue that there is</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 33</p>	<p>1 a qualitative difference, and the difference is that 2 what we are talking about are essentially very 3 patriarchal structures, patriarchal family structures, 4 kinship structures, community structures, within which 5 women exist. In that context, the pressure to conform 6 to gender stereotypes, the pressure to conform to, you 7 know, particularly strong powerfully clearly demarcated 8 gender roles are much greater. You are talking about 9 tight-knit structure of families, women living in 10 extended family structures, which can translate into 11 more pressure to behave in a certain way, not to 12 transgress community codes of conduct, and so that 13 creates a kind of heightened atmosphere in which, you 14 know, it makes it far more difficult for women to 15 disclose and to transgress. 16 So we are talking about qualitative difference. 17 Women are constantly told, "Be modest" -- not just when 18 you go out, modest in dress when you go out, as you 19 might expect in a wider society in terms of the blame 20 culture, but within communities, within families, you 21 are told to be modest in the way you dress, in the way 22 you behave, you are told to be dutiful, you are told to 23 respect your elders, which are usually male, or you're 24 told to, you know, show complete subservience and 25 respect, and so there are cultures of complete</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 34</p>
<p>1 subjugation, and there are very little spaces to express 2 your own sexual autonomy, your own independence, your 3 own ability to think freely. So there is a qualitative 4 difference. 5 I'm not saying generally across every South-Asian 6 family, but I am talking about the fact that, you know, 7 there are very close-knit populations where it's 8 particularly -- these pressures are particularly 9 heightened. 10 I would just say that with the rise of religious 11 fundamentalism in all the South-Asian religions, with 12 the rise of ultra-conservatism, what we are seeing is 13 not a diminishing of those pressures, but an actual 14 increase of those pressures. At the moment, it presents 15 a massive challenge to organisations like us who are 16 trying to work with survivors, trying to raise these 17 questions and lift a lid on these things, and trying to 18 get, you know, some kind of justice for these survivors. 19 It's a very, very difficult climate in which we are 20 operating at the moment: the rise of religious 21 fundamentalism, the rise of ultra-conservatism, combined 22 with austerity and cuts to services. This is the 23 climate in which we are operating and it is incredibly 24 challenging and difficult for us in those circumstances 25 to survive and to make sure that the voices of these</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 35</p>	<p>1 survivors are heard and to give them the remedies that 2 they need. 3 MS SCOLDING: Ms Hameed, I know you had something you wanted 4 to say that you wanted to come back on. Over to you. 5 Thank you, Ms Patel. 6 MS HAMEED: There are a few points, actually. So, in terms 7 of the victim-blaming threshold, it's actually much, 8 much lower in our communities. I don't know if I'm use 9 the right -- lower or higher -- 10 MS SCOLDING: What do you mean? 11 MS HAMEED: What I mean is, for instance, in general society 12 where you would see victim blaming in terms of skirt 13 length, we might see it in terms of having our hair out. 14 So, you know, we might be fully covered, but having our 15 hair out could result in victim blaming. 16 Pragna is quite right, actually. The conservatism 17 and fundamentalism has increased in our communities. 18 When I was a child, a woman having her hair out, as in 19 untied, was considered, you know, dishonourable. 20 Today -- and in those days, women used to wear a loose 21 headscarf, not the kind of headscarves that we see in 22 the Muslim community today, the tight hijab type. 23 However, today, not having your hair covered at all, 24 even just having it tied and out and uncovered, would be 25 considered dishonourable.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 36</p>

<p>1 So things have changed but have become more 2 conservative, and that would, and does, result in victim 3 blaming. So it's not about skirt length. You know, 4 a woman who is wearing a skirt knee-length or that's 5 a belt wouldn't be the issue. The issue would be what 6 she was doing even out after it had gotten dark, let 7 alone whether she was drinking or not. So the threshold 8 is very, very different.</p> <p>9 The other thing was the importance of honour here, 10 and it is linked to marriageability. So a woman who is 11 dishonourable -- and, like I said, the threshold is 12 completely different to what we would see in the wider 13 society or even a less conservative family within our 14 communities. If she is thought to have been dishonoured 15 or, you know, she has any mark on her reputation -- and 16 sexual violence, child sexual abuse or sexual violence 17 is still considered a mark on her honour -- then it 18 would affect her marriageability and her marriage 19 prospects. So that's -- I guess I was just feeding into 20 what Natasha was saying here, that it does affect their 21 marriage prospects. Hence why marriages are very, very 22 quickly arranged when sexual abuse or disclosures of 23 sexual violence or sexual abuse arise.</p> <p>24 The other thing that's important is the use of 25 euphemisms within the community. So if somebody was to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 37</p>	<p>1 be raped or abused within the community, the terms that 2 are used -- now, we have talked about the issue of 3 honour within the community. The words quite literally 4 that are used is that her honour has been lost. So when 5 a woman is raped or a child is abused, the terms that 6 are used is that her honour has been taken from her. So 7 that's the way that it's framed. So it tells you quite 8 a lot about how it is perceived when somebody is abused 9 within the community.</p> <p>10 I think, Fiona, your video has frozen.</p> <p>11 MS SCOLDING: I have absolutely no idea what happened then. 12 I disappeared and I came out of Zoom and then I have 13 reappeared into Zoom. So I apologise. I think this is 14 the first time this week we have had such a significant 15 technical glitch, for which I apologise, and if it is my 16 internet connection, I apologise even more.</p> <p>17 But we were just in the middle of having 18 a conversation when you completely froze. I suspect 19 everybody else heard what was being said, but I didn't. 20 As it is, it is 11.30 am. I don't know whether or not 21 now is an appropriate moment to take a break, when I can 22 find out what may have caused the technical glitch.</p> <p>23 Chair, if we may take a break for 15 minutes, just 24 to sort the technical issues out, and also because now 25 is an appropriate moment to have a break. Chair?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 38</p>
<p>1 THE CHAIR: Yes. Thank you, Ms Scolding. We will return at 2 11.45 am.</p> <p>3 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much. Thank you. 4 (11.30 am)</p> <p>5 (A short break) 6 (11.45 am)</p> <p>7 MS SCOLDING: Ms Hameed, Ms Rattu, Ms Patel. Ms Hameed, you 8 were talking to us immediately before the break.</p> <p>9 Ms Rattu, I just wanted to pick up with you if there's 10 anything you wanted to add to the discussion there was 11 about victim blaming within the context of 12 the South-Asian community.</p> <p>13 MS RATTU: Just picking up on the point that Ms Hameed had 14 raised about -- with respect to how girls are expected 15 to behave in a particular way, and these expectations 16 are quite high in comparison to other people in society. 17 I just wanted to share an example that we have had where 18 we had a child who disclosed as an adult that she was 19 abused and raped and was expected to marry her rapist, 20 and that was a way to hide the sexual abuse that had 21 taken place and make it look as though they were in an 22 actual relationship, which was ludicrous. I just wanted 23 to really extend upon the point that Ms Hameed had made, 24 that those expectations can also be placed -- I know 25 I mentioned that there may be an expectation to marry,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 39</p>	<p>1 but also then to marry the rapist to hide the sexual 2 abuse.</p> <p>3 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful. All of you in your 4 witness evidence have talked about the fact that there 5 is a lack of understanding about sexual abuse in 6 South-Asian communities. Ms Patel in particular, you 7 attached a research paper in which you talked about -- 8 we have already heard about the language that there 9 literally is no language for rape and sexual violence, 10 and that this causes particular difficulties with 11 reporting.</p> <p>12 Ms Patel, would you like to say a little more about 13 the lack of understanding about the prevalence of sexual 14 abuse in the context of South-Asian communities?</p> <p>15 MS PATEL: Yes. What I would say is that there isn't a lack 16 of knowledge that these things exist. I think the 17 knowledge is there. So the lack of understanding that 18 comes isn't a lack of understanding based on the 19 ignorance that there is a prevalence of child sexual 20 abuse taking place; it's an almost wilful lack of 21 understanding, and that, I think, goes back to the ways 22 in which the whole structures of family kinship, 23 community networks, are embedded in very patriarchal 24 notions of family, of sexuality, of women, of 25 adolescence, and so on.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 40</p>

<p>1 What I think is particularly alarming is the fact 2 that any attempt to raise issues of sexual abuse within 3 families, let alone even in religious settings, is very 4 quickly clamped down upon.</p> <p>5 So we are seeing situations where, as others have 6 described, if a child or if a young person raises these 7 issues, and there are a number of remedies that are 8 used, but, effectively, to close down the allegations, 9 to close down -- to clamp the voice that's trying to 10 seek support. So whether it's through, you know, "Don't 11 tell anyone. Keep it in the family", or, "Let's speak 12 to a community elder", who inevitably will then tell the 13 person to keep it in the family.</p> <p>14 Another very important mechanism that's used is 15 mediation. Family and community mediation in relation 16 to family matters is extensively practised in many 17 South-Asian communities.</p> <p>18 MS SCOLDING: When you say "mediation", what do you mean by 19 that?</p> <p>20 MS PATEL: Usually mediation by community -- usually 21 religious or community figures, leaderships, usually 22 male, who have some authority, who will bring together 23 the accused and the accuser and will mediate in order to 24 come to an informal settlement. Informal mediation 25 takes place all the time.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 41</p>	<p>1 We have seen this time and time again. The number 2 of women that come to us, come to organisations like us, 3 to report abuse is usually a matter of last resort, an 4 act of last resort, a desperate act, when all informal 5 attempts to resolve problems within family and 6 communities have been exhausted. Usually, what we find 7 women tell us is that, when they're in these mediation 8 meetings, whether it's in relation to reports of -- 9 allegations of domestic abuse or sexual abuse or marital 10 rape or any other form of oppression and cruelty, they 11 say that theirs is the voice that's never listened to. 12 They are often blamed. All the abuse is minimised or 13 denied. And, inevitably, the people doing the 14 mediation -- the mediators, who are the religious and 15 community leaders -- will side with the abusers, will 16 side with the perpetrators. So they feel a huge sense 17 of injustice.</p> <p>18 When they come to organisations like ours, the first 19 thing they want to know is that that is not going to be 20 repeated by us in the way in which we respond to their 21 disclosures.</p> <p>22 So these are just some of the ways in which that -- 23 it is not so much a lack of understanding as a wilful 24 lack of understanding that takes place. I'm afraid that 25 this kind of mediation -- attempts to resolve things</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 42</p>
<p>1 informally -- has now accelerated, has now been 2 institutionalised even more through Sharia councils and 3 Sharia courts, for example, which have become informal 4 forums of mediation, presided over by imams, presided 5 over by figures of religious authorities and often 6 linked to mosques and so on. And women are being 7 compelled, through coercion or sheer social compulsion, 8 to resolve their family matters in these forums.</p> <p>9 These forums -- and there is considerable evidence 10 based on our research, but also other research, that 11 these forums are profoundly discriminatory, are 12 profoundly patriarchal, do not follow procedures of due 13 process, do not support women, do not deliver justice in 14 a non-discriminatory way. They are patriarchal 15 structures that are attempting to keep a lid on family 16 matters, including allegations of abuse within the 17 community; to prevent women from seeking justice in the 18 formal legal system. And that is another mechanism of 19 control.</p> <p>20 Ultimately, what lies at the heart of all of this is 21 an attempt to control women and to control their 22 sexuality, so these structures are being set up to do 23 precisely that.</p> <p>24 So I would argue that it's not just about a lack of 25 understanding. It really is about the ways in which the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 43</p>	<p>1 patriarchal structures shape that lack of understanding, 2 that kind of wilful ignorance.</p> <p>3 On the other hand, of course, amongst survivors 4 there is a confusion. There is a kind of sense of 5 trauma, of internalisation of what they have 6 experienced, so much that there is a lack of 7 understanding, "Is this something that I have done 8 wrong?", "Is this something that I have brought on 9 myself?", "am I wrong? Did I not perform as a dutiful 10 wife or daughter should perform?". So in relation to 11 survivors of abuse there is a lack of understanding. 12 But the lack of understanding is not so much about the 13 injustice that's been done, they all understand that 14 brilliantly in the way in which they recount their 15 experiences, but a lack of understanding of what they 16 should do about it; a lack of understanding of where do 17 they go; a lack of understanding of who to report to; 18 the lack of knowledge; the lack of information about 19 their right; the lack of how to navigate the wider 20 societal safety net that might exist.</p> <p>21 So, in some ways, it is a bit more complex than just 22 saying there's a lack of understanding there. There's 23 a kind of wilful denial in relation to the powerful 24 structures that exist, but there is a serious lack of 25 understanding in relation to the way survivors respond</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 44</p>

<p>1 to the abuse.</p> <p>2 MS SCOLDING: In some of the research that you have</p> <p>3 exhibited, you have identified that women, especially</p> <p>4 older women, will sometimes pressurise younger women, by</p> <p>5 which we are talking about people under the age of 18,</p> <p>6 to accept child sexual abuse for the purposes of family</p> <p>7 harmony. I understand that that's something that's come</p> <p>8 out of the research that you have undertaken.</p> <p>9 You also say about not knowing where to turn. Is</p> <p>10 this somewhere where religious organisations -- and I am</p> <p>11 going to turn to Ms Rattu -- could, in fact, play a very</p> <p>12 valuable role? I am assuming, Ms Rattu, that you</p> <p>13 largely agree with what Ms Patel has just said, but if</p> <p>14 you don't, please identify any nuance you would like to</p> <p>15 indicate. But could religious organisations be used as</p> <p>16 places where there can be signposting to organisations</p> <p>17 like yourself, other organisations, or even</p> <p>18 organisations within the religious community who can</p> <p>19 provide help and advice to women and girls who are</p> <p>20 survivors of sexual abuse? Do you think that's</p> <p>21 practicable?</p> <p>22 MS RATTU: I think, in an ideal world, it would be fantastic</p> <p>23 if they would do that and they were prepared to do that.</p> <p>24 But, in our experience, there's been reluctance to do</p> <p>25 that.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 45</p>	<p>1 The one thing I just wanted to add, from the points</p> <p>2 already made, is that we have got to recognise as well</p> <p>3 that there's a conditioning of the mind of the survivor,</p> <p>4 of the victim, and that conditioning takes place from</p> <p>5 a very young age as to what the expectations and norms</p> <p>6 are.</p> <p>7 Just to kind of follow on from the points around</p> <p>8 survivors, when they do leave, you know, they don't</p> <p>9 leave and have a very different mind-set and are</p> <p>10 thinking differently; they leave with that conditioned</p> <p>11 mind, that "Maybe I did do something wrong", and, you</p> <p>12 know, that are totally and completely battling from the</p> <p>13 point of leaving with decisions that they have made, and</p> <p>14 often do end up going back to abusive family members</p> <p>15 because they struggle to own that, actually, what</p> <p>16 happened to them happened to them. Rather, they feel</p> <p>17 that they maybe were the cause of that.</p> <p>18 But going to your question about religious</p> <p>19 institutions supporting and signposting to organisations</p> <p>20 like ourselves, in an ideal world, that would be great</p> <p>21 if that could happen. I don't know, even if there was</p> <p>22 a requirement put into place for that to happen, whether</p> <p>23 it would and whether that could be monitored in any way.</p> <p>24 I highly doubt that, just by way of experience where we</p> <p>25 have tried to reach out to such institutions, where we</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 46</p>
<p>1 have had people that have come forward -- and I'm</p> <p>2 thinking about one survivor in particular who was</p> <p>3 sexually abused in a Sikh temple and wanted to go into</p> <p>4 that space years down the line to talk about what</p> <p>5 happened with a view to the community recognising that</p> <p>6 and supporting her to make a difference as a victim in</p> <p>7 that Sikh temple, that gurdwara. She wasn't supported</p> <p>8 to do that because of the shame of admitting that that</p> <p>9 had happened.</p> <p>10 So I think it would be ideal, but I would really</p> <p>11 struggle to see practically whether that would happen in</p> <p>12 reality.</p> <p>13 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask now about language and linguistic</p> <p>14 barriers and social isolation. We have already talked</p> <p>15 about the fact that there is an absence of language.</p> <p>16 Ms Hameed, maybe you can help us. How far are there</p> <p>17 still significant language and linguistic barriers and</p> <p>18 social isolation for girls within the South-Asian</p> <p>19 communities which would prevent them being able to</p> <p>20 report abuse effectively? Can you help us with that?</p> <p>21 MS HAMEED: Yes, there is still a huge amount of stigma</p> <p>22 about talking about even healthy relationships and</p> <p>23 consensual sex and the concept and principle of consent,</p> <p>24 without even mentioning genitalia, without mentioning</p> <p>25 any of the mechanics of sex. That's a really, really</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 47</p>	<p>1 crucial issue here, where we are not being able to talk</p> <p>2 about healthy relationships because there is -- you</p> <p>3 know, relationships are very, very heavily controlled.</p> <p>4 For particularly a woman to choose her own partner,</p> <p>5 particularly in higher -- you know, more conservative,</p> <p>6 religiously conservative, fundamentalist communities,</p> <p>7 it's unthinkable.</p> <p>8 You know, young people do have relationships in</p> <p>9 secret. All of us have worked with those kinds of young</p> <p>10 people and women. We still see them. And we have seen</p> <p>11 some of the implications of those such things. Just two</p> <p>12 years ago, a woman was murdered for coming out of</p> <p>13 a clearly forced marriage and choosing a partner. She</p> <p>14 was lured to Pakistan and murdered there. I'm talking</p> <p>15 about the case of Samia Shahid who was murdered in</p> <p>16 Pakistan. That should illustrate how difficult it is</p> <p>17 even to broach the subject of a relationship of your</p> <p>18 choosing without any of the discussion around sex,</p> <p>19 consent and, you know, the healthy parts of</p> <p>20 a relationship that we might talk about in everyday life</p> <p>21 outside of these communities.</p> <p>22 So the concept of discussions around child sexual</p> <p>23 abuse are just non-existent. I mean, we saw, from the</p> <p>24 Sikh organisation that gave evidence on Monday and four</p> <p>25 out of the five organisations that gave evidence on</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 48</p>

<p>1 Wednesday, a complete denial of the fact that this even 2 exists within the community, that sexual abuse or sexual 3 violence issues exist within the community, that there's 4 kind of two things at play together. One is the issue 5 of denial, and the other one, I think, is the issue of 6 disguised compliance, where they're saying all the right 7 things, that we're doing all of the right things, but at 8 the same time simultaneously they are saying, "This 9 doesn't happen here". Those two things are at play 10 together, which makes it quite difficult for people 11 within the community to know -- you know, I think one of 12 the organisations that was giving evidence in the 13 afternoon on Wednesday said, "We have policies, but 14 nobody knows we have policies". So if there was child 15 sexual abuse occurring within the community, nobody 16 would know what the policies or procedures internally 17 were or how they would be dealt with. 18 I think that's kind of occurring. I have forgotten 19 what your second part of the question was, actually? 20 MS SCOLDING: That's absolutely fine. I'm actually going to 21 move on from that. Oh, Ms Patel wanted to come back. 22 Ms Patel? 23 MS PATEL: Yes, I just want to talk about -- you were 24 talking about, you know, is there access to language, is 25 there access for survivors or in the community. I want</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 49</p>	<p>1 to talk to you about the fact that there are 2 contradictory developments. Not only is there not -- is 3 there an absence of language generally to talk about 4 these things, but the political and social developments 5 within communities is to absolutely prevent any kind of 6 access to knowledge that might lead to more -- gaining 7 information about sexual abuse. What I am talking about 8 here -- I am going to give two examples in particular. 9 One is the current mobilisations that have been taking 10 place, which are just part of a long campaign by, 11 particularly, Muslim fundamentalists to encourage 12 parents to withdraw children from sex education in 13 schools. This is the major campaign that's taking place 14 at the moment. You will all know about the protests 15 outside the Birmingham schools, primary schools, 16 precisely around this issue. 17 The campaign to withdraw children from sex education 18 is a long-running campaign, and it is precisely because 19 it is seen to clash with so-called religious values, 20 values around family, sexuality, gender roles, 21 et cetera. 22 So we have seen organisations like the Muslim 23 Council of Britain supposedly saying one thing in 24 public, but actually endorsing other -- this kind of 25 campaign to withdraw children from parts of the school</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 50</p>
<p>1 curriculum that would give them access to information 2 about how to stay safe, how to recognise abuse, how to 3 report. It's these very, very important parts of 4 the school curriculum that these conservatives and 5 fundamentalists are trying to exclude their children 6 from having access to. That is incredibly important and 7 we have seen it time and time again in some of the work 8 we have done around, you know, challenging gender 9 segregation, which is on the increase in schools, around 10 the imposition of dress codes, around the imposition of 11 Sharia laws in Sharia courts. These are all ways in 12 which attempts are being made to exclude women and 13 children from the very tools that they need to talk 14 about sexual abuse and to do something about it. 15 MS SCOLDING: Thank you. That's very helpful. Can I ask 16 Ms Rattu, maybe, about the reverence for religious 17 leaders and how that can play into -- is it the case 18 that religious leaders within the South-Asian community 19 are predominantly male or -- I believe in the Sikh 20 religion, both men and women can become religious 21 leaders of one description or another. Are these 22 individuals elected by the local community? Are they 23 appointed? How are they viewed by the community? I'm 24 just thinking about -- Ms Patel earlier talked about the 25 need for leadership and whether or not religious leaders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 51</p>	<p>1 could be, and should be, the leaders of saying that 2 certain behaviours are unacceptable and whether or not 3 they do do that. Ms Rattu, can you help me with that? 4 MS RATTU: Yes. In our experience, no, they're not elected 5 or appointed. That isn't shared in terms of 6 the experiences of victims and survivors. And, yes, in 7 the Sikh faith in particular, a faith that I come from, 8 men and women are both recognised as leaders -- can be 9 religious leaders. However, predominantly, you do tend 10 to see more men in those positions. 11 But it is really important to make the point that, 12 when we are talking about honour dynamics and honour 13 systems and codes, not only are they upheld by men, they 14 are also upheld by women. So when we are talking about 15 perpetrators, we are also talking about female 16 perpetrators. And sometimes, in terms of the coercive 17 control, the control of females within the family, you 18 will find that it's not just brothers, uncles and 19 fathers; it can be mothers and sisters as well. And 20 when we think about the role of the mother-in-law in 21 a lot of the circumstances that we hear about on our 22 helpline, incredible control that is held by women. So 23 I just wanted to really highlight that, in terms of that 24 control over the autonomy of women and girls, it is not 25 just men that are ensuring that they behave in that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 52</p>

<p>1 particular way.</p> <p>2 But in terms of my understanding, these aren't</p> <p>3 elected roles. They are not appointed. And there is</p> <p>4 a lot of -- it is not entirely clear how -- again, very</p> <p>5 unregulated, depending on -- faith to faith, as to how</p> <p>6 people do become leaders in those positions. But what</p> <p>7 is clear is that these individuals are not individuals</p> <p>8 that victims would go to if they were a victim of any</p> <p>9 abuse, of any nature, let alone sexual abuse which is</p> <p>10 already tied in with the shame, stigma and</p> <p>11 embarrassment, as you highlighted, amongst all</p> <p>12 communities, but with the additional layers, barriers,</p> <p>13 that South-Asian victims face in particular.</p> <p>14 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask, there has been a lot of talk about</p> <p>15 shame and honour, and I understand why all of you,</p> <p>16 within your witness statements, raise it. Concepts such</p> <p>17 as izzat or haya. Ms Rattu, could you explain, what is</p> <p>18 izzat and what is haya? Ms Rattu, you mentioned</p> <p>19 something called "haya" within your witness statement.</p> <p>20 Would you mind explaining that?</p> <p>21 MS RATTU: In relation to izzat, "izzat" translates into</p> <p>22 "honour" and "respect". What we are finding is, in</p> <p>23 terms of younger generations of people that are coming</p> <p>24 forward, they do still understand what honour means, but</p> <p>25 it translates, fundamentally, into the respect of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 53</p>	<p>1 the family name. It is about recognising that the</p> <p>2 family name is like a brand. It is a status. You know,</p> <p>3 it's looking at it through that lens. Women, in</p> <p>4 particular, are more capable of bringing that family</p> <p>5 branding into disrepute through their actions, more so</p> <p>6 than the men in the family. Actually, for women, it is</p> <p>7 a lot easier for them to cause dishonour than men and</p> <p>8 easier for men to regain their honour if they were to do</p> <p>9 something dishonourable. So there is a disparity in how</p> <p>10 honour -- family respect impacts men and women.</p> <p>11 One of the best ways to describe it is, if you</p> <p>12 imagine that a woman is a piece of silk and a man is</p> <p>13 a bar of gold and you drop both into mud. You take the</p> <p>14 gold out of the mud. It's quite easy to wipe it clean,</p> <p>15 to restore that honour. But for the woman, you take the</p> <p>16 silk out of the mud, and no matter how much you wash it,</p> <p>17 people remember what it was that she did that was so</p> <p>18 dishonourable, be it the secret boyfriend or the</p> <p>19 relationship before marriage, the divorce. People</p> <p>20 remember that. That woman, as a result of that, has to</p> <p>21 try doubly hard to rebuild the family brand and the</p> <p>22 family reputation and the family name.</p> <p>23 If she's not able to do that, it puts pressure upon</p> <p>24 the other female members in that family to uphold the</p> <p>25 honour. So if we look to our founder,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 54</p>
<p>1 Jasvinder Sanghera, who fled home, it put additional</p> <p>2 pressures on her other sisters. So she was one of six</p> <p>3 sisters. Again, the shame of that, it's recognised in</p> <p>4 South-Asian communities that there is a preference to</p> <p>5 have sons over daughters. That's widely recognised. So</p> <p>6 the shame that can be caused is huge by having</p> <p>7 daughters. So it is about recognising, I think, the</p> <p>8 differences between men and women.</p> <p>9 MS SCOLDING: Maybe, Ms Hameed, I will ask you to comment</p> <p>10 upon this, then Ms Patel, then Ms Rattu. How much of</p> <p>11 this has got anything to do with religion? Because</p> <p>12 religious leaders came and spoke to us on Wednesday and</p> <p>13 said, "None of this stuff is religious. All of this is</p> <p>14 social and cultural. In none of these places does</p> <p>15 religion teach this or that". Ms Hameed, has it been</p> <p>16 your experience that this is cultural and social rather</p> <p>17 than religious?</p> <p>18 MS HAMEED: No. My experience is -- I think -- it's</p> <p>19 a commonly-used tactic, to try and separate the two.</p> <p>20 The problem is, religion and culture kind of intertwine</p> <p>21 like that (indicating), and are very difficult to</p> <p>22 separate. The problem is that, if somebody is an</p> <p>23 outsider speaking to somebody from within the community,</p> <p>24 it's a very easy way to deflect from what's happening</p> <p>25 and say, "It's just outdated cultures". But the problem</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 55</p>	<p>1 is, the religious leaders often aren't doing anything --</p> <p>2 if it is, indeed, that it's just culture, then why are</p> <p>3 they not talking about it from a cultural perspective,</p> <p>4 "This isn't part of our religion", and sending that</p> <p>5 message out far and wide?</p> <p>6 Actually, what we are seeing, with the increase of</p> <p>7 fundamentalism and conservatism within the community, is</p> <p>8 that these practices are becoming more entrenched in the</p> <p>9 community because religion and culture do very, very</p> <p>10 comfortably intertwine and interlock.</p> <p>11 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, would you like to come in on that?</p> <p>12 MS PATEL: Yes. I would very much agree with Sadia on that</p> <p>13 point. What we are talking about here is a very common</p> <p>14 tactic used. It is, in effect, an avoidance and</p> <p>15 distancing tactic, to say, "Oh, it's nothing to do with</p> <p>16 us. It's all about those malfunctioning cultures. It's</p> <p>17 all about those backward people who have just come to</p> <p>18 this country who bring their malfunctioning cultures and</p> <p>19 backward cultures and backward ways of thinking with</p> <p>20 them". It is a way of distancing themselves from</p> <p>21 responsibility and any form of accountability.</p> <p>22 I mean, everybody knows that religion and culture</p> <p>23 are intertwined. Religion is always experienced within</p> <p>24 a cultural setting. When women come to us and talk</p> <p>25 about their experiences of abuse, they also talk about</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 56</p>

<p>1 the cultural and religious pressures on them to remain 2 silent, to not disclose, to go back and resolve it 3 within the community because they need to maintain the 4 honour of the family and the community and not to shame 5 their family. 6 So this idea that culture and religion can be 7 separated, when, in fact, they're closely intertwined 8 and closely experienced as a lived experience, is 9 something that is a bit of a red herring. It is a way 10 of distancing themselves -- those who use that argument, 11 a way of distancing themselves from, you know, taking 12 responsibility. 13 The other thing I would just quickly want to come 14 back on is the leadership question, to say that I wasn't 15 saying that these are leaders. I was saying that, if 16 they're assuming positions of leadership, then they need 17 to show -- they need to have the qualities of leadership 18 and not hide behind congregations and argue that, "The 19 congregation won't like it, therefore, we shouldn't do 20 it". As far as we are concerned, they are not 21 recognised leaders. They are self-styled, 22 self-appointed people who claim to represent the needs 23 of the community and present the community as if it is 24 all homogeneous and try to present the community as if 25 it buys into the same value systems, failing to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 57</p>	<p>1 recognise the fault lines, the gender, the caste, the 2 class, the different religious sects that are within 3 community; failing to, you know, recognise that there 4 are those different competing interests, failing to 5 recognise the needs of the most vulnerable. 6 So we certainly don't see them as leaders. They see 7 themselves as leaders, and, what's more disturbing, 8 local authority and the government see them as leaders. 9 They are propped up as leaders. But they are no more 10 leaders than any one of us or any of the survivors from 11 the communities from which we come. I think that is 12 part of the problem. It is what I have called the kind 13 of multi-cultural, multi-faith model of managing race 14 relations in this country, where everybody assumes, 15 "Want to know something about what the community needs, 16 want to reach the community? Go to these people because 17 they are the leaders". But nobody has appointed them. 18 They are not accountable to anyone. They certainly 19 don't represent the interests of the entire communities. 20 MS SCOLDING: I have seen Ms Rattu and Ms Hameed both 21 nodding vigorously during the course of that answer. 22 I would like now to focus briefly upon two issues which 23 maybe directly relate to religion in terms of child 24 sexual abuse. First, Ms Rattu, I'd like to ask you 25 about child marriage because I know that's a campaign</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 58</p>
<p>1 you are particularly working on at the moment. Then 2 I would like to go on and talk about spiritual abuse 3 more generally, ie, sexual abuse which is carried out in 4 the name of religious belief or as part and parcel of 5 some form of spiritual exorcism. 6 Ms Rattu, can I first come to you about child 7 marriage. Now, can you explain, what do you mean by 8 child marriage? 9 MS RATTU: So child marriage is the marriage of anybody 10 considered as a child. So from the age of 17 and under. 11 We have a current campaign to make child marriage 12 a crime because we see a real protection gap around the 13 safety of children who are married. 14 Now, in this country, you can get married at the age 15 of 16 with parental consent, which we often see as 16 parental coercion, or judicial consent, and what's 17 interesting is that, actually, there isn't any crime for 18 the marriage of a child at any age, including 16 -- we 19 are talking here about those where religious marriages 20 take place, there is no governance or regulation of 21 those marriages, and they do happen. 22 Just because they are not registered doesn't make 23 them any less harmful. In fact, I would say that 24 they're more harmful by the nature in which they have 25 taken place and (overspeaking) --</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 59</p>	<p>1 MS SCOLDING: Can I stop you there? There seem to be two 2 issues here: firstly, whether or not the age of entering 3 into marriage should be raised to 18, so any registered 4 marriage could not take place until somebody was 18 5 rather than 16, which is the law at the moment; and, 6 secondly, you then raise the issue of religious 7 marriages, which you say are taking place to people who 8 are under 16. It seems to me there are two issues here. 9 Firstly, the position of those between 16 and 18, who 10 can only marry with their parents' consent or with an 11 order of the court; and religious -- so non-registered 12 marriages, but religious marriages, which are recognised 13 by religious authorities which are, you say -- you have 14 got examples of them being entered into by individuals 15 who are under 16. Is that right? 16 MS RATTU: Yes, that's right. Just to clarify, we are not 17 asking to raise the age. All we are asking is to remove 18 the parental consent element and the judicial consent. 19 We recognise, in this country, that you are a child if 20 you are under that age, and there are many things that 21 you can't do, such as leave educational training, buy 22 alcohol, vote, gamble, et cetera. There are so many 23 things that you can't do, that it feels bizarre that one 24 of the things that you can do is marry and have children 25 as a child.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 60</p>

<p>1 From our perspective, it is a real protection gap, 2 because child marriage is a breeding ground for sexual 3 abuse. It fundamentally is. We know -- 4 MS SCOLDING: It is sexual abuse. 5 MS RATTU: It is. 6 MS SCOLDING: If you marry somebody under the age of 16, one 7 of the precursors to being able to enter into any kind 8 of marriage is the ability to have sexual relations and 9 it is illegal to have sexual relations with somebody who 10 is under the age of 16, whether that's religiously 11 sanctioned or otherwise, it is a criminal offence. 12 MS RATTU: Well, we are not seeing those offences being 13 dealt with by way of prosecution, and there's an 14 incredible onus on the child to bring those cases 15 forward because these cases are invisible, because there 16 is no registering or regulation of those marriages. We 17 don't even know, so we are not able to say, how many of 18 those happen. We only hear about them, more often than 19 not, because you have a victim who's contacted one of 20 the -- you know, a service like ourselves, later on down 21 the line, after the marriage has happened, because 22 they're now looking to leave, because we recognise their 23 vulnerability as children. It's a huge, huge, onus to 24 expect that child to come forward at that point. 25 One of the things I also wanted to raise is that, in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 61</p>	<p>1 2013, there was an ITV investigation into child marriage 2 in particular, and it recognised or identified -- and it 3 only looked at mosques, but it identified that there 4 were 18 mosques that were prepared to marry 5 a 14-year-old girl. That documentary is available on 6 YouTube to watch. But it is interesting that we hear 7 about these marriages taking place through the third 8 sector, but we don't really recognise them in terms of 9 the statutory sector. These children aren't known to 10 Social Services, these children are very unlikely to 11 come forward to the police, because they have been 12 conditioned to think that that's shameful in terms of 13 speaking about them. And some of them have been 14 conditioned to believe that, actually, marrying as 15 a child is a norm and there's stigma to marry after 16. 16 So very often you find that children are conditioned and 17 wanting, consenting, even, dare I say -- quote, unquote 18 consenting -- to these marriages, and that's massively 19 worrying for us, because these cases aren't recognised 20 under the forced marriage law, so there's a protection 21 gap there, because the forced marriage law only 22 recognises those that do not have capacity as an adult 23 within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act. It 24 doesn't recognise children as being a category of 25 individuals that cannot give their consent.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 62</p>
<p>1 So we are really worried about that. We want to 2 remedy that through making child marriage a crime, one; 3 but also removing parental consent, which, as I have 4 already alluded to, is parental coercion. 5 MS SCOLDING: You say parental consent is parental coercion. 6 Obviously you run a forced marriage helpline. What 7 percentage of the people that phone your forced marriage 8 helpline are people who have been married at 16 or 17, 9 either as a total number or as a proportion, if you are 10 aware? 11 MS RATTU: I can get that evidence to the inquiry. I can 12 talk to our data and case analyst for that specifically. 13 The issue that you have is that we get that 14 information at that time, usually through professionals, 15 if they recognise it at an earlier stage. It's very 16 rare that you get the young person themselves coming 17 forward and making that disclosure, unless they're quite 18 empowered and they know absolutely what they want in 19 terms of decisions to leave. 20 So you're relying upon professionals to have that 21 understanding to recognise it, which we know that 22 actually professionals don't have that confidence to 23 deal with forced marriage and honour-based abuse. So 24 that makes it quite difficult. 25 We have also then got to look at data with where</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 63</p>	<p>1 people are now adults and reporting back as being 2 children when they were married. But I can certainly 3 get that evidence to you. 4 MS SCOLDING: As I understand it, the UN issued some 5 development goals, so that, by 2030, the age of marriage 6 in all countries should be 18. Is that right? Or 7 certainly, developing countries, they're asking the age 8 of marriage to be 18. We, as the UK Government, have 9 signed up to those international development goals, and 10 as I understand it, in a briefing paper which I happened 11 to read, that I think you produced, you identified that 12 Bangladesh re-introduced marriage for those under the 13 age of 18, justifying the use of the fact that the UK 14 still has the age of consent at 16 for marriage. Is 15 that right? 16 MS RATTU: That is correct. I find it wholly embarrassing 17 that that's a justification. You know, we are meant to 18 be leading internationally on ending child marriage, and 19 we can't be seen to be doing that if we're saying that 20 children within our law can marry. 21 MS SCOLDING: Now, only very small numbers of people do get 22 married between the ages of 16 and 18. I think it is 23 something like 3,500 people a year, which, in comparison 24 to the entire number -- but of those, from the research 25 that you have done when producing and introducing this</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 64</p>

<p>1 bill, what proportion of those do you think might be as 2 a result of some form of coercion rather than truly and 3 freely given consent? 4 MS RATTU: It's very difficult to be able to give that 5 information, but you do rightly allude to the fact that 6 the numbers are quite small, and I think that really 7 shows a shift in society, where actually children are 8 now not getting married in terms of at the age of 16, 9 17, 18. It is quite rare in terms of those registered 10 marriages. I think it shows a shift in society that we 11 are now looking at education as being something that you 12 should be completing before thinking about marriage. 13 But what we don't know, and what we can't quantify 14 accurately with a number, are the religious marriages 15 that take place, and that worries me massively, because 16 we do hear about them on the helpline sporadically, we 17 do hear about them, but often we hear about them far too 18 late, when that child is now an adult -- they may be 19 just 18, 19, 20, and it happened a lot earlier on, and 20 the signs weren't spotted. The issue is, there were 21 lots of opportunities for the signs to be spotted, not 22 just by religious institutions but also by health 23 professionals, where some of these young girls have 24 attended a midwifery appointment because they are 25 pregnant as a child and they are married and they are</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 65</p>	<p>1 there with their husband who may be older than them. So 2 there are opportunities to identify these young girls, 3 but we are missing them, fundamentally. We just don't 4 know the exact and true figure as to how often these 5 cases are happening. 6 But I would say one case is one too many anyway, but 7 we know that the numbers are high. 8 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much, Ms Rattu, that's very 9 helpful. 10 Ms Hameed, you mention in your witness statement 11 quite a lot, and, Ms Patel, also in yours -- so I am 12 going to come to Ms Hameed first and then Ms Patel -- 13 about the use of religious texts to justify sexually 14 abusive behaviours. Does that happen in the context of 15 formal religious settings or what one might call more 16 sort of folk traditions? Because you have -- both 17 yourself and Ms Patel talk about the use of jinns and 18 black magic and exorcism rituals which might be 19 considered to be more folk tradition than religion and 20 how they might interrelate with each other. Ms Hameed, 21 can you help us with that at all? 22 MS HAMEED: With both, actually. The documentary that 23 Ms Rattu mentioned just a moment ago would be a really, 24 really crucial one for the inquiry to watch, actually, 25 because, within that documentary, you see a scenario</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 66</p>
<p>1 play out where the documentary makers and the 2 investigating team contact a mosque, and quite clearly 3 mention the age of the potential young woman that they 4 wish to marry, who is 14 years old, and the potential 5 spouse who is 21 years old, and the kind of verbal 6 somersaults and the kind of "word spaghetti salad" that 7 you see happening in order to ensure that that marriage 8 takes place. 9 They both talk about the law of the land but then 10 also mention within the documentary that religious law 11 trumps the law of the land. 12 Now, that's what we would see within mosque settings 13 in this country as well. I couldn't say that it happens 14 in every mosque, because, even within that documentary, 15 you hear that two-thirds of the mosques that they do 16 contact are appalled by the suggestion of arranging such 17 a marriage. But you do hear that 18 mosques, who are 18 likely to have huge congregations, like we heard on 19 Wednesday, you know, thousands that would attend their 20 mosques, would facilitate such a marriage. So it could 21 happen in a formal or an informal setting, which makes 22 it a bit more difficult. 23 The thing is, the people that would facilitate such 24 things would ensure that they are very careful in how 25 they do it. They would mention the law, they would also</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 67</p>	<p>1 mention religion. Now, Islamically, a young girl, once 2 she has had her first period, the principle is that you 3 have your first period in your father's house, you have 4 your second period in your husband's house. 5 Now, for example, if my family were to honour those 6 religious principles, I would have been married and 7 having had sex at the age of 11. There are young girls 8 who now have their period by the age of 8/9 years old, 9 and that, Islamically, is accepted. 10 Now, for more conservative or fundamentalist 11 religious leaders, they would use that principle -- and 12 they call it reaching -- they would say you've reached 13 the age of puberty or you have become "balik", would be 14 the word that would be used. 15 MS SCOLDING: Can you spell that word, because the 16 transcriber, otherwise, at lunchtime, will ask me to 17 spell it and I know it is not in anyone's witness 18 statement? 19 MS HAMEED: B-A-L-I-K, I think. It is difficult to 20 transliterate across. 21 MS SCOLDING: I completely understand. 22 MS HAMEED: It is a rough one, would be that. 23 But males in these communities would reach the age 24 of maturity at a much later age. Because they don't 25 have periods, they set the age at 13, for example. So</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 68</p>

<p>1 religion is used in that context to facilitate child 2 sexual abuse. 3 MS SCOLDING: You also talked about spiritual abuse, which 4 I am going to say the use of religious texts to justify 5 sexual abuse, you've talked about the Islamic situation, 6 but you have also identified some examples about 7 exorcism and that being used incorrectly. 8 Now, can I just double-check, certainly within the 9 context of Islam, is exorcism -- exorcism isn't a sort 10 of recognised art, or it is not a recognised religious 11 ritual. So this is more kind of folk -- what I would 12 call kind of folk tradition. Is that right? 13 MS HAMEED: It's become more prevalent as I have gotten 14 older. When I was younger, it almost didn't exist. You 15 might have somebody that would pray and blow on you or 16 pray on some water and give you that water to drink. 17 But now we are seeing this industry, if you like, of 18 exorcisms happening, happening even in the UK, and it 19 might happen in a mosque setting or they might happen in 20 somebody's home, where somebody is invited in to perform 21 an exorcism. But they've certainly grown in prevalence 22 in recent times, I would say in the last decade. 23 I almost didn't even hear of them when I was a child. 24 Like I said, they would have been very, very -- they 25 wouldn't have been as serious when I was a child. It</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 69</p>	<p>1 would have just been somebody praying and blowing. 2 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, can you help us with this, in terms 3 of use of kind of spiritual texts to justify abusive 4 behaviour, both in the context of formal religious texts 5 and what I would call the sort of more informal folk 6 tradition, which is not directly religious but might be 7 related to it. Ms Patel, can you help us at all with 8 this? 9 MS PATEL: I think the two are often interlinked and the two 10 are combined. It is difficult to separate what is the 11 use of formal text from a particular folk tradition. 12 Both of them can be, you know, practised at the same 13 time. 14 So if you -- if a family invites a faith healer or 15 a spiritual leader to their home, that person, that 16 religious person, would also use text in the performance 17 of the ritual, and that's true whether it's in the home 18 or in a temple setting, say, or in a mosque setting. We 19 certainly have had cases where there's been sexual 20 abuse -- the ritualised kind of healing that takes place 21 is often a pretext for sexual abuse. So it is 22 particularly -- what's interesting for me, in terms of 23 our experience, is that it's particularly practised on 24 certain people as a way of correcting their so-called 25 nonconformist behaviour, as a way of getting them back</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 70</p>
<p>1 into line, if you like. So it is particularly -- use 2 exorcism, witchcraft, faith healing, it's usually used, 3 for example, to so-called "cure" mental illness, even 4 disability. There's a prevalence of that. That's one 5 way. 6 Second is nonconformist sexual behaviour. So if you 7 happen to suggest that you're gay or you have homosexual 8 feelings, it's often used as gay correction therapy. So 9 the use of formal religious texts, informal rituals are 10 used to correct what they perceive to be nonconformist 11 sexual behaviour. 12 And, thirdly, nonconformist behaviour on the part of 13 young women and girls who are seen to be getting out of 14 line, who are seen to be too independent of mind and 15 spirit. 16 So these are some of the ways in which ritualised 17 religious abuse takes place, and that blurs into sexual 18 abuse. So we have had examples and stories of how 19 particularly -- there was a case in Slough -- this is in 20 my statement as well. There was a case in Slough where 21 a man purporting to be an Islamic scholar made a young 22 girl have sex with another man while he watched, and he 23 said that that correction was needed in order to divest 24 her of her homosexual feelings, her love for another 25 woman.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 71</p>	<p>1 We have constantly -- also, that kind of sexual 2 abuse is also combined or linked with physical abuse. 3 We have had a spate of killings of women who have been 4 beaten to death as part of that exorcism and ritual kind 5 of performance, purportedly to rid the women of demons, 6 to rid them of the spirits that they have been possessed 7 with, which makes them behave in the way they do. So 8 the physical and sexual abuse, the ritualised abuse, it 9 all blurs. So the ritual performance itself can be 10 a pretext for the infliction of sexual and physical 11 abuse, and there have been, sadly, a number of instances 12 of this, and it is accepted, and it is partly accepted 13 because many families do trust and look up to religious 14 figures. Religious priests, imams, you know, in these 15 communities do have a special privileged status of power 16 and reverence within our communities. People look up to 17 them. People trust them. 18 One of the things is that it is assumed that they 19 are imparting wisdom, that they are fountains of wisdom, 20 of knowledge, of education. Therefore, there is 21 enormous deferential culture towards these figures. So 22 when these figures say that, "In order to cure your 23 daughter or homosexual son, we need to perform these 24 rituals", families can be very trusted. 25 One of the interesting patterns that emerge from</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 72</p>

<p>1 some of these cases is the way in which these 2 performances of rituals all take place in private. 3 Often the family is excluded. So these rituals take 4 place just involving the scholars and imams, the faith 5 healer and the person they are curing. It is a very 6 private space. They exclude everybody else. And that, 7 itself, is so that the environment becomes conducive to 8 that form of abuse.</p> <p>9 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask, if I may -- I'm going to go first 10 to Ms Rattu and then Ms Patel and then Ms Hameed about 11 this -- is a fear of a racist backlash or the growing 12 Islamophobia within our society a reason why people do 13 not report child sexual abuse to authorities? Ms Rattu 14 first?</p> <p>15 MS RATTU: I think there's definitely a fear that 16 professionals won't understand the issues, won't 17 understand the complexities and the dynamics of 18 the communities that these victims come from. I think 19 that definitely prevents them.</p> <p>20 Sadly, the reality is, when they do come forward to 21 professionals, professionals don't have the confidence 22 to deal with it and will tiptoe around the issues for 23 fear of not wanting to offend or to appease communities 24 or not to kind of rile community tensions. So that 25 doesn't help either.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 73</p>	<p>1 So you have the victim coming with their fears of 2 not being understood, the professional fearing getting 3 it wrong, and what needs to happen, I think, 4 fundamentally, are two things: for victims and survivors 5 to be empowered to know that, when they do come forward, 6 they will be believed, to validate their experience -- 7 to be quite honest, victims are disclosing things that 8 some professionals have never heard of before. You 9 know, "What do you mean your family would do that 10 because you have been seen with a boy?" or "What do you 11 mean your family would do that because you choose to 12 wear that?", and it is jeans or whatever it might be. 13 So they need to be empowered to come forward.</p> <p>14 On the other hand, you have got to have the 15 professionals with the equipment, the tools and 16 resources, the knowledge, the confidence to deal with 17 it, to validate what's being said, to get it right first 18 time. Because, if you don't get it right first time, 19 the reality is that that victim will be so disempowered 20 they may go back and never come forward again.</p> <p>21 So there are two things that do need to happen.</p> <p>22 Equally, you know, when we are talking about 23 professionals, we hear often -- and I will give you an 24 example on our helpline. We had contact from a young 25 girl, a child, who was being sexually abused by her</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 74</p>
<p>1 stepfather. We had a police force contact our helpline 2 to say, "We want to convince this girl" -- who has 3 disclosed to her teacher, the teacher has told social 4 care, social care haven't been around at this point but 5 police have been around and they are now ringing us 6 after going. "We want to convince the girl that she 7 shouldn't be abused and it is not part of culture". You 8 know, it is not part of a culture. Which, for us, was 9 alarming, because, shouldn't they be safeguarding 10 a 14-year-old girl, irrespective of her culture or 11 background? I would dare to say that if she didn't have 12 the complexity of culture, we would have just dealt with 13 that as a 14-year-old girl who was being sexually abused 14 by her stepfather. They are the bare facts we are 15 dealing with.</p> <p>16 When we tried to intervene and support, we were told 17 by the officer that they wanted somebody from our 18 organisation to speak with the girl directly. So our 19 advocacy worker, Hannah, said, "Yeah, okay, happy to do 20 that. We do face-to-face support". The officer said, 21 "Oh, no, no, no, Hannah, is she white? We want somebody 22 who is Muslim to come to talk with authority". Now, the 23 reality is, you don't have to be Muslim, you don't have 24 to be female, you don't have to be from that community 25 to deal with these issues. You just need to deal with</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 75</p>	<p>1 them for what they are: simply abuse.</p> <p>2 It got a bit complicated and we agreed for one of 3 our Muslim females, just to be able to talk to the girl, 4 but by that point, the whole thing got shut down. So it 5 is about making sure that we get the response right in 6 terms of how professionals are dealing with it and our 7 key messages to young girls are that if they do come 8 forward, they will be believed, they will be validated 9 and there is help. There are options.</p> <p>10 MS SCOLDING: Ms Patel, can you tell us about the reluctance 11 to report because of racism but also immigration issues, 12 which is something that you raise within your witness 13 statement?</p> <p>14 MS PATEL: First of all, on this question of reluctance to 15 report, I can tell you for sure that there is no 16 shortage of reluctance to report by women and girls and 17 children because of fear of Islamophobia. That charge 18 of Islamophobia is being made by the very people that 19 don't want to see disclosures, that don't want to see 20 people approaching statutory bodies or bodies outside of 21 the community that they think will threaten their own, 22 you know, power and scrutinise what's going on.</p> <p>23 So we have been here before. Forty years ago, when 24 we raised issues of domestic violence, when we raised 25 issues of forced marriage and all those, you know, other</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 76</p>

<p>1 forms of gender-related violence, the charge that was 2 levelled against us -- forget anyone else -- was, "You 3 are being racist. You are raising the issues. You are 4 showing up our community in a bad light. You are doing 5 this and it is fuelling racism. It will fuel racial 6 stereotypes about our communities. It will fuel 7 a racist backlash". So now, instead of the racist 8 backlash, the charge is, "You're fuelling Islamophobic 9 backlash or a Hinduphobic backlash. You are fuelling 10 hatred and hate crimes towards our communities". Our 11 response to that is, "No. We do not want to fuel 12 racism. Anti-Muslim, anti -- any form of racism is 13 abhorrent and we need to tackle that, but that should 14 not stop us from talking about the abuse that's going on 15 in our own communities, the injustice that's going on in 16 our own communities, and the cause of racism, the cause 17 of anti-racism, will not be helped by remaining silent 18 because silence is complicity. 19 So our argument has always been that the people who 20 are charging us with, you know, fuelling Islamophobia 21 are the very people that want to see us silenced or want 22 to see the voices of survivors silenced. 23 That's the first thing. The survivors fear shame. 24 They fear dishonour. They don't fear the racist 25 backlash. That's what they come to us and tell us: "How</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 77</p>	<p>1 will my community respond? What will my parents think? 2 What will happen to my siblings, particularly female 3 siblings who need to be married and whose marriage 4 prospects will be tainted. My elderly parents, who will 5 be ostracised and vilified about me not being able to be 6 engaging or participating in community life". That's 7 what they fear and that's what we help them overcome 8 through counselling and through all our services. 9 In relation to the intersection between child abuse, 10 disclosure and immigration difficulties, yes, 11 immigration difficulties has become an enormous barrier 12 to reporting abuse, and we find that those women and 13 children who are subject to some form of immigration 14 control are going to find it particularly difficult to 15 seek support because they will always fear that, once 16 they come out in the open, their chances -- they fear 17 deportation, they fear detention, and they fear 18 destitution. 19 Some of the women who come to us -- in fact, a large 20 proportion of the women who come to us are migrant 21 women. They have fled sexual abuse from their own 22 countries and, when they come here and they're subject 23 to some kind of immigration control, usually it is with 24 the condition "no recourse to public funds" attached. 25 That means that they are economically dependent on their</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 78</p>
<p>1 families or their partners for their existence, and if 2 they leave situations of abuse, then they immediately 3 are plunged into destitution because they can't claim 4 any form of welfare benefits or the key benefits and 5 social housing, which plunges them into destitution. 6 The irony here is that, when they are in those 7 situations, often the only places they can turn to to 8 meet their basic need for food and some kind of roof 9 over their head are the religious institutions. This is 10 the added complexity, because we have had cases where 11 women have been forced to go to religious institutions 12 for some form of shelter and food, in contexts where 13 they're subject to immigration controls, and find that 14 their vulnerability is exploited in those institutions 15 by those in religious authority who then use their 16 vulnerability, their destitution, to sexually exploit 17 them, to financially exploit them. 18 So those are just some of the ways in which these 19 issues are really complicated and the way they intersect 20 and the kinds of barriers that we are seeing that are 21 erected, both internally within the community and also 22 outside the community in relation to the ways in which 23 immigration system works, access to services, austerity 24 and the way in which they all intersect to make it 25 incredibly difficult for vulnerable survivors to obtain</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 79</p>	<p>1 protection. 2 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful, Ms Patel. Chair, would 3 now be an appropriate moment to take lunch? After 4 lunch, I would like to just pick that up with Ms Hameed 5 and then I would like to move on to recommendations, so 6 what can we do to improve the situation? 7 Chair, would now be an appropriate moment for lunch? 8 THE CHAIR: Yes, of course. We will return at 1.45 pm. 9 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much, chair. Thank you. 10 (12.45 pm) 11 (The short adjournment) 12 (1.45 pm) 13 MS SCOLDING: Just before the break, we were talking about 14 the interrelationship between insecure immigration 15 status, racism and under-reporting of child sexual 16 abuse. I said that I would let Ms Hameed answer that 17 question, or say if she's got anything more to add. 18 Ms Hameed, do you have anything more to add to that 19 which Ms Rattu and Ms Patel have already said? I can't 20 see Ms Hameed, chair, and neither can you. Ah, there we 21 are. Ms Hameed? 22 MS HAMEED: Yes, just a few short points, if I may. One, 23 just off the back of what Pragna was saying about 24 immigration status, what we have seen is that 25 perpetrators, they use this whilst they are abusing.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 80</p>

<p>1 Like, letting their victims know that they can be 2 deported and they might be put in detention if they seek 3 help or support. 4 The other one was about the colour matching and race 5 and religion matching that we see in services. It's 6 very, very offensive. I think Ms Sanghera yesterday 7 said about -- and we have seen this too; certainly this 8 was my own personal experience as well -- when 9 disclosing anything that you're experiencing within the 10 community, it's very -- the likelihood that we are going 11 to want to speak to someone from our own community is 12 very slim, just because we don't know who is going to 13 maintain confidentiality, even within statutory 14 services. 15 I've trained hundreds of professionals, actually, 16 around working with BME communities, around harmful 17 traditional practices, and certainly I do see there is 18 still a fear -- I mean, I ask this question in every 19 single training session, and I have been delivering 20 training since 2014, and I've probably trained, if I was 21 to give a conservative estimate, about 600 professionals 22 around the issue of harmful traditional practices, and 23 I very clearly ask right at the beginning of 24 the training session, "How many of you are afraid of 25 allegations of racism and Islamophobia against you, as</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 81</p>	<p>1 professionals", and nearly every single time, at the 2 beginning of the training session, the majority of them 3 will raise their hands, with the odd exception not 4 raising their hands, and the hope is, by the end, that 5 they won't have that fear. We still have those 6 conversations by the end, but that is a very real fear. 7 I think what I would like to ask professionals, 8 statutory services, even government bodies, to start 9 doing, rather than having this fear of allegations of 10 racism against yourselves when you're doing your job, 11 because one of the things that I ask professionals to do 12 is just use the law. Use the law, use policies, and 13 that's it. Then there can't be any allegations of 14 racism or bigotry. 15 When you're working as a social worker or any 16 statutory service, when you're working with somebody and 17 saying, "You've done wrong here", the likelihood of them 18 kicking off is quite high. The thing that more 19 conservative religious communities have is they can make 20 allegations of Islamophobia or racism. They just have 21 that extra allegation to throw at you. I think the 22 community themselves, statutory services, government 23 bodies, anybody working with victims and survivors in 24 these communities, what they need to ask them is, "Why 25 are you not asking perpetrators if they are afraid that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 82</p>
<p>1 they are encouraging racism and bigotry within their 2 community and from the external community by their 3 misbehaviour, rather than directing that question (a) at 4 victims and survivors" -- which does happen within the 5 community -- "or (b) at women's services that have been 6 trying to tackle these issues within the community?". 7 MS SCOLDING: Thank you. That's very helpful. 8 Now turning to what can be done about this. You 9 have set out a very powerful picture about the 10 difficulties that there are in reporting, about the 11 cultural factors, about the various problems within the 12 community. Ms Rattu, if you wanted to make some 13 recommendations for change, what would they be and why 14 are you recommending what you're recommending? 15 MS RATTU: I have got two very brief recommendations, both 16 of which, I hope, go towards improving visibility of 17 these issues in religious settings, and wherever these 18 issues manifest. 19 So one of the recommendations that we would propose 20 would be for there to be a mandatory reporting 21 requirement for child sexual abuse on religious 22 institutions. 23 MS SCOLDING: Mandatory reporting. We have had lots of 24 seminars about mandatory reporting. Who should have to 25 report what to whom and what would be the nature of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 83</p>	<p>1 the allegation that would have to be reported? Would it 2 just be a suspicion? Would it be an allegation? Would 3 it be a disclosure? 4 MS RATTU: I think there would have to be a consultation on 5 that when it comes to putting the requirement into 6 place. Because I think it will vary. I don't think you 7 can use models that currently exist, for example, for 8 FGM around mandatory reporting requirements because the 9 issues are quite distinct and different and they pose 10 different challenges. So I think there would have to be 11 a consultation on it. 12 But the reason why we would suggest it is twofold. 13 We think that it would be an enabler in these settings, 14 and you would have to identify -- so where you have 15 a religious institution that's identified, it would be 16 about improving accountability in that setting to 17 safeguard, which should then attract robust procedures, 18 policies, training and awareness of these issues in 19 place. 20 Now, I'm not saying this naively. I'm not thinking 21 that, once you put these things into place, you know, 22 the picture is going to improve overnight. 23 What I am saying is that what it does is improve 24 visibility, and has a consequence of sharing a message 25 of empowerment to victims. It shifts the narrative from</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 84</p>

<p>1 one that is currently victim blaming, that where these 2 things happen, this is your fault, to, actually, there 3 is accountability and we are empowering you to come 4 forward. 5 Now, they may not come forward. I'm not naive to 6 believe they will all come forward to religious leaders, 7 but they will start to come forward, recognising the 8 shift in narrative, to other professionals, such as 9 a teacher, such as a police officer or some other 10 professional that they identify as being a safe space to 11 make such a disclosure. 12 So, for me, it is about shifting that narrative for 13 victims -- the one they currently own as being victim 14 blaming and viewing that it is their fault, trying to 15 remove some of the stigma attached to reporting. 16 I think that that will go some way towards improving 17 that. I don't know if you have any questions, but 18 I have another very brief recommendation. 19 MS SCOLDING: As far as mandatory reporting is concerned, 20 the chair and panel have heard an enormous amount of 21 evidence in a number of seminars about the concept. But 22 that was very helpful, the idea of shifting the 23 narrative in that way. 24 When you say there should be mandatory reporting, 25 that is all religious leaders should have to report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 85</p>	<p>1 sexual abuse that comes to their attention within their 2 organisations? 3 MS RATTU: Yes, I think so. I think so, and I think, with 4 that, what we will see happening or what should happen, 5 as we saw with FGM, and hopefully we will see with 6 forced marriage -- there is a current consultation on 7 whether forced marriage should be a mandatorily reported 8 matter. It is outstanding. The consultation results 9 were meant to be announced last spring. We are still 10 waiting to hear on the back of that. I think what we 11 will see is a shift in narrative and, in those spaces, 12 a shift around the dialogue and the fact that people can 13 talk about these issues and it is the start of shifting 14 that narrative. It will take some time. You know, we 15 are talking about deeply engrained attitudes, beliefs and 16 values, but it has to start somewhere, and I think it 17 starts by saying that, actually, this is wrong and we 18 need to be looking out for it and we need to be 19 protecting those that are most vulnerable from it, who 20 are children. 21 MS SCOLDING: I recognise that, but obviously given the 22 space that the three of you work in, obviously I know 23 that there is a mandatory duty to report FGM, for 24 example, and there's been a lot of debate about whether 25 or not that mandatory duty is or isn't helpful to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 86</p>
<p>1 professionals, has or hasn't worked. From your 2 organisation's experience, has the imposition of that 3 mandatory duty been useful? I know you don't work 4 directly on FGM. If you are able to give me an answer 5 to that. 6 MS RATTU: I think it's been massively helpful in increasing 7 awareness and knowledge of the issues and training and 8 ensuring that professionals are aware of it. It's been 9 hugely helpful in that respect. 10 In some respects, actually, we saw that forced 11 marriage was very much a talked-about issue, we have got 12 a Forced Marriage Unit, we have got, you know, lots of 13 awareness on it, statutory guidance. Through the 14 mandatory reporting, we almost saw the progress on the 15 agenda of FGM overtake that of forced marriage, and 16 I would say that you can link that to the mandatory 17 reporting. It made it a requirement for people to make 18 it their business to know about this issue, to protect. 19 So it's a direct consequence. I appreciate that 20 there are other arguments and discussions about how 21 valuable it has been, but in terms of awareness and 22 shifting narrative, I think there is agreement that it 23 has been exceptionally valuable to changing that 24 narrative, which I perceive, if we do the same thing 25 around this, we'll be able to start the ball rolling</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 87</p>	<p>1 with shifting narrative on that. Maybe not so much for 2 the people who are the perpetrators, but for the victims 3 who are blaming themselves for these incidents that 4 occur, that don't own that actually it is not their 5 fault. It is shifting that narrative that is incredibly 6 important. 7 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful. You said you had 8 a second recommendation. What is that? 9 MS RATTU: It would be remiss of me not to say that I think 10 there needs to be some -- and I don't know how, I think 11 there needs to be some thought about it -- improving the 12 regulation of marriages, particularly as they relate to 13 children and the detection of child marriages, ensuring 14 that they don't take place. 15 There's a clear protection gap with respect to 16 children who can be married, and registered marriages 17 only really form part of the picture and understanding 18 as to what's going on here. 19 There are many marriages that aren't registered 20 where they take place in a religious setting that we 21 don't know about. So we need to kind of take the mask 22 off that. We need to understand that a bit more. So 23 some recommendation around improving detection around 24 child marriages would be, I think, an important one to 25 highlight.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 88</p>

<p>1 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful, Ms Rattu. Ms Patel, what 2 are your recommendations to try and improve the 3 situation that you have talked to us about this morning? 4 MS PATEL: Well, I want to start by saying what we don't 5 want. 6 MS SCOLDING: Okay. 7 MS PATEL: I think it's really, really critical. The whole 8 issue of what is to be done probably deserves a whole 9 inquiry on its own. I mean, certainly a lot more 10 detailed discussion than we are able to have, some of 11 which requires more thought. So I'm not trying to sit 12 here and sort of set out the A to Zs of everything. 13 But what I am worried about is where this might head 14 and why it is important that it doesn't head in 15 a particular direction. 16 So the first thing I don't want is self-regulation. 17 We have constantly been told, when we raise these 18 issues, that the community knows best, that the 19 community can sort it out, and now that everyone has 20 brought their attention to this horrible, abhorrent 21 practice, "We will sort it out". You know, this 22 abhorrent, appalling practice has been around, everybody 23 knows it exists, but structures are in place that, you 24 know, insist -- that make sure it doesn't come out. 25 So we don't want any kind of self-regulation by</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 89</p>	<p>1 religious institutions who are inspecting and policing 2 themselves. That is very, very critical. We have 3 already had bodies that are supposed to be regulating. 4 So, for example, MINAB is a national advisory body for 5 mosques, for imams. It has set up a council to advise 6 others. Yet it's shown complete ineptitude, and, worse, 7 in setting standards, in providing leadership as to what 8 is acceptable and unacceptable in religious institutions 9 and what are the expectations and standards that should 10 be followed. Not just MINAB, the Hindu Council UK, 11 I notice it pretends that it has nothing to do with 12 safeguarding, but it is an umbrella body. And it has 13 shown nothing on its website to suggest that it, you 14 know, is encouraging or proactively informing other 15 temples affiliated to it, or religious bodies affiliated 16 to it, as to what it should be doing in relation to 17 child abuse and child protection. 18 What I'm saying is, there are these regulatory 19 bodies that have shown themselves to be inadequate, 20 unwilling, unable and inept at regulating religious 21 institutions and religious personnel within our 22 communities. So we don't want to see any kind of 23 self-regulation. 24 That means we would not want to see some kind of 25 wider external overseeing body that then delegates, you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 90</p>
<p>1 know, auditing and inspections and monitoring to 2 community institutions as the kind that -- I think it 3 was Faith Associates was suggesting. 4 MS SCOLDING: Yes. 5 MS PATEL: That is also problematic, because I see that as 6 simply self-regulation through the back door. Again, it 7 is problematic, because we are asking the very 8 institutions that are a problem to be the solution and 9 to be part of the solution. 10 So we have problems with that. I also have problems 11 with the idea that you can have, you know, a friendly 12 delegate or a friendly -- a friend in local 13 neighbourhood who can act as a mediator between some 14 kind of regulatory body and communities, because I worry 15 about the kind of mediators that are -- the consultants, 16 as Rabbi Natan Levy talked about in his evidence. He 17 talked about, you know, "We have grass-root consultants 18 who seem to have the trust and the ear of religious 19 institutions", and yet, when he was asked what did he 20 think about the fact that there is no vocabulary to talk 21 about sexual abuse and sexuality, he said that none of 22 his hundreds of consultants seem to have had a problem 23 with that. That, in itself, is hugely revealing to me, 24 and it would make me question and very suspicious about 25 what it is that these consultants -- who are these</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 91</p>	<p>1 consultants, how are they appointed, and who -- and how 2 is it that the religious institutions can -- and are 3 welcoming to them, when organisations like us, who might 4 ask for the same things, are told that we are being 5 intrusive, that we are challenging, that we are being 6 problematic ourselves, and that we are the 7 troublemakers. So that kind of delegation of 8 responsibility I call outsourcing, outsourcing of 9 protection. 10 In our organisations, we cannot -- cannot -- have 11 any faith or confidence in community institutions that 12 have posed the barriers for us being, you know, 13 responsible for policing themselves. I think that's 14 really, really concerning. 15 The third thing I would say that I have huge 16 concerns about is this idea that you can develop 17 a regulatory system that somehow is religiously 18 sensitive. I have huge problems in the way in which 19 they all talk about, "Absolutely. We need an external 20 regulation. We need inspections. We need standards, 21 but somehow it must be tweaked to absolutely take 22 account of religious sensitivities". Nobody has spelt 23 out to me what those religious sensitivities that are 24 constantly being bandied about mean. 25 In our work, when we raise issues of child sexual</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 92</p>

<p>1 abuse or wider issues around violence against women and 2 girls, and when we challenge the kind of structures that 3 put up barriers, we are told we are being religiously 4 insensitive. To what? To patriarchal norms and values 5 that we need to challenge because they endorse violence 6 against women and abuse? Because they legitimate this 7 and provide the context for all of this? To shape the 8 gender inequality that we see, the power imbalances that 9 we see? So for us, the constant mantra, "Be sensitive 10 to our religious values", is a way of saying, 11 ultimately, "Our right to manifest religion, our right 12 to freedom of religion in the way that we define it 13 cannot be trumped". And we argue that the right to 14 manifest religion is an important right, but it cannot 15 trump the rights of women and children to life and 16 liberty. It cannot. And to the right to be free from 17 inhuman and degrading treatment.</p> <p>18 So for us, when they talk about any system of 19 regulation that must be sensitive to religious values, 20 that's a codeword for saying, "Do not interfere". And 21 my worry is the earlier discussion we had about the 22 charge of Islamophobia. It is then very easy for them 23 to slip into a charge of racism and Islamophobia because 24 you question certain practices, because you question, 25 you know, the lack of responses. And so, for me, yes,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 93</p>	<p>1 religious sensitivity, racial sensitivity in the way in 2 which we all want to be able to engage with anyone in 3 any place with dignity, showing respect, but that 4 doesn't mean that you respect the abuse that's going on 5 and the way in which religion is often used to avoid any 6 kind of scrutiny.</p> <p>7 So these are some of the key things that, you know, 8 we need to bear in mind when we talk about what it is, 9 in terms of regulation and inspection, because I think 10 what Sadia said earlier, the single most important 11 barrier to statutory agencies supporting victims of 12 abuse in minority communities is the fear that they will 13 be charged with racism or Islamophobia, and, you know, 14 it is a charge that's also levelled against anyone who 15 dissents and questions.</p> <p>16 So that call to show religious sensitivity is 17 a problem. What we want to see, ultimately, is 18 a rights-based approach; not secular, not religious, 19 a right-based approach. Is this -- you know, the 20 children's rights at the heart of this, centring the 21 rights of victims at the heart of this, centring the 22 rights of BME victims who have been so forgotten, who 23 have been so neglected for so long, they need to be 24 centred at the heart of this.</p> <p>25 It worries me, these religious leaders suddenly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 94</p>
<p>1 coming to the fore, getting their act together, showing 2 the public that they have got DBS checks in place, that 3 they have got child protection policies in place. What 4 worries me is, what we're seeing is a culture of -- 5 a checklist culture developing. Is it meaningful? If 6 it is meaningful, it needs to embed all of that in 7 a wider framework of analysis of child abuse that's also 8 linked to violence against women and girls. We also 9 know that where there is child abuse, there is likely to 10 be domestic abuse, there's likely to be sexual abuse.</p> <p>11 So, you know, is there training embedded within that 12 wider framework of understanding gender equality, sexual 13 equality, rights, children's rights? All of those 14 things I think have to be part of the ingredients in 15 terms of what we look at.</p> <p>16 But in terms of mechanics, definitely I am for 17 external regulatory framework for inspections, for 18 standards on child protection, and that is able to 19 impose sanctions where those standards are breached 20 according to the level of severity, and that external 21 framework can be made up of local authorities, Ofsted, 22 Charity Commission, even some external body set up by 23 central government; some kind of form of external body 24 that does all of that.</p> <p>25 Training. Local authorities have been providing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 95</p>	<p>1 free training. It is not an accident that these people 2 have not been using the free training that's on offer.</p> <p>3 It absolutely is not an accident, because their clear 4 agenda is to prevent state intervention. That is the 5 agenda here. That's what we have to be so careful 6 about. Because, if that is the agenda, they will use 7 any excuse -- religious sensitivity, lack of resources, 8 you know, informal spaces in which we operate, poor -- 9 resource-poor facilities. All of these become excuses.</p> <p>10 They are not poor of resources. Some of these 11 institutions are rich. They are resource rich. When 12 they want to, they mobilise really fast and very quickly 13 something that fits their agenda. They have mobilised 14 around the withdrawal of parents from sex education. 15 Savvy at using social media. Able to get lawyers in 16 place. Able to navigate their way around the systems 17 when they want to. We have got to also see that some of 18 this is just pulling wool over people's eyes. This is 19 not the reality. The reality is, they don't want state 20 intervention and all the more reason to make sure that 21 there is an outside, independent, single regulatory 22 framework for monitoring, for setting standards, for 23 training and for inspections.</p> <p>24 MS SCOLDING: Thank you, Ms Patel. Ms Hameed, do you echo 25 those recommendations? Are there any other</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 96</p>

<p>1 recommendations you think this inquiry should consider? 2 MS HAMEED: I 100 per cent echo those recommendations. 3 I think that, in terms of mandatory reporting, what we 4 did find with FGM, just off the back of Ms Rattu's 5 recommendation, is that, for the first time ever, we 6 have actually got concrete statistics about FGM. 7 FGM has been against the law in this country since 8 1985, and we have only had one conviction, but what we 9 didn't have until very, very recently were concrete 10 figures. They were always estimates. Now we have more 11 concrete figures of the prevalence of this. And what we 12 did have, with the strengthening of existing laws, was 13 FGM protection orders being utilised so they didn't end 14 up in convictions, so we could do more preventative 15 work. 16 So mandatory reporting has been fantastic for us, 17 actually. 18 And in terms of Pragna's recommendations, I couldn't 19 agree more. We cannot, and must never, have 20 self-regulation. It would be dangerous. We effectively 21 already have that kind of system, where we have just 22 left these communities to themselves to, you know, 23 monitor and regulate themselves. But what we have heard 24 so far this week from every single one of these 25 organisations is that they're not getting disclosures</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 97</p>	<p>1 because they're not doing things right within their 2 communities. By leaving them to it, what we will 3 effectively be doing is sending a message to any victims 4 within these communities that, "It's all right. Carry 5 on. Just carry on with the system that you have got, 6 and we don't really care about you". As a country, what 7 we want is to see the same laws applied in the same 8 manner as you would in any other child protection 9 situation within these organisations. 10 You also heard the resistance of religious 11 organisations from today's witnesses to even display 12 posters or information about their services. 13 The other crucial thing is, if we allow 14 self-regulation of these religious organisations, it 15 could very easily swallow up and disappear existing 16 women's organisations, because, as Pragna said, they are 17 very, very resource rich. You know, women's services 18 are gradually being disappeared and religious 19 organisations are cropping up everywhere. Now, if we 20 have that -- the women that you have heard from today, 21 if something was to happen in our lives, if any one of 22 us was a victim of domestic abuse, sexual violence, 23 child sexual abuse, we would not be able to go to those 24 religious organisations for help because they don't want 25 to help women like us. The help and support around</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 98</p>
<p>1 child sexual abuse, sexual violence, domestic abuse, is 2 conditional upon secrecy -- we heard that from not just 3 the witnesses today; Ms Sanghera yesterday echoed this 4 too, that you are expected to keep these things within 5 the bounds of the community. Opening that up to the 6 wider community is seen as bringing dishonour on the 7 entire community, and that would be on the back of 8 the victim, not the perpetrator. We don't see the 9 perpetrator being blamed. It is always the victim. 10 But the support that you get is on the condition not 11 just of having the same beliefs as the religious 12 organisation, but also the condition of keeping this 13 within the bounds of the community, not engaging with 14 external services. So women like us would actually not 15 get that protection or support. 16 But I do think that we need a much, much bigger 17 discussion on how we go about regulating and monitoring, 18 and I would suggest some kind of round-table discussion 19 by a government body to have -- to figure out how we 20 move forward, because self-regulation would just be so, 21 so dangerous. 22 MS SCOLDING: That's very helpful. Thank you all very much. 23 I have no further questions for you. But if you would 24 like to wait there. We have no questions from any other 25 core participants, chair, so I pass now to you,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 99</p>	<p>1 Professor Jay. 2 Questions from THE PANEL 3 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Scolding. 4 You have indeed painted, as Ms Scolding has said, 5 a powerful picture for us, but also quite a bleak one. 6 Given your lengthy experience and apart from the 7 recommendations you have already commented on, do you 8 see any cause for optimism that children are being 9 better protected from sexual abuse in the faith 10 communities with which you're working and does that 11 imply that things have changed and there's been any 12 improvement over the piece? I would urge you, please, 13 not to repeat anything that's already been said. Thank 14 you. 15 After that, I will turn to my colleagues. 16 MS PATEL: Shall I start first? Oh, there is hope. There 17 is hope, and there is a cause for optimism too. It is 18 not meant to -- we are not trying to just portray the 19 whole thing as incredibly bleak, there is no point in 20 doing anything. The hope comes from organisations like 21 ours, because we have created spaces in our communities. 22 We have created spaces to allow not only survivors to 23 come and talk and share their experiences, but to try 24 and develop counter-narratives, counter-values, to 25 challenge some of this. That is why what Sadia said was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 100</p>

<p>1 so important. It is organisations like us. It is the 2 women and the children who are survivors who are the 3 change makers of tomorrow, who are the real drivers of 4 change. As long as we continue to ensure that there are 5 alternative spaces that are resourced to have more 6 women's organisations, autonomous women's 7 organisations -- one of the major problems at the moment 8 is that BME organisations are shrinking because of all 9 the cutbacks, and yet it is BME organisations that have 10 driven all the progressive changes that you see around 11 violence against women and children over the last 12 40 years.</p> <p>13 The laws around forced marriage, the guidance around 14 honour-based violence, domestic abuse laws, laws around 15 even protection of children, have come out of women's 16 struggles. They have come out of the challenges that 17 women have posed to community. They have come out of 18 challenges that women have posed to the state. So the 19 hope -- there is enormous hope, because 40 years ago, 20 there was nowhere for women to turn to, nowhere for 21 survivors to go to. Now, despite all our difficulties, 22 there are helplines, there are centres, there are 23 therapies, there are counselling services. But all of 24 it has been driven not by religion, but by the women's 25 organisations often operating in contexts of great</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 101</p>	<p>1 hostility and difficulties. So we need to ensure that 2 they remain funded and that they remain supported as 3 independent entities because, as long as they are there, 4 there is hope for change and bigger change.</p> <p>5 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Patel. Ms Rattu? 6 MS RATTU: Yes, just to concur with what Pragna said. You 7 know, there are more opportunities now and we are seeing 8 things change.</p> <p>9 I think that the one key thing for Karma Nirvana is 10 that we have got to keep empowering young people to come 11 forward and talk. That is absolutely critical to 12 improving visibility of these issues as they exist, but 13 also improving our understanding as to how these issues 14 manifest. So empowering and sharing those key messages 15 that enable people to come forward.</p> <p>16 That is, too, religious institutions but also in 17 those other spaces like the third sector, like 18 a teacher, like another professional to be heard. So it 19 is about empowering for me, I think, is a key message.</p> <p>20 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Rattu. Finally, Ms Hameed? 21 MS HAMEED: Yes, I do think one of the things that we could 22 do together in society is, when we have members of 23 the community coming forward and saying that there is 24 this issue within the community, what we often see is 25 people turning against that individual and, rather</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 102</p>
<p>1 patronisingly, society saying, "No, no, no, this 2 community" -- (a) infantilising them and (b) being very, 3 very protective of them and not challenging this 4 community for the issues that exist within it. And, 5 actually, I think what we need to do is be a bit braver 6 in addressing head-on some of these issues within the 7 community, challenging the perpetrators far more 8 confidently. There are so many of us that would rally 9 behind any professionals that are willing to support us. 10 You know, this fear-mongering that the community does is 11 very, very intentional to try and make you back off.</p> <p>12 We saw an attempt at that, I think, on Wednesday, 13 where one of the witnesses -- I do apologise, I can't 14 remember which one -- mentioned Prevent, and I thought, 15 "I have seen this before". They do this kind of thing 16 to instil fear and make you back off, and that's 17 completely the wrong thing to be doing, particularly 18 with such -- with an issue such as child protection.</p> <p>19 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hameed. Sir Malcolm, do you have 20 any questions? 21 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: No, thank you very much. 22 THE CHAIR: Ms Sharpling? 23 MS SHARPLING: Thank you, chair, just one, if I may, and it 24 is to any particular witness. 25 We have heard a lot during the course of this</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 103</p>	<p>1 inquiry how difficult it is on occasions to change 2 culture. Without making any comment on that, it has 3 also been said that major legislative reform would speed 4 the change of culture up. I don't know whether that is 5 right or wrong, but I would be interested in an opinion 6 as to whether that is the case.</p> <p>7 MS PATEL: Absolutely. Absolutely. It doesn't -- major 8 legislative reform on its own is not enough, but it is 9 very educative as it goes through, in terms of creating 10 awareness and rights, and awareness about what is 11 acceptable and not acceptable.</p> <p>12 So where legislative reform is needed, it is very, 13 very helpful in terms of raising awareness, in terms of 14 educating more people, and in terms of sending messages 15 and signals to the right people about coming forward and 16 not being afraid and giving evidence where needed.</p> <p>17 But, on its own, legislative reform is only part of 18 the jigsaw. You have got to also have with it a wider 19 campaigning work that helps to reach out to the 20 particularly hard-to-reach communities, to make more 21 women participate, more survivors speak out.</p> <p>22 So I think that legislative reform is critical. We 23 wouldn't have had the kind of protection measures we 24 have seen without reform around domestic abuse, control 25 and coercion, around marital rape, around, more</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 104</p>

<p>1 recently, forced marriage, honour-based violence. All 2 of these have driven cultural change because we have 3 seen not only the legal machinery working and providing 4 answers, but around it a wider public debate developing. 5 We certainly saw it in some of the work that we did 6 around battered women who kill and changing the law of 7 provocation back in the '90s, and by taking on the case, 8 by taking on that kind of reform of the law, which we 9 succeeded in, we also managed to create huge public 10 debate, even within communities. Whether they agreed 11 with it or not, there was a public debate, there was 12 a public discussion. Things were being brought out into 13 the open. And I think that is very important to drive 14 change. 15 MS SHARPLING: Thank you. Ms Rattu? 16 MS RATTU: Yes, I just wanted to add on that that we often 17 hear, don't we, from the religious settings and sectors, 18 but we don't always hear the voice being amplified from 19 victims and survivors. That bicultural conflict is 20 very, much alive and it poses real challenges to victims 21 and survivors. I think we are hearing more about their 22 testimonies and their stories which is empowering for 23 other people that are going through that as children 24 during this time. So it is about amplifying, I suppose, 25 victims and survivors' voices in as many places as we</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 105</p>	<p>1 can to drive real change. 2 We are talking about new emerging communities, and 3 it is interesting that, when you look at an individual, 4 you automatically connect them to a community or to an 5 identity, and going back to something that Fiona 6 mentioned at the beginning, it is about 7 self-identification I think being very, very important. 8 You know, we are almost lumped together as a group or 9 a collective of people, and we all kind of have the same 10 views, beliefs and values, but we need to be hearing 11 a counter-narrative for those people that have that 12 cultural conflict, that don't line up with the cultures 13 they have been conditioned to hold or even the religion 14 that they have been -- sometimes that's been forced upon 15 them. So it is about, I think, amplifying that voice so 16 that we hear actually, yeah, if you don't agree with 17 your conditioning, then there are other opportunities 18 that you can get help and that, I think, is a huge 19 enabler for more people to come forward and speak, if 20 they hear other people doing the same. 21 MS SHARPLING: Thank you. Ms Hameed? 22 MS HAMEED: So I would echo what both Pragna and Ms Rattu 23 have said. I just, if I may -- as a child, I was told 24 that the law of the country that you are in overrides 25 Islamic law. That's actually a principle of Islam.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 106</p>
<p>1 That is not being adhered to anymore by -- and that 2 shift happened because of -- I wouldn't say culture, 3 I would say religious leaders. I think -- I failed to 4 mention this earlier, and I do apologise for bringing it 5 up again, but I am -- I'm no longer a believer, but 6 I have many cultural practices that I'm very proud of. 7 I don't have many religious practices. There are some 8 wonderful parts of religion. Every religion talks about 9 peace and love, and that's wonderful. But some of 10 the harmful practices within faith groups I really, 11 really strongly believe that it's not only -- not only 12 right, but also essential to legislate against them. 13 You know, there's arguments within some faith groups 14 for FGM. We wouldn't accept that anymore. So I think 15 that where that shift isn't happening automatically, 16 utilising the law really, really helps us. 17 MS SHARPLING: Thank you very much. 18 THE CHAIR: Finally, Mr Frank? Any questions? 19 MR FRANK: Yes, if I may, please. Just this: the impression 20 we have been given from some of the witnesses from some 21 of the religious institutions so far is that they have 22 made attempts -- some perhaps quite lately -- to redress 23 an apparent gender imbalance within their institutions. 24 Now, I don't know whether that's been your experience 25 and, if it has, whether you think that's made any</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 107</p>	<p>1 difference or whether it hasn't? But I would be 2 grateful to learn whether you share the view that's been 3 expressed to us so far or whether you have a different 4 view? 5 MS HAMEED: You could probably count the number of female 6 imams on one hand, and I mean internationally, not just 7 in Britain. In terms of female faith leaders, there 8 would be a selection process. So someone like me would 9 never, ever be appointed or somebody who was more 10 liberal would be less likely to be appointed to a senior 11 position within a mosque. There would be certain things 12 that they would be looking for on their tick sheet, and 13 I think an example of that was given by Ms Sanghera 14 yesterday, who said she went into an Islamic -- I think 15 it was a mosque or an institution, a Bangladeshi 16 institution, some time ago and the two female senior 17 members -- not imams, because an imam would be quite 18 senior -- even more senior, sorry -- their faces had 19 been blacked out. It was just a shadow of a woman, even 20 in the picture. 21 I think it shows how female senior individuals 22 within these institutions would be treated. 23 I've seen other instances where there would be 24 meetings with those senior female leads and they will be 25 behind a screen -- there might be just one female in the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 108</p>

<p>1 room, by the way, who is the senior person, and they 2 would be behind a screen and all the men would be sat at 3 the table. 4 So I'm not convinced that that's necessarily going 5 to shift culture within the organisation, particularly 6 if the female that they have appointed to have a senior 7 role within that organisation is going to have the same 8 religiously conservative ideals as the men in those 9 senior roles. 10 MS RATTU: Just to add, we are certainly not seeing any 11 balance in that respect, and in terms of where you do 12 see females in those positions, they almost have the 13 same views as the male leaders in that field as well. 14 So they don't act to be an avenue of support or they are 15 not an identifiable person that a victim could 16 necessarily go to either. Those fears around judgment 17 and shame would exist when talking to a female leader 18 just as it would to a male leader. So it doesn't 19 improve accessibility, in our view, in any way. Those 20 fears are still very much real, that they would share 21 information potentially with family, putting that person 22 at more risk; that they will be judging them; that they 23 will be looking down upon them. 24 So I don't think that what you have heard is 25 entirely correct, from our experience.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 109</p>	<p>1 MS PATEL: I would concur. My view about -- I'm glad this 2 is brought up, actually, because it is an area that 3 I did want to address, because there has been a lot of 4 evidence given about how women are occupying positions 5 of, you know, status and really important positions in 6 these religious institutions. But what I would say is, 7 I would sound a word of caution, because having women 8 representatives in your religious institution doesn't 9 necessarily translate into gender equality. That's the 10 first thing. 11 These are religious institutions that are, on the 12 whole, patriarchal. They uphold patriarchal norms and 13 values. So if there are women in it, there are women in 14 it who subscribe to those same values. So having women 15 visible, on its own -- whether they are accountants or 16 finance officers or deputy, you know, directors or 17 trustees, on its own, is not enough. Of course we all 18 want to see more women, but that does not necessarily 19 translate into gender equality. That's the first point 20 I make. 21 The second point I want to make is that, actually, 22 the fact that they are having to show that there are 23 women, that they're trying to show that women are there, 24 is partly what I call an attempt at ticking the right 25 boxes, at speaking the language they want you want to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 110</p>
<p>1 hear, that they think you need to hear, that they are 2 ticking the checklist. So saying that there are more 3 women involved means nothing because none of those women 4 are women with ultimate power. 5 In those institutions, they do not have the power to 6 make final decisions or to override decisions that 7 others have made. They are simply there as showpieces, 8 often, and as a public face and to show that "Look how 9 progressive we are. Look how much we are changing". It 10 is not to say that there isn't the odd, but on the 11 whole, it's the wider institutional culture, patriarchal 12 culture, and the sheer imbalance of power that needs to 13 be tackled, not a question of whether they just bring 14 a few more women into the fold. 15 So I think that, you know, those women, until they 16 have absolute power -- what I find striking about the 17 evidence that has been given so far by all the religious 18 people is that the majority of them are men. They have 19 not sent a single woman to represent them to the inquiry 20 to give evidence on their behalf. And that, itself, for 21 me is quite revealing. It is about who, ultimately, can 22 represent an institution, and they don't see women being 23 able to do that, and they will never, and certainly not 24 women who will challenge their power and challenge the 25 ideological, the political framework within which they</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 111</p>	<p>1 operate. 2 MR FRANK: Thank you. That's all I ask. Thank you. 3 MS SCOLDING: Chair, may now be an appropriate moment to 4 take a slightly earlier break? Then, when we return, we 5 have Mr Gill and Mr Basi from two gurdwaras to come and 6 give us evidence. May we take a slightly earlier 7 afternoon break, if that is possible? 8 THE CHAIR: Indeed, Ms Scolding. But first of all, I would 9 like to thank all of the witnesses for their 10 contributions today. You can all be assured that they 11 will be very carefully considered by myself and the 12 panel. Thank you very much. 13 (The witnesses withdrew) 14 THE CHAIR: We will return at 2.50 pm. 15 (2.32 pm) 16 (A short break) 17 (2.50 pm) 18 MS SCOLDING: Mr Hughes, please could you call Mr Gill and 19 Mr Basi to affirm, please. 20 MR HARMEET SINGH GILL (affirmed) 21 MR JATINDER SINGH BASI (affirmed) 22 Examination by MS SCOLDING 23 MS SCOLDING: Good afternoon, both, and thank you so much 24 for coming to give evidence. I know, in particular, 25 that you're both doing a lot of work around the COVID-19</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 112</p>

1 pandemic, and so I know this is taking up -- this is
 2 a burden upon you. Thank you.
 3 Just a few preliminary matters. Firstly, this isn't
 4 a test of memory. If you have got any notes with you,
 5 please feel free to use them. Secondly, there is
 6 a bundle in front of you with both your witness
 7 statement and other documents. If I need to get any
 8 documents up in any detail, I will call them up on the
 9 screen, which you should be able to see. Any problems,
 10 may we use the school-based tradition of putting your
 11 hand up? Again, if I drop out at any time or you're not
 12 clear or you want to add something, please put your hand
 13 up.
 14 I am asking both of you to give evidence together
 15 because you both assist in the management of gurdwaras,
 16 so there may well be some commonality of approach. But
 17 I am going to specifically address my questions to one
 18 or other of you.
 19 The Zoom platform doesn't, in fact, enable people to
 20 overspeak, so, again, if you would like to follow up
 21 something Mr Gill has said, Mr Basi, or vice versa,
 22 hands up, please.
 23 We can stop and have a break at any time. We will
 24 be breaking in around an hour, in any event, and we are
 25 going to see where we have got to with your evidence at

Page 113

1 MS SCOLDING: Is it true, to the best of your knowledge and
 2 belief?
 3 MR BASI: Yes, it is.
 4 MS SCOLDING: Have you had an opportunity to read that
 5 witness statement recently?
 6 MR BASI: Yes.
 7 MS SCOLDING: Mr Gill, back to you. You are the general
 8 secretary of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall. Could
 9 you tell us a little bit about what the gurdwara is,
 10 what it does and how large you are?
 11 MR GILL: The word "gurdwara" translates to the "daughter of
 12 the guru. So for Sikhs, our founder was Guru Nanak Dev
 13 Ji, and today we worship our guru in the form of
 14 scripture, which contains the word of God. So the first
 15 ten living gurus bestowed the guruship to
 16 Guru Granth Sahib Ji -- that's the name of the scripture
 17 we revere and what every brother has.
 18 A gurdwara will be not just a place of worship. It
 19 is also a hub of the community. So our gurdwara in
 20 Southall is one of the oldest in Europe. When the first
 21 Sikhs came over from Punjab, where most Sikhs are from,
 22 this is in the 1950s, they typically were working class
 23 and worship was a core part of their lives, and still
 24 is. The first gurdwaras tended to be in homes. Over
 25 time, with the progress, bigger buildings were required,

Page 115

1 that time, as to whether or not we might need to sit
 2 slightly later this afternoon, but I'm hoping that we
 3 can manage to avoid that.
 4 Mr Gill, firstly, could I have your name, full name,
 5 and job title in respect of your role in the gurdwara,
 6 please?
 7 MR GILL: Harmeet Singh Gill. I'm the general secretary of
 8 Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall.
 9 MS SCOLDING: We have a witness statement from you behind
 10 tab 1 of the bundle. Can I ask you to confirm that you
 11 signed that witness statement?
 12 MR GILL: Yes.
 13 MS SCOLDING: I can't hear you as well as I would like to,
 14 Mr Gill.
 15 MR GILL: That is mine. Yes, I did sign that statement.
 16 MS SCOLDING: Thank you. Is it true, to the best of your
 17 knowledge and belief?
 18 MR GILL: Yes, it is.
 19 MS SCOLDING: Have you had a chance to read it recently?
 20 MR GILL: Yes.
 21 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, turning now to you, we have a witness
 22 statement from you behind tab 2, the last page of which
 23 is signed. Can I ask you to confirm that you signed
 24 that witness statement?
 25 MR BASI: Yes, I did.

Page 114

1 more facilities were set up. Singh Sabha Southall, our
 2 gurdwara, is now one of the biggest outside of India in
 3 terms of congregation numbers, physical facilities, the
 4 number of services we provide.
 5 MS SCOLDING: How many people would attend the gurdwara for
 6 congregational facilities on a weekly basis?
 7 MR GILL: On a typical day, where there's no celebrations,
 8 between 4,000 and 5,000 a day. Our worship services
 9 start from 3.00 am up until about 9.00 pm every day.
 10 When there are religious events, holidays, festivals,
 11 then, typically, you have more members attending. Big
 12 celebrations, you have upwards of 20,000, 30,000, 40,000
 13 people coming through the gurdwara throughout the day.
 14 MS SCOLDING: So you have 4,000 to 5,000 people coming
 15 through your gurdwara every day just for the
 16 congregational services?
 17 MR GILL: Yes.
 18 MS SCOLDING: You have also said, in effect, you run
 19 a community hub. Does that community hub include
 20 activities for children and, if so, what sort of
 21 activities do you do with them?
 22 MR GILL: Like, most gurdwaras like ours will provide things
 23 like Punjabi classes, where children come and learn the
 24 language. Some of the Sikhs will speak Punjabi and our
 25 scripture is written in Punjabi, in Gurmukhi. In

Page 116

1 addition to that, many gurdwara have (inaudible)
 2 classes, you know, after-school clubs, some may have --
 3 they will also have music classes, lessons, where
 4 children come and learn how to play an instrument. Part
 5 of our worship is through singing and using instruments,
 6 so children like to come in and learn.
 7 MS SCOLDING: Roughly how many children do you think
 8 attend -- I'm assuming all those activities are
 9 unsupervised by parents. So how many children would you
 10 say, on a weekly basis, do you have attending one or
 11 other of those activities?
 12 MR GILL: For us, a lot of our classes and a lot of
 13 the events we do, they're family orientated. Even our
 14 worship is family based. Children will come along with
 15 their parents and sit together. Even the classes,
 16 actually, we try to do things where parents can come
 17 along (a) to help with supervision, but because a lot of
 18 the things they are learning there we want them to go
 19 home and practise and continue, and often parents are
 20 quite engaged and want to be part of the children's
 21 learning. So our children's classes aren't quite like
 22 Sunday schools. They are more maybe an hour, an hour on
 23 a Saturday or Sunday morning, so the parents will be
 24 there. For us, we don't actually have classrooms. We
 25 have it in large, open areas where the parents will sit

Page 117

1 which I'm assuming they would attend with their parents?
 2 MR BASI: I'm a trustee at Guru Nanak Gurdwara Smethwick.
 3 My official role is maintenance officer. Our gurdwara
 4 was established -- our community as a gurdwara was
 5 established in 1958, and the building that we are
 6 currently in was purchased and established as a gurdwara
 7 in 1961 when a lot of people from -- Sikhs from Punjab
 8 migrated over into the Black Country and they got jobs
 9 in foundries, et cetera.
 10 So our weekly congregation is about 10,000. We have
 11 about 1,000 people come in every day and, on the
 12 weekend, that rises -- we get a couple of thousand on
 13 both the Saturday and Sunday and, just like Mr Gill
 14 said, during special events that can also rise -- the
 15 figures can rise.
 16 So we also carry out similar classes, Punjabi
 17 school, which is our main class. In that, we have about
 18 250 children who attend.
 19 MS SCOLDING: So 250 children. Again, there might be some
 20 parents there as volunteers or when the children are
 21 small, maybe 5 or 6, that you might have mum and dad
 22 with them. But then, as they get older, am I assuming
 23 that a lot of those activities, such as Punjabi classes,
 24 music classes, children would attend on their own
 25 without parents? Is that right?

Page 119

1 with them and help them as well. Because often, say,
 2 the Punjabi classes will be led by three teachers, but
 3 it is also helpful to have a few volunteers, in the form
 4 of parents, helping them.
 5 MS SCOLDING: I understand having parents helping them. But
 6 if I, for example, were to come along and say, "I'd
 7 quite like my daughter to come to your Punjabi class but
 8 I can't stay with her", I'm assuming you would say,
 9 "Yes, that's fine", or would you insist that a parent
 10 came along?
 11 MR GILL: Normally, the first two lessons, we'd ask them to
 12 stay so they get adjusted, but beyond that, no, of
 13 course, if the parent cannot stay, they would be welcome
 14 to leave the child there under the supervision of
 15 the teachers.
 16 MS SCOLDING: I'm not sure you answered my question as to
 17 how many children you think might use these services on
 18 a weekly basis.
 19 MR GILL: Probably 600 to 700, for our facility anyway.
 20 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, can I turn to you and ask you the
 21 same thing. I understand your gurdwara is, again, one
 22 of the largest and oldest. You are based in Smethwick,
 23 which is in the West Midlands. Can you tell me roughly
 24 how large your congregation is and what activities you
 25 would do with children other than religious worship,

Page 118

1 MR BASI: Yes. You are quite right. So parents can attend
 2 when -- only to -- as a volunteer role. But then they
 3 have to go through a procedure to become a volunteer,
 4 and then have the relevant DBS checks carried out, and
 5 then they -- usually, the classes are run by the actual
 6 teachers.
 7 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, you also have a role in the
 8 Sikh Council UK, as I understand it. Is that right?
 9 MR BASI: Yes.
 10 MS SCOLDING: Could you tell us a little bit about whether
 11 or not -- I understand the Sikh Council UK is a sort of
 12 umbrella body. Is it an umbrella body for all
 13 gurdwaras, is it a voluntary organisation or, if you
 14 want to run a gurdwara, do you have to be a member of
 15 the Sikh Council UK?
 16 MR BASI: No, the Sikh Council was founded in 2010. You
 17 don't have to be a member of it, but we are more than
 18 willing to provide help and support to any gurdwara and
 19 membership to any gurdwara who would like to become
 20 a member of the Sikh Council. It is more of an
 21 organisation who approaches or deals with issues in
 22 regards to the Sikhs in the United Kingdom who -- you
 23 know, in regards to approaching the government on
 24 certain things, and we also share good practice and, you
 25 know, if there is anything that we need to share amongst

Page 120

<p>1 gurdwaras, you know, it's sort of done via this 2 platform. But, again, not all gurdwaras are members of 3 the Sikh Council, so, yeah. 4 MS SCOLDING: As far as the Sikh Council UK is concerned, 5 has that produced, promulgated, been involved in any 6 guidance on child protection, either in gurdwaras or 7 other organisations that Sikhs -- that the Sikh 8 community might organise for children? 9 MR BASI: Not actively, no. If someone does approach us, 10 our process would realistically be to put them in touch 11 with their local authorities. For example, every sort 12 of local area usually has a voluntary council for 13 organisations -- for charities, who normally can guide 14 organisations with their safeguarding and policies. 15 MS SCOLDING: So if somebody were to approach you -- do you 16 know, has any gurdwara ever approached you or any 17 organisation about safeguarding and child protection 18 issues, as far as you're aware? 19 MR BASI: No. I have only been in term for the last year. 20 So in the last year, no. 21 MS SCOLDING: I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I didn't ask you what 22 your precise role was on the Sikh Council. I said you 23 had a role. If you would like to say your term, what 24 office you occupy? 25 MR BASI: I'm the secretary general.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 121</p>	<p>1 MS SCOLDING: I'm assuming that means you're the boss? 2 MR BASI: Yes, one of them. 3 MS SCOLDING: One of them. Okay. I say that with a note of 4 caution. Thank you very much, Mr Basi. 5 MR BASI: We're a collective leadership, rather than -- 6 MS SCOLDING: All right. Just to sort of double-check for 7 people who aren't aware, there is no hierarchy in 8 Sikhism; it is genuinely -- every gurdwara is 9 independent and there is no kind of central board of 10 control or management, is there? 11 MR BASI: No. 12 MS SCOLDING: So, Mr Gill, maybe back to you. You're on the 13 management committee, I'm assuming, and you're also on 14 the board of trustees, is that right, of your gurdwara? 15 MR GILL: Yes, on the board of trustees, 21 of them, and I'm 16 one of them. 17 MS SCOLDING: 21. Gosh, that's quite a large board of 18 trustees. I'm not going to talk about how meetings 19 would run with that many people. Of those, can you tell 20 me, what is the gender balance between men and women? 21 MR GILL: We currently have two females and the rest are 22 males. 23 MS SCOLDING: That's despite the fact that Sikhism is 24 famously equality driven, in terms of both men and women 25 can perform roles of religious leadership. Isn't that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 122</p>
<p>1 right? 2 MR GILL: Yes, correct. So from a theological point of 3 view, there is no restriction on what men and women can 4 do. They are completely equal. But, unfortunately, 5 cultural practices -- well, currently today -- has meant 6 gurdwara management has largely been male-dominated. 7 But that is changing. A generation ago, it would have 8 been completely men. Today, you are seeing, 9 increasingly, more women getting involved, if not on 10 trustee levels, certainly management roles, all in 11 helping the day-to-day running. 12 MS SCOLDING: Do your trustees -- are they recruited -- do 13 they have DBS checks? How are they recruited? Are they 14 elected? How does that work? 15 MR GILL: Our recruitment is through elections. We have 16 a membership. Anyone who fulfils the criteria of our 17 constitution, so living within a certain area as a Sikh, 18 is able to become a member and they then go ahead and 19 elect 20-odd people every three years. We have a loose 20 criteria, so someone has to be a member, they have to be 21 a practising Sikh and one condition is they must have 22 had an enhanced CRB check. During every election cycle, 23 we will have probably set up an election scrutiny panel 24 who will ensure all those who are contesting the 25 elections fulfil the criteria, one of them being having</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 123</p>	<p>1 undertaken a CRB check. 2 MS SCOLDING: Does anyone on your trustee board or 3 management committee have particular responsibility for 4 child protection? 5 MR GILL: That role isn't codified within the constitution, 6 and then it is notoriously difficult to get our 7 constitutions amended, because they require ADMs and 8 a lot of politics goes on. But we and a lot of other 9 gurdwaras have obviously implemented safeguarding 10 policies and appointed safeguarding officers in line 11 with best practice. So we have one dedicated officer, 12 Navraj Cheema, who has completed the required training. 13 I have also, since knowing I was coming, also completed 14 the training just so I understood it a lot better. 15 MS SCOLDING: So you have an officer. Is that someone who 16 is a trustee as well or -- 17 MR GILL: He is an official trustee. 18 MS SCOLDING: He is also the safeguarding officer. Do you 19 employ a member of staff as a child protection officer 20 or a safeguarding officer as well, or does that not 21 happen? 22 MR GILL: No, that happens as well. We have got staff who 23 have trained as part of the job role to be involved on 24 the safeguarding side. But the ultimate responsibility 25 is in the hands of that trustee.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 124</p>

<p>1 MS SCOLDING: Do you, as the board of trustees -- we have 2 got a safeguarding policy from you. Do you, as a board 3 of trustees, review that, look at that, on an annual 4 basis? Have you ever discussed it in any trustee 5 meetings? 6 MR GILL: I -- (overspeaking). 7 MS SCOLDING: (Overspeaking) -- meeting after you got the 8 letter from us, when I spoke to you and we discussed it. 9 MR GILL: Prior to that, it is reviewed annually. It 10 wouldn't be with 21 people, for obvious reasons. It is 11 notoriously difficult to discuss things in detail. 12 Actually, of the 21, probably most -- they would 13 struggle to understand how the policy works and what 14 they need to be looking at. So it is normally a core 15 team, who understand and know what to do, who would be 16 reviewing it. That would normally include myself, the 17 president, other senior office bearers would be the ones 18 reviewing and making sure it's fit for purpose. 19 MS SCOLDING: You have just said your trustees might 20 struggle to understand the policies and to review them. 21 Do you think that's something which is acceptable, given 22 that they are the leadership of what is a very large -- 23 I mean, an enormous religious organisation on any 24 religious basis, do you think that all your trustees 25 should undergo some form of child protection training so</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 125</p>	<p>1 they are able to provide some degree of challenge as to 2 what goes on on a day-to-day basis? 3 MR GILL: Certainly. In this day and age, there should be 4 no reason why they cannot, and should not, have some 5 form of training and understanding. I think the 6 challenge has been a lot of trustees have tended to be 7 sort of first generation, second generation, who are now 8 retired, so 60-plus. English hasn't always been their 9 strong point. 10 So it's worked in the past, but now, as younger 11 trustees come on board and get involved in the running 12 of gurdwaras, there is now a shift towards more of them 13 being involved in things like safeguarding, being 14 involved in (interference). So if you had this 15 conversation ten years ago, we would have probably 16 struggled to find any trustee who had had the requisite 17 training. 18 MS SCOLDING: Now you have had the requisite training, as 19 had somebody else. But, in reality, you have had this 20 training because you're being asked to give evidence 21 and, therefore, you wanted to make yourself more aware 22 of the issues that might arise, I'm assuming. 23 MR GILL: Yes. So personally, that was it for me, but as an 24 institution, I have been involved from 2017 and I know 25 my predecessors actively always had someone taking</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 126</p>
<p>1 a proactive role, ensuring we had practice, we were 2 reviewing things, we weren't just ticking boxes for the 3 sake of it. We know we are a high-profile organisation 4 with a lot of people coming through our doors. There 5 have been incidents in the past, so we have to make sure 6 there is someone actively doing something about it. 7 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask, who leads religious -- I understand 8 the individuals who lead religious worship are Granthis. 9 Are they people who are employed by you on a full-time 10 basis, are they peripatetic, are they people who are 11 members of the congregation and you all take it in turns 12 to be a Granthi, how does that work? 13 MR GILL: There isn't a priest class or a clergy class 14 within the faith. The word "Granthi" is given to that 15 individual who reads the Granth. So our guru, 16 Guru Granth Sahib Ji, is in the form of scripture and 17 the Granthi is the one who leads prayers. So anyone can 18 be a Granthi provided they can read. Typically, now, 19 because -- so in the past, anyone could lead services, 20 but now, because folks are working, we need to have -- 21 we have a day of, from 3.00 am to 9.00 pm, constant 22 services going on, we employ a team of Granthis who work 23 shifts, effectively, from morning to the evening. They 24 are paid positions. 25 MS SCOLDING: Do they have any child protection training?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 127</p>	<p>1 MR GILL: Yes, they have all undergone -- so they have all 2 undergone training and constantly refreshed every couple 3 of months, with a new course. 4 MS SCOLDING: Who runs that training? Is that something 5 that's organised internally or do you get an external 6 provider in to provide training for you? 7 MR GILL: We get an exam provider. We are fortunate 8 enough -- so in the past, we would have gone to one who 9 speaks English, a native Brit, to deliver it and then 10 have someone translate, which is obviously, naturally, 11 difficult because, a lot of our Granthis, English isn't 12 the first language. 13 Since I have been involved, we have managed to get 14 a Punjabi-speaking trainer who is involved in the 15 community and understands sort of cultural norms and can 16 integrate that into the training that he provides. 17 MS SCOLDING: I'm asked to ask you a question on behalf of 18 Southall Black Sisters, who you may or may not be aware 19 of, but they are an organisation which are close to you 20 geographically. They have identified that, at some 21 stage, you have had an organisation called SAS come to 22 give you training, and they are saying -- they ask me to 23 ask you that they consider that it has a Sikh 24 fundamentalist political agenda and, therefore, is it 25 well placed to provide training in respect of child</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 128</p>

1 protection?
 2 MR GILL: SAS have been involved, but they aren't
 3 responsible for providing training to our staff or our
 4 volunteers. I do understand the connotation of
 5 the question and why they have asked. They have come in
 6 and given talks on issues they deal with to the
 7 congregation and (overspeaking) --
 8 MS SCOLDING: Right. What issues do they deal with?
 9 MR GILL: Sorry?
 10 MS SCOLDING: What issues do they deal with? I'm so sorry,
 11 Mr Gill, for interrupting you.
 12 MR GILL: There had been quite an increasing trend of
 13 grooming young Sikh girls, something we heard about
 14 within the community, and they, I think, took a lead on
 15 helping, in those particular cases -- typically, it
 16 would be teenage girls who were groomed because of their
 17 faith, they were targeted because they were Sikhs, by
 18 other groups or members from other faiths and SAS felt
 19 there was an underlying, sort of, race element to it and
 20 felt the authorities weren't doing enough or, when
 21 parents were seeking help, they were -- there were
 22 barriers. So the SAS have done quite a bit of work on
 23 those particular cases. With us, they have come in just
 24 to raise the case. They normally (interference) -- we
 25 have allowed them to deliver talks to parents to say,

Page 129

1 volunteers, and they will all have undergone at least
 2 level 1 and some level 2 training, and all of them would
 3 have had CRB checks as well.
 4 Some of the activities we have -- so we are also
 5 a Duke-of-Edinburgh-accredited provider, so in that
 6 connection we have reporting obligations there. Again,
 7 all trainers in that would equally have undertaken the
 8 training and the relevant checks.
 9 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much. That's very helpful.
 10 Mr Basi, how does your gurdwara work in terms of,
 11 firstly, in respect of your management committee?
 12 What's the gender balance like for that?
 13 MR BASI: We have 21 members, just like --
 14 MS SCOLDING: (Overspeaking), yes.
 15 MR BASI: -- Southall. Out of that, three are females at
 16 the moment and 18 are males.
 17 MS SCOLDING: Again, given that it is a religion which
 18 famously practises equality and was founded on the basis
 19 of gender equality, that seems to be a high proportion
 20 of men to women. Is that for religious reasons or for
 21 cultural and social reasons?
 22 MR BASI: To be honest, since I have been involved, and
 23 I think since the new skill set of British-born
 24 committee members have come on board, we have actively
 25 been encouraging females to come on board and, you know,

Page 131

1 "Here is the cases we are aware of", without actually
 2 identifying the folks. So their parents were aware of
 3 what was going on in society.
 4 MS SCOLDING: We obviously heard Ms Patel from Southall
 5 Black Sisters who shared her concern about those
 6 organisations, saying that they might be part and parcel
 7 of the continuing patriarchal need for control within
 8 the context of that society. So I suppose the
 9 question -- the follow-up question she asks me to ask
 10 you is, why didn't you go and see her, who has had
 11 40 years' worth of experience working in honour-based
 12 violence and grooming and ask her to come in and talk to
 13 your parents, if this was a concern and a problem, given
 14 that she is just down the road?
 15 MR GILL: I certainly will now. I think -- I guess we
 16 haven't made full use of all the resources around us.
 17 Now that I know they work in that arena, we certainly
 18 will be in touch with her.
 19 MS SCOLDING: In respect of your volunteers who teach your
 20 classes, or your teachers who teach your classes, do
 21 they have any child protection training or
 22 qualifications from the volunteers, from the parents who
 23 might help out, to everyone else and, if so, what sort
 24 of child protection training do they have?
 25 MR GILL: So our classes are typically the paid teachers or

Page 130

1 come on to the management committee.
 2 So rather than our usual number of two, we have
 3 managed to get it up to three, and hopefully, in the
 4 coming years, we can increase that number and, you know,
 5 at least get half, if not more.
 6 MS SCOLDING: Is there anyone on your management committee
 7 who has specific responsibility for child protection or
 8 safeguarding?
 9 MR BASI: Yes. Our assistant general secretary and our
 10 Education Secretary.
 11 MS SCOLDING: Are those two individuals men or women?
 12 MR BASI: One is a female, the other one is a male.
 13 MS SCOLDING: Have they had any training in child
 14 protection?
 15 MR BASI: Yes. They have both got level 2 in child
 16 safeguarding.
 17 MS SCOLDING: Have your other trustees done any child
 18 protection training at all?
 19 MR BASI: Some have, and some are still pending.
 20 MS SCOLDING: As far as your Granthis are concerned, are
 21 they employed or are they volunteers? How does that
 22 work?
 23 MR BASI: The Granthis are employed.
 24 MS SCOLDING: Again, have they had child protection
 25 training?

Page 132

1 MR BASI: Yes. We have had one change, but three of them
 2 have had their child protection training.
 3 MS SCOLDING: I didn't ask Mr Gill this, but I am going to
 4 ask you this: do your Granthis have anything to do with
 5 children? Are they seen as figures of reverence within
 6 your community? Do they provide spiritual advice or
 7 other advice or do they literally just lead prayers?
 8 MR BASI: Just lead prayers.
 9 MS SCOLDING: If you had a problem in the Sikh community,
 10 you wouldn't necessarily go and see the Granthi and ask
 11 him for his advice?
 12 MR BASI: No.
 13 MS SCOLDING: It is just because, obviously, in some
 14 religious communities, that would be what one would do.
 15 As far as your teachers and your volunteers, have
 16 they all had training in child protection run by
 17 yourselves?
 18 MR BASI: Yes, they have.
 19 MS SCOLDING: Who runs that training? Is that something
 20 that's run in-house or do you have an external trainer
 21 that provides that?
 22 MR BASI: It is external, and currently we have been
 23 liaising with the Sandwell Safeguarding Board -- I can't
 24 remember the full name for it.
 25 MS SCOLDING: Sandwell Child Safeguarding Partnership would

Page 133

1 since 2017?
 2 MR BASI: No. It's up for review now.
 3 MS SCOLDING: Who reviews it?
 4 MR BASI: The trustees will. They get advice from our local
 5 bodies, for example, the SCVO or the NCVO, and get --
 6 MS SCOLDING: The SCVL or NCVL. It would be very useful for
 7 us to know what that acronym means?
 8 MR BASI: SCVO is the Sandwell Council of Voluntary
 9 Organisations and the NCVO is the National Council of
 10 Voluntary Organisations. We are still in the process of
 11 that, because, on the NCVO website, for those that are
 12 members, they do provide templates and sort of guidance
 13 of how to develop a child protection policy.
 14 MS SCOLDING: Your policy, having looked at it -- I mean,
 15 it's got the bare bones of things there, but it's quite
 16 basic, if I may be permitted to sort of say that.
 17 The other thing I wanted to ask is, is this
 18 disseminated? Who sees this? Is it something which
 19 just stays in a file or is it up around the gurdwara or
 20 is it circulated to various people? Who sees it and how
 21 do they get to see it?
 22 MR BASI: It is up on our notice board and it is also given
 23 to staff and it is available in our policies and
 24 procedures folder which is available in our information
 25 office.

Page 135

1 be the new word for it, yes.
 2 MR BASI: We have been liaising with them and they have been
 3 providing some training. Like I said, the pending
 4 training, which was supposed to be completed in March
 5 but then, obviously, the lockdown happened and it's
 6 still pending.
 7 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, can I ask you now about your policies
 8 and practices. So we have got a copy of your
 9 safeguarding policy. It seems to be a little out of
 10 date because it makes no reference to any what I would
 11 call the most up-to-date form of guidance. It is behind
 12 tab 5 of the bundle. Danny, would you mind getting it
 13 up? It is GNG000002_001. If you wouldn't mind getting
 14 up _002, please. It makes reference, for example, in
 15 the third paragraph down, to what to do if you're
 16 worried a child is being abused, which is from 2003.
 17 That's quite an out-of-date reference to statutory
 18 documentation. Do you know when this was written and
 19 how long ago it was updated?
 20 MR BASI: It was written in 2015, and then last updated
 21 in -- sorry, it was adopted in 2017.
 22 MS SCOLDING: Then it says "Date for review: 30/11/2019".
 23 This is GNG000002_009. That's the little box at the
 24 bottom there, Danny, if you wouldn't mind. Has it been
 25 updated? Has anybody had a look at it, reviewed it,

Page 134

1 MS SCOLDING: Is it up in English and Punjabi or just
 2 English?
 3 MR BASI: No, it is up just in English, not in Punjabi.
 4 MS SCOLDING: Is that not a slight problem -- Mr Gill, I am
 5 going to ask you about that afterwards -- which is, all
 6 these policies seem to be written in English. Now,
 7 I understand why you would have given us the English
 8 versions. That is a very sensible thing to do. But
 9 given that you're saying that quite a lot of your
 10 volunteers, your trustees, might have Punjabi as their
 11 first language, a lot of them may be elderly, might not
 12 have a very good level of written English, I'm just
 13 wondering why this isn't a policy that wasn't translated
 14 into Punjabi for the use of your congregation?
 15 MR BASI: I think it is something that we should get done.
 16 MS SCOLDING: Mr Gill, can I just check, your policy is,
 17 again, the version we have been given is written in
 18 English. That's not a surprise. Is there a version in
 19 Punjabi and is it -- where is your policy -- your policy
 20 is behind tab 5. Chair and panel, it is GUR000002_001.
 21 Again, that's a procedure which was reviewed in November
 22 last year, and it does appear to be a more up-to-date
 23 policy than Mr Basi's policy in terms of the reference
 24 it makes and the issues that it raises.
 25 In particular, can we look at _004 and _005, which

Page 136

<p>1 sort of sets out the sort of abuse and how you might be 2 able to spot it, et cetera, et cetera. 3 Is this something which is translated into Punjabi? 4 Should it be? 5 MR GILL: The full document certainly should. It isn't at 6 the moment. We have disseminated a summary, 7 particularly of these particular ones, that we gave out 8 during the training to all the staff, to the volunteers 9 who are on there, just because this is the kind of thing 10 we wanted them to be aware of. 11 MS SCOLDING: You have indicated in your witness statement, 12 Mr Gill, that you are having an external safeguarding 13 review. Could you tell us a little bit about who is 14 doing this when and what is their role? 15 MR GILL: We engaged with -- her name is Jaspal Gill. She 16 worked with the Ealing CVS for a number of years as the 17 lead on safeguarding. She is from the community and 18 speaks the language. She got involved with us I think 19 early last year. She has been responsible for 20 delivering the training as well as helping us review our 21 policies and working to help translate some of 22 the documents, so we can disseminate them and make them 23 a bit more effective. 24 MS SCOLDING: Is this something -- I hate to say this, but 25 was this engagement prompted by the receipt of a letter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 137</p>	<p>1 from us or was it something that has been spontaneously 2 decided upon? 3 MR GILL: No. We have actually -- we started work with 4 external sources for most of our training a long time 5 ago, just recognising we don't have all the skill sets 6 within the gurdwara, within the trustees. So even for 7 our health and safety, food hygiene, et cetera, we tend 8 to outsource and get, effectively, experts in who know 9 the field. 10 MS SCOLDING: You have talked -- Mr Basi, can I ask you 11 a question about training and training of people -- does 12 anyone who volunteers, who works with children, have to 13 attend training? 14 MR BASI: Yes. 15 MS SCOLDING: Is that training delivered in English or in 16 Punjabi? 17 MR BASI: It is in English and translated into Punjabi. 18 MS SCOLDING: Is it not possible to get first language 19 Punjabi trainers with the relevant level of expertise? 20 MR BASI: I think sometimes it can become a bit difficult 21 trying to get hold of someone who can deliver training 22 in Punjabi. It would be a great help because, 23 obviously, they would know both languages, so they kind 24 of could cover both. But, at the moment, we just get 25 someone in who delivers it in English and we just</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 138</p>
<p>1 translate it to the persons attending. 2 MS SCOLDING: You said to me earlier that your Granthis had 3 undergone compulsory child protection training. Has 4 that changed since your witness statement? Because I'm 5 just looking at paragraph 26 of your witness statement, 6 which is GNG000001_005, which says: 7 "Our Granthis are not required to undertake 8 compulsory child protection training." 9 Did I mistake your answer to that question, or would 10 you like to consider your answer to that question again? 11 Paragraph 26. Do you want to have a look at it on 12 screen, Mr Basi? 13 I think earlier you said that your Granthis had 14 received child protection training. I might be wrong 15 about that, in which case, I apologise. I just wanted 16 to clarify that, to be clear about what your answer is. 17 MR BASI: No. They are not required to, as such, where it 18 was not sort of a policy to do so. But we have, in 19 delivering training to trustees, to volunteers, and all 20 employees, we -- we kind of go through a couple of 21 training packages with everyone, one being first aid, 22 basic first aid, the second one being level 1 23 safeguarding for children, and then another one being 24 fire marshalling and -- the last one, I can't remember 25 the last one. Sort of basic training that they should</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 139</p>	<p>1 have. But it's not compulsory, but we do invest in 2 a training programme. 3 MS SCOLDING: So your Granthis could come along and wouldn't 4 necessarily have any child protection. You say: 5 "We obtain character reference checks from their 6 previous organisations to ensure they lead an exemplary 7 life and are respectable individuals." 8 MR BASI: Yes. 9 MS SCOLDING: I'm not entirely clear what's meant by "an 10 exemplary life and respectable individuals". What does 11 that mean? 12 MR BASI: In the past, in their past places of work, they 13 have not had any issues which sort of brought them or 14 the organisation into disrepute. We want to see that, 15 you know, they have been good employees and they have 16 not had any issues which would be any cause of concern. 17 MS SCOLDING: Would they have a DBS check? 18 MR BASI: Yes, they have all been DBS checked. 19 MS SCOLDING: Is that a basic DBS check or the enhanced DBS 20 check? Because you can only get the highest level of 21 DBS check if individuals have -- undertake regulated 22 activity, ie, they spend a certain amount of time 23 unsupervised with children on a weekly basis. Would 24 Granthis meet that criteria at the moment, do you think? 25 MR BASI: All of our volunteers and staff who are employed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 140</p>

1 at the gurdwara that come into contact with -- they are
 2 teaching at the gurdwara are checked for -- enhance
 3 checked by the DBS.
 4 MS SCOLDING: Mr Gill, turning back to yourself, other than
 5 the training from SAS, have you commissioned or
 6 proactively sought out any training to give to parents
 7 and children about child protection within the context
 8 of your gurdwara, given your role as a community hub?
 9 MR GILL: Definitely. So the SAS was just one organisation
 10 that reached out to us and wanted to deliver on what
 11 they know and what they have experienced.
 12 As an example, every year, we typically have
 13 children's camps in the summer, a week long, parents
 14 drop the kids off in the morning. You know, they will
 15 have a range of activities, and on that syllabus, we
 16 will dedicate time for the local (inaudible) from the
 17 police or from the council, who will come along and talk
 18 to the children and deliver a talk or a lecture on
 19 things like grooming, things like being safe online.
 20 There will be one session with parents there as well,
 21 and talk to them -- normally, I think, a community
 22 liaison officer or the appropriate one from the local
 23 police.
 24 So we have worked with the police, we have worked
 25 with the SAS. There are one or two small organisations,

Page 141

1 MR BASI: Yes.
 2 MS SCOLDING: Is that the only time you have ever run any
 3 training sessions for parents and children about child
 4 sexual abuse?
 5 MR BASI: In recent times, yes.
 6 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask firstly you, Mr Basi, and then
 7 I will ask the same question to Mr Gill: if an
 8 allegation -- firstly, have you ever had any allegations
 9 of child sexual abuse made or reported to you at the
 10 gurdwara, as far as you're aware?
 11 MR BASI: Not directly, no. What we did have is what I've
 12 mentioned in my statement.
 13 MS SCOLDING: Which is the Facebook post, which is
 14 paragraphs 45, 46 and 47. 44 to 47. Danny, would you
 15 mind getting up GNG000001_007-008, please.
 16 A post had been uploaded onto a Facebook page which
 17 identified that there had been some form of sexual
 18 assault and that the Sikh -- the SAS, which is an
 19 organisation we have talked about with Mr Gill, was
 20 taking the lead on the case, and then, at paragraph 45,
 21 you said -- you phoned and said, "What's going on here?
 22 Nobody has told us anything about this? What is going
 23 on and why haven't you contacted the police?" Could you
 24 tell us what happened next?
 25 MR BASI: I contacted the SAS, whose lead is mentioned, and

Page 143

1 I think Sikh Helpline as well, who have come in and
 2 delivered talks to the congregation on the main stage as
 3 well when parents are there.
 4 MS SCOLDING: So when have you had these talks? Because
 5 I understand from your witness statement there was an
 6 incident which took place of an alleged sexual assault
 7 in 2016, I believe, between two young people, shall we
 8 say, on the gurdwara's premises. Was it instituted
 9 after that, before that or has this been more recent?
 10 MR GILL: No, we have always had this as far back as I can
 11 go. So the annual camps we do are an opportunity where
 12 children and parents are there together. It is an easy
 13 way to deliver these talks. We have always known there
 14 are issues within the community and so we try to use
 15 those as an avenue to deliver these talks, to deliver,
 16 I suppose, training to parents and children, and I think
 17 it typically happened at a lot of the gurdwaras I know
 18 of where they have children's camps, they will deliver
 19 a small element of this kind of training to the
 20 children.
 21 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, I understand at your gurdwara you
 22 have had the NSPCC come in very recently, at
 23 paragraph 52 of your witness statement, to provide some
 24 e-safety courses. This is GNG000001_009. Two sessions
 25 at the gurdwara about child online safety.

Page 142

1 I didn't get an answer that satisfied me. He told me
 2 that the police weren't aware of it. So I took it upon
 3 myself to contact the police and I have given reference
 4 to it. But the police also told me they had not
 5 received any -- they have not been notified of any
 6 allegation at the gurdwara.
 7 MS SCOLDING: So other than this allegation, about which we
 8 don't really know anything, and it came from a Facebook
 9 post and you sought to investigate and couldn't really
 10 get much further, there have been no other allegations
 11 made as far as you are aware?
 12 MR BASI: No.
 13 MS SCOLDING: I suppose the follow-up question is, would you
 14 be aware? What the women who all came to give evidence
 15 to us this morning said, who have all been involved in
 16 various forms of the South-Asian community, is that the
 17 last thing anybody would do, if they have been the
 18 subject of child sexual abuse, is tell anyone in the
 19 religious organisation. Do you agree with that,
 20 Mr Basi, that that has tended to be the way that your
 21 community have not wanted to really disclose those
 22 things?
 23 MR BASI: It might have been in the past when we had the
 24 generation issues, just like Mr Gill mentioned earlier.
 25 However, as the generation has changed and we have got

Page 144

<p>1 more people coming who are born and bred in the 2 United Kingdom, the staff that we have got in the 3 offices, we want people to be -- to find them 4 approachable and all the staff that do sit in our 5 office, our admin staff, are all females, so if there 6 was an issue, realistically, our complaints policy does 7 highlight that people should -- on a first occasion -- 8 come to our office. 9 MS SCOLDING: Would you then investigate it, or what would 10 be the step? If an allegation were to take place, what 11 would happen practically in the context of the gurdwara? 12 MR BASI: Realistically, it would be reported to the 13 committee, the president, the general secretary. It 14 would be reported to the police. In our situation, it 15 would be reported to the Charity Commission and to our 16 local safeguarding board. 17 MS SCOLDING: Does everybody know that's what's meant to 18 happen? Would you always refer something out to outside 19 agencies, to the local safeguarding board, to the 20 police, or would you attempt to deal with it internally 21 through the use of internal mediation within the 22 community? 23 MR BASI: No. I will be quite honest with you. If it was 24 a dispute amongst members of congregation over a certain 25 issue, then, yes, we would try to resolve the dispute or</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 145</p>	<p>1 try to mediate. However, if a serious allegation like 2 this does come about, then it needs to go straight to 3 the police or to the relevant authorities. 4 MS SCOLDING: Mr Gill, same for you. What would happen if 5 an allegation were made? What happened in 2016 when an 6 allegation was made? 7 MR GILL: That particular one was before my time, and I did 8 try to get as much information about it from my 9 predecessor. Effectively, in that case -- I will just 10 refresh my memory -- 11 MS SCOLDING: You mention this at paragraph 20 of your 12 witness statement. 13 MR GILL: In that one, again, the SAS, the other 14 organisation, made the general secretary at that time 15 aware of a potential grooming case. My predecessor then 16 went ahead and informed the police. The allegation was 17 that a young male had abused another male on one of our 18 sites. That did proceed to prosecution. The trial was 19 scheduled, but then, later, the witnesses failed to 20 attend. So not much came from it. 21 MS SCOLDING: I don't know how much you know about the case, 22 but do you think the witnesses may have failed to attend 23 because of difficulties -- you know, the taboo nature of 24 what we are talking about? You know, it is male-on-male 25 sexual violence, which I would imagine, in your</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 146</p>
<p>1 community, might be considered to be more taboo even 2 than male-on-female sexual violence. 3 MR GILL: That's certainly possible and may have played 4 a factor in this particular case. In terms of taboo, 5 yes, there is certainly -- there is the sort of honour 6 system, that's quite commonly talked about, but things 7 are changing, especially now we are sort of 8 the third/fourth generation of Sikhs in the UK. It is 9 openly spoken about. We do speak about it on our stages 10 in our gurdwaras about sexual abuse. In this particular 11 case, maybe the male-on-male aspect of it did prevent 12 the victim attending court. It is unfortunate, but yes. 13 MS SCOLDING: You talked about honour, roughly. We heard 14 a lot about honour and shame this morning, and in some 15 of the other evidence that we have been given and, as 16 well, that the sort of religious and social elements of 17 your community are all bound up with each other. 18 Would you agree, Mr Gill, that issues around shame 19 and honour within the Sikh community can lead to harmful 20 cultural practices or have led to harmful cultural 21 practices, such as honour-based killings, honour-based 22 abuse, forced marriages and sexual abuse? 23 MR GILL: In a nutshell, I would agree. It's driven by 24 cultural practices more than religious ones. 25 MS SCOLDING: I'm so sorry, your voice is dropping in and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 147</p>	<p>1 out. Would you mind -- I'm terribly sorry, I'm going to 2 ask you to lean forward. I know why you're not because 3 you don't want to look as if you're looming, but would 4 you mind? 5 MR GILL: Yes. I think, in a nutshell, that does exist. 6 The cultural practices, more so, drive the shame and 7 honour element rather than religious beliefs. I guess 8 it was more common certainly a decade or so ago. Now 9 you probably find it more prevalent in, say, first 10 generations who have just come to the UK rather than 11 those who are established and living sort of third or 12 fourth generation. 13 MS SCOLDING: Do you agree, however, that although the guru 14 preached total equality, and that was one of the sort of 15 remarkable things about Sikhism when it was first 16 founded, that it is, or it could be, perceived by some 17 as being quite a patriarchal culture? 18 MR GILL: No, I wouldn't, because -- so a lot of our beliefs 19 and a lot of our teachings stem from what the guru says, 20 but also we rely on historical events, so the things 21 that happened with the gurus and their families and 22 women and children at the time. They, sort of, are what 23 drive our moral code. I sort of touched upon our code 24 of conduct, and that's as a result of changing norms and 25 what's acceptable and what's legal and what's right.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 148</p>

<p>1 MS SCOLDING: I suppose the question, however, is, you have 2 identified, yourself, that, until very recently, it 3 seems to me you're probably from a new generation, shall 4 we say, who are becoming trustees now, that they tended 5 to be quite elderly people, Punjabi might be their first 6 language. Do you think that, therefore, within your 7 community and within the gurdwara they would have 8 replicated their views on things like keeping things 9 within the community, not telling people about sexual 10 abuse and they would have consciously, or unconsciously, 11 translated unhelpful approaches and attitudes towards 12 child sexual abuse within the context of your gurdwara? 13 MR GILL: That is a real possibility, definitely, especially 14 amongst the older generation who ran a lot of gurdwaras 15 until recently. It is slowly changing, the mind-set is 16 changing, and that's a result of fresh new faces coming 17 in who understand issues better. I am 30 years old, so 18 I have grown up here and understood the kind of 19 pressures children go through -- I've gone through the 20 schooling system here, the education system here -- 21 whereas the trustees who were educated in India in 22 Punjab didn't have that first-hand experience and 23 probably would have struggled and, of course, brought 24 across those cultural norms there which aren't -- you 25 know, aren't now fit for purpose here.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 149</p>	<p>1 MS SCOLDING: So it is likely -- I mean, I think an example 2 was given of women in the family being complicit and 3 saying, "Well, you can't report that", or, "You've just 4 got to see that as acceptable", or, "Please don't tell 5 anyone". Would you say that that's something that was 6 common and is it still common? 7 MR GILL: I have heard of cases in the past historically. 8 My first-hand experience -- I can give one which I think 9 happened after I'd submitted my statement. 10 We were approached by a family whose daughter -- 11 I think she was about 14 or 15 -- had been groomed at 12 school. It was a sexting case. They had reported it to 13 the police; rightly so. But they came to us, as 14 a gurdwara, because they felt there hadn't been enough 15 action or weren't taking it as seriously as they wanted 16 to, and they came to us because they -- not to provide 17 pastoral support or counselling support; rather, to put 18 pressure on the local police. They just assumed we had 19 good links with our local MP and politicians and the 20 superintendent, which we did. 21 We put in a -- we spoke to the superintendent 22 saying, "A member of our congregation is very concerned, 23 they feel their child's case hasn't been looked into and 24 we would like you to take it seriously because it's 25 having a big impact on that child and that family".</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 150</p>
<p>1 But, at the same time, we used it as an opportunity to 2 signpost the family towards other organisations. So our 3 Sikh helplines and Sikh counsellors could provide 4 counselling to that particular child. 5 MS SCOLDING: Again, what you are saying -- what you have 6 just said to me, Mr Gill, it could be interpreted that 7 you have quite a lot of power in terms of you can get to 8 see the MP, you can get to see the superintendent, you 9 are able to engage in that power. Do you think you've 10 done enough to really use that power to deal with the 11 issue of child protection and child sexual abuse within 12 that community? Could you use that power to try and 13 really stamp out this practice? 14 MR GILL: Absolutely, 100 per cent. The fact that this 15 inquiry is in place now shows the problem of child abuse 16 is still going on and we should all use all the means we 17 can to stamp it out or at least cut it down. I think, 18 in the past, gurdwaras didn't appreciate the power they 19 had or didn't make full use of it. We are certainly 20 trying to and definitely we can do more. There is no 21 doubt about it. 22 MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much, Mr Gill. 23 Chair, I note the time. It is 3.50 pm. I think 24 I have probably got around 15 more minutes, but I would 25 appreciate a brief five-minute break, as I've got no</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 151</p>	<p>1 doubt Mr Gill and Mr Basi would. Would it be 2 acceptable, and then we sat slightly later today? 3 THE CHAIR: Yes, we can do that. 4 MS SCOLDING: If we could have five minutes. Thank you very 5 much. 6 (3.50 pm) 7 (A short break) 8 (3.55 pm) 9 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, just to pass to you, we have heard 10 evidence from a number of women's organisations this 11 morning that still talk about concepts of shame and 12 honour being mixed up with sexual purity are still 13 significant problems within the South-Asian community, 14 including the Sikh community, and create a barrier to 15 reporting and disclosing child sexual abuse. Do you 16 agree that that is still the case? 17 MR BASI: There may have been in the past. Again, I have to 18 keep referring to the generational issues. Because, as 19 we have come on board, we have tried to implement 20 policies, we have tried to put procedures into place to 21 ensure that, you know, there is more accountability and 22 approachability in gurdwara and, you know, people should 23 feel safe, people should feel that, you know, they can 24 approach people and, you know, it should be a nice, safe 25 environment for everyone.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 152</p>

1 But if there are -- and, you know, I presume
 2 there's -- well, you've got quite a lot of information
 3 about it, that in the past there may have -- well, there
 4 has been a sort of stigma around this, about the shame
 5 and -- but I think, as we are sort of growing and we are
 6 getting into, you know -- we are sort of developing our
 7 procedures and policies, you know, I think it is
 8 lifting, and people are coming to terms that they need
 9 to be a bit more open about certain things, and, you
 10 know, the only thing that we can obviously do is, you
 11 know, encourage and provide that training for people
 12 to -- I suppose provide that sort of -- that confidence
 13 in them that, you know, they should be able to, you
 14 know, speak openly about certain issues and, you know,
 15 not to sort of hold back if there is an issue, you know,
 16 speak about it and bring it to the relevant person's, or
 17 people's, attention so that action can be taken.
 18 MS SCOLDING: What have you done, as a gurdwara, to try and
 19 break those barriers down to try and get people to speak
 20 out, to try and listen to victims? Have you done
 21 anything proactively?
 22 MR BASI: Not around child sexual abuse, we haven't.
 23 I mean, you know, we have done on certain issues like,
 24 for example, domestic violence, we have covered -- you
 25 know, we have worked with Black Country Women's Aid, we

Page 153

1 constructively do to try and address the issue of child
 2 sexual abuse?
 3 MR BASI: Okay. What we could do is put in a template of
 4 measures that gurdwara could adopt all over the
 5 United Kingdom and maybe even set up some sort of
 6 scrutinising committee or board or person who deals with
 7 safeguarding or -- on the community side of things; get
 8 people involved who have got a relevant background in
 9 children's safeguarding and get them to help us develop
 10 policies and procedures in regards to child sexual abuse
 11 or children's safeguarding in gurdwaras.
 12 MS SCOLDING: If there were to be some kind of external
 13 registration for the activities you perform with
 14 children, if there were to need to be some kind of
 15 external registration and meeting a set of minimum
 16 standards imposed by an external state body, whether
 17 that's the local authority, the Charity Commission, the
 18 DfE, would you have any objection in principle to that?
 19 MR BASI: I wouldn't have any objection in principle.
 20 However, I think the first step, maybe give the
 21 opportunity -- well, maybe give an organisation like
 22 ourselves the opportunity to implement policies and
 23 procedures and to overlook it, you know, in gurdwaras
 24 and see how that works first.
 25 MS SCOLDING: Mr Gill, same question to you: what do you

Page 155

1 have lit up purple to promote Domestic Violence Month
 2 in October. We light up purple to sort of -- because,
 3 you know, again, that was an issue, and to create more
 4 awareness and also mental health. That was another
 5 thing. So we are slowly, in that process, trying to get
 6 people out that these -- realistically, they shouldn't
 7 be classed as a taboo subject. We need to be open about
 8 them and, if there are issues, we need to address them
 9 rather than ...
 10 MS SCOLDING: Do you still think that talking about sex,
 11 sexuality, is a taboo subject within your community, or
 12 is it something which is much more freely discussed,
 13 including issues of consent, capacity?
 14 MR BASI: Yes, I'm sure there's areas where it still is, you
 15 know -- there still are issues where people aren't
 16 opening up enough, yes.
 17 MS SCOLDING: Can I ask, obviously you have a very powerful
 18 position in respect of the Sikh Council. Do you think
 19 that the Sikh Council should take a more proactive role
 20 in dealing with issues around child protection and in
 21 particular child sexual abuse?
 22 MR BASI: Yes, I think we should.
 23 MS SCOLDING: So what are you going to do? Not to put you
 24 on the spot or anything, but to put you on the spot.
 25 What can you see that you, as the Sikh Council UK, could

Page 154

1 think gurdwaras should or the Sikh community should or
 2 could do to try and improve understanding and awareness
 3 of child sexual abuse? I will ask you that question
 4 first, Mr Gill?
 5 MR GILL: Certainly use gurdwaras as a platform to signpost
 6 people towards where they can seek help, should they
 7 need it. We can use the gurdwaras, as we already do, to
 8 actually talk about the subject.
 9 You mentioned talking to people at Black Sisters,
 10 which I certainly will after this, inviting them in. We
 11 do that on other issues. Mr Basi has talked about
 12 mental health, physical well-being, et cetera. We
 13 always get folks in to talk about those issues off our
 14 stage to the congregation. Truth be told, in thinking
 15 about it now, reflecting on it, we certainly can do more
 16 when it comes to child sexual abuse, bringing in those
 17 experts to deliver talks to parents, to children,
 18 raising the issues.
 19 I think it's been discussed in our questioning and
 20 before, the issue of taboo and not being able to talk
 21 about certain subjects. I certainly wouldn't ever have
 22 an issue with anyone raising any issue, however
 23 culturally insensitive it is, because I recognise a lot
 24 of our congregation is now very well integrated in UK
 25 society, and actually a lot of the kids talk about all

Page 156

<p>1 the issues that are happening.</p> <p>2 Parents sometimes can be really strict, but I know,</p> <p>3 having gone through that generation, actually children</p> <p>4 are very clued on and are very active. So we have to</p> <p>5 talk about it in the gurdwaras. If we don't, well,</p> <p>6 there isn't any other forum for -- especially for</p> <p>7 Sikh Punjabi parents to understand and learn about it.</p> <p>8 MS SCOLDING: What would your view be about some form of</p> <p>9 external regulator who would say, "Right, you have to</p> <p>10 meet certain minimum standards in the activities you</p> <p>11 perform with children"?</p> <p>12 MR GILL: That's a very sensible approach. Almost, in my</p> <p>13 mind, it's kind of like Ofsted reviewing schools. We're</p> <p>14 undertaking activities, so an external body that looks</p> <p>15 after particularly areas around children, certainly</p> <p>16 I would welcome it, and I'm keen to work with them, and</p> <p>17 certainly implement any practice guidance they come up</p> <p>18 with. But at the same time, we would be keen to work</p> <p>19 with them in developing the guidance that's applicable</p> <p>20 and functional for --</p> <p>21 MS SCOLDING: Other than understanding the way that worship</p> <p>22 takes place, the particular way in which prayers might</p> <p>23 be led or the theological basis for saying that child</p> <p>24 sexual abuse is wrong, is there anything other than that</p> <p>25 which isn't sort of generic good practice across the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 157</p>	<p>1 board? Is there anything which is Sikh-specific which</p> <p>2 people would need to know about before they could</p> <p>3 deliver safeguarding training appropriately?</p> <p>4 MR GILL: From a theological point of view, no, nothing. It</p> <p>5 is wrong. It is immoral. And there is nothing above</p> <p>6 that.</p> <p>7 It is more the intricacies and practicalities in the</p> <p>8 way our worship services are performed. So we are</p> <p>9 family orientated: children and parents sit together.</p> <p>10 There is never a need for a child to ever be alone with</p> <p>11 a Granthi or any worker from the gurdwara per se. Other</p> <p>12 than the teaching, which would happen in classrooms or</p> <p>13 in a hall environment -- and that's where sort of the</p> <p>14 generic good practice comes into it.</p> <p>15 I guess what would be good as well is, reviewing the</p> <p>16 way we worship, is actually identifying have we missed</p> <p>17 something. Having an external set of eyes might spot</p> <p>18 something that we haven't. I probably think we have</p> <p>19 captured all sides when it comes to the worship side,</p> <p>20 but you never know.</p> <p>21 MS SCOLDING: Do you think there should be an obligation,</p> <p>22 a compulsory obligation, for you to report allegations</p> <p>23 of abuse that come to your attention -- you, the</p> <p>24 trustees of your organisation -- to the police or to the</p> <p>25 local authority?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 158</p>
<p>1 MR GILL: Absolutely. We already have a legal obligation to</p> <p>2 report certainly to the police and raise serious</p> <p>3 incident reports to the Charities Commission as they</p> <p>4 arise.</p> <p>5 MS SCOLDING: Mr Basi, same question to you: how would you</p> <p>6 feel about the imposition of a mandatory duty, enforced</p> <p>7 by the way of criminal law, for you to refer cases to</p> <p>8 the police or to local authorities that came to your</p> <p>9 attention?</p> <p>10 MR BASI: Absolutely. I absolutely agree with that.</p> <p>11 MS SCOLDING: Thank you. Thank you both very much. I have</p> <p>12 no further questions for you, and I don't think there</p> <p>13 are any additional questions I am asked to ask on behalf</p> <p>14 of anybody else.</p> <p>15 If you would just like to wait here, the chair and</p> <p>16 panel may well have some questions for you. Thank you.</p> <p>17 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Scolding. I have no questions,</p> <p>18 but I will ask my colleagues. Mr Frank?</p> <p>19 MR FRANK: Yes, I have one question, please, for Mr Basi.</p> <p>20 Can you tell me, Mr Basi, when your child protection</p> <p>21 policy was last reviewed? If it helps you, it is your</p> <p>22 exhibit number 1 on page 19. That might help you.</p> <p>23 MS SCOLDING: Danny, just maybe to try and help,</p> <p>24 GNG000002_009. Is that the correct page, Mr Frank?</p> <p>25 MR BASI: It was last reviewed in 2017. We haven't reviewed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 159</p>	<p>1 it since.</p> <p>2 MR FRANK: I wanted to ask you next, then, you said it was</p> <p>3 due for review on 30 November last year. Did that not</p> <p>4 happen?</p> <p>5 MR BASI: No. It's not been reviewed, no.</p> <p>6 MR FRANK: Can you help us as to why?</p> <p>7 MR BASI: Sorry, I have not got an answer for that. It's</p> <p>8 just not been reviewed. It is up for review. It is</p> <p>9 something that we are working with the -- with our legal</p> <p>10 team and the Charity Commission for reviewing it. But</p> <p>11 it's not been reviewed.</p> <p>12 MR FRANK: Thank you.</p> <p>13 THE CHAIR: Ms Sharpling?</p> <p>14 MS SHARPLING: No, thank you, chair.</p> <p>15 THE CHAIR: And Sir Malcolm?</p> <p>16 PROF SIR MALCOLM EVANS: No, thank you.</p> <p>17 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We have no further</p> <p>18 questions. I'd like to thank the witnesses for their</p> <p>19 evidence today.</p> <p>20 MR BASI: Thank you.</p> <p>21 (The witnesses withdrew)</p> <p>22 MS SCOLDING: Thank you, chair. We have no further evidence</p> <p>23 for today, something which I suspect you will be pleased</p> <p>24 about.</p> <p>25 May we resume again at 10.30 am on Monday?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 160</p>

1	THE CHAIR: Yes, indeed. We will do that. Thank you very	
2	much.	
3	MS SCOLDING: Thank you very much.	
4	(4.10 pm)	
5	(The hearing was adjourned to	
6	Monday, 18 May 2020 at 10.30 am)	
7		
8		
9	I N D E X	
10		
	MS PRAGNA PATEL (affirmed)1	
11		
	MS NATASHA RATTU (affirmed)1	
12		
	MS SADIA HAMEED (affirmed)1	
13		
	Examination by MS SCOLDING1	
14	Questions from THE PANEL100	
15	MR HARMEET SINGH GILL (affirmed)112	
16	MR JATINDER SINGH BASI (affirmed)112	
17	Examination by MS SCOLDING112	
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
	Page 161	

A				
A3 3:22	63:23 69:2,3,5	21:18 22:7,8,18	admitting 47:8	76:23 101:19
abhorrent 77:13	70:20,21 71:17	22:18 56:21	ADMs 124:7	108:16 123:7
89:20,22	71:18 72:2,2,8,8	84:16 85:3	adolescence 40:25	126:15 134:19
ability 35:3 61:8	72:11 73:8,13	152:21	adopt 155:4	138:5 148:8
able 6:22 16:16	76:1 77:14 78:9	accountable 58:18	adopted 134:21	agree 18:19 45:13
47:19 48:1 54:23	78:12,21 79:2	accountants	adult 18:25 39:18	56:12 97:19
61:7,17 65:4	80:16 83:21 86:1	110:15	62:22 65:18	106:16 144:19
76:3 78:5 87:4	90:17 91:21 93:1	accurately 65:14	adults 18:11 64:1	147:18,23 148:13
87:25 89:10 94:2	93:6 94:4,12	accused 41:23	advice 5:3 13:10	152:16 159:10
95:18 96:15,16	95:7,9,10,10	accuser 41:23	23:8 26:25 27:3	agreed 76:2
98:23 111:23	98:22,23 99:1,1	achieving 6:2	45:19 133:6,7,11	105:10
113:9 123:18	100:9 101:14	acronym 135:7	135:4	agreement 87:22
126:1 137:2	104:24 137:1	act 42:4,4 62:23	advice/advocacy	Ah 80:20
151:9 153:13	143:4,9 144:18	91:13 95:1	5:18	ahead 1:4 123:18
156:20	147:10,22,22	109:14	advise 5:1 90:5	146:16
absence 47:15	149:10,12 151:11	action 150:15	advisory 90:4	aid 139:21,22
50:3	151:15 152:15	153:17	advocacy 5:4 7:2	153:25
absolute 111:16	153:22 154:21	actions 54:5	75:19	aimed 5:18
absolutely 3:16	155:2,10 156:3	active 157:4	advocate 5:1,21	alarming 41:1
8:15 10:7 28:16	156:16 157:24	actively 30:12	21:5	75:9
38:11 49:20 50:5	158:23	121:9 126:25	advocating 21:4	alcohol 60:22
63:18 92:19,21	abused 11:11 29:6	127:6 131:24	affect 30:20 37:18	alignment 32:6
96:3 102:11	29:15,17 30:8	activities 116:20	37:20	alive 105:20
104:7,7 151:14	38:1,5,8 39:19	116:21 117:8,11	affiliated 90:15,15	allegation 82:21
159:1,10,10	47:3 74:25 75:7	118:24 119:23	affirm 1:12 112:19	84:1,2 143:8
abuse 4:24 5:10,11	75:13 134:16	131:4 141:15	affirmed 1:13,14	144:6,7 145:10
5:13,15,19 6:7,7	146:17	155:13 157:10,14	1:15 112:20,21	146:1,5,6,16
6:10,12,18,18 7:4	abusers 42:15	activity 140:22	161:10,11,12,15	allegations 27:25
7:11 8:3,8,12,14	abusing 80:25	actual 35:13 39:22	161:16	41:8 42:9 43:16
9:1 10:6,9,10,14	abusive 24:25	120:5	afraid 19:1 42:24	81:25 82:9,13,20
10:15,16,22 11:6	46:14 66:14 70:3	add 31:2 39:10	81:24 82:25	143:8 144:10
11:9,10,24 12:11	accelerated 43:1	46:1 80:17,18	104:16 121:21	158:22
12:14,18 13:4	accept 45:6 107:14	105:16 109:10	after-school 117:2	alleged 142:6
18:9 19:12 21:2	acceptable 90:8	113:12	112:7,23 114:2	allow 1:24 7:3
21:13 23:3 28:9	104:11,11 125:21	added 79:10	age 30:6 45:5 46:5	98:13 100:22
29:4,22,24 30:2	148:25 150:4	addition 117:1	59:10,14,18 60:2	allowed 14:9
30:12,19,19 31:9	152:2	additional 53:12	60:17,20 61:6,10	129:25
31:15 32:10,11	accepted 68:9	55:1 159:13	64:5,7,13,14 65:8	allude 65:5
37:16,22,23	72:12,12	address 7:1 110:3	67:3 68:7,8,13,23	alluded 63:4
39:20 40:2,5,14	access 19:19 49:24	113:17 154:8	68:24,25 126:3	alternative 14:22
40:20 41:2 42:3	49:25 50:6 51:1	155:1	agencies 94:11	101:5
42:9,9,12 43:16	51:6 79:23	addressing 1:7	145:19	amended 124:7
44:11 45:1,6,20	accessibility	103:6	agenda 18:5 87:15	amount 6:21 47:21
47:20 48:23 49:2	109:19	adhered 107:1	96:4,5,6,13	85:20 140:22
49:15 50:7 51:2	accessing 7:20	adjourned 161:5	128:24	amplified 105:18
51:14 53:9,9	accident 31:25	adjournment	ages 64:22	amplifying 105:24
56:25 58:24 59:2	96:1,3	80:11	ago 8:19,19,20 9:9	106:15
59:3 61:3,4	account 92:22	adjusted 118:12	26:2 48:12 66:23	analysis 95:7
	accountability	admin 145:5		analyst 63:12

announced 86:9	approachable 145:4	associated 28:16	106:4 107:15	balik 68:13
annual 125:3	approached 23:8	Associates 26:3,6	autonomous 14:16	ball 87:25
142:11	121:16 150:10	91:3	14:23 101:6	BAME 10:10
annually 125:9	approaches 120:21 149:11	assumed 72:18	autonomy 35:2	bandied 92:24
answer 25:9 58:21	approaching 76:20 120:23	150:18	52:24	Bangladesh 64:12
80:16 87:4 139:9	appropriate 38:21	assumes 58:14	available 62:5	Bangladeshi 5:9
139:10,16 144:1	38:25 80:3,7	assuming 45:12	135:23,24	108:15
160:7	112:3 141:22	57:16 117:8	avenue 109:14	bar 54:13
answered 118:16	appropriately 30:24 158:3	118:8 119:1,22	142:15	bare 75:14 135:15
answers 105:4	area 6:7,10,25 7:5	122:1,13 126:22	avoid 94:5 114:3	barrier 19:6 26:19
anti 77:12	9:6 16:2 110:2	assurance 27:16	avoidance 56:14	28:3 31:18 78:11
Anti-Muslim	121:12 123:17	assured 112:10	aware 17:5 63:10	94:11 152:14
77:12	areas 6:20 7:15	atmosphere 34:13	87:8 121:18	barriers 6:1,3 7:19
anti-racism 77:17	20:18 117:25	attached 40:7	122:7 126:21	9:3,4,14,21,25
anybody 2:10,11	154:14 157:15	78:24 85:15	128:18 130:1,2	10:1 13:14 30:22
10:22 59:9 82:23	arena 22:19	attempt 41:2	137:10 143:10	47:14,17 53:12
134:25 144:17	130:17	43:21 103:12	144:2,11,14	79:20 92:12 93:3
159:14	argue 21:22,25	110:24 145:20	146:15	129:22 153:19
anymore 107:1,14	33:25 43:24	attempted 30:11	awareness 16:19	based 40:18 43:10
anyone's 68:17	57:18 93:13	attempting 43:15	84:18 87:7,13,21	117:14 118:22
anyway 66:6	18:15,21 57:10	attempts 42:5,25	104:10,10,13	Basi 112:5,19,21
118:19	77:19	51:12 107:22	154:4 156:2	113:21 114:21,25
apart 100:6	arguments 87:20	attend 67:19 116:5		115:3,6 118:20
apologies 21:3	107:13	117:8 119:1,18	B	119:2 120:1,7,9
apologise 38:13,15	arranged 37:22	119:24 120:1	b 83:5 103:2	120:16 121:9,19
38:16 103:13	arranging 67:16	138:13 146:20,22	B-A-L-I-K 68:19	121:25 122:2,4,5
107:4 139:15	art 69:10	attended 65:24	back 3:2 31:1 36:4	122:11 131:10,13
appalled 67:16	Asia 20:16	attending 116:11	40:21 46:14	131:15,22 132:9
appalling 89:22	Asian 8:17 9:11	117:10 139:1	49:21 57:2,14	132:12,15,19,23
apparent 107:23	asked 16:10 26:25	147:12	64:1 70:25 74:20	133:1,8,12,18,22
appear 136:22	91:19 126:20	attention 86:1	80:23 86:10 91:6	134:2,7,20 135:2
appease 73:23	128:17 129:5	89:20 153:17	97:4 99:7 103:11	135:4,8,22 136:3
applicable 157:19	159:13	158:23 159:9	103:16 105:7	136:15 138:10,14
applied 98:7	asking 20:9 60:17	attitudes 7:3 86:15	106:5 115:7	138:17,20 139:12
appointed 51:23	60:17 64:7 82:25	149:11	122:12 141:4	139:17 140:8,12
52:5 53:3 58:17	91:7 113:14	attract 84:17	142:10 153:15	140:18,25 142:21
92:1 108:9,10	asks 130:9	attribution 32:23	background 12:13	143:1,5,6,11,25
109:6 124:10	aspect 147:11	auditing 91:1	29:14 75:11	144:12,20,23
appointing 21:19	assault 142:6	austerity 35:22	155:8	145:12,23 152:1
appointment	143:18	79:23	backgrounds 5:8,9	152:9,17 153:22
65:24	assert 5:22	authorities 43:5	15:5 17:11,11	154:14,22 155:3
appreciate 87:19	assist 113:15	60:13 73:13	18:1	155:19 156:11
151:18,25	assistance 5:5 23:8	95:21,25 121:11	backlash 22:22	159:5,10,19,20
appreciative 21:8	assistant 132:9	129:20 146:3	24:21 73:11 77:7	159:25 160:5,7
approach 94:18,19		159:8	77:8,9,9,25	160:20 161:16
113:16 121:9,15		authority 41:22	backward 56:17	Basi's 136:23
152:24 157:12		58:8 75:22 79:15	56:19,19	basic 7:20 79:8
approachability		155:17 158:25	bad 77:4	135:16 139:22,25
152:22		automatically	balance 109:11	140:19
			122:20 131:12	

basically 12:22 27:6	big 116:11 150:25	99:19 120:12,12	British-born	51:17 63:12 66:6
basis 8:22 29:8	bigger 99:16 102:4	155:16 157:14	131:23	71:19,20 104:6
116:6 117:10	115:25	bogus 16:3	broach 48:17	105:7 129:24
118:18 125:4,24	biggest 116:2	bones 21:16	brother 115:17	139:15 143:20
126:2 127:10	bigotry 82:14 83:1	135:15	brothers 52:18	146:9,15,21
131:18 140:23	bill 65:1	born 145:1	brought 33:8 44:8	147:4,11 150:12
157:23	Birmingham	boss 122:1	89:20 105:12	150:23 152:16
battered 105:6	50:15	bottom 134:24	110:2 140:13	cases 33:12,12
battling 46:12	bIsexual 7:25	bound 25:17,18	149:23	61:14,15 62:19
bear 94:8	bit 14:10 26:1	147:17	building 119:5	66:5 70:19 73:1
bearers 125:17	44:21 57:9 67:22	bounds 99:5,13	buildings 115:25	79:10 129:15,23
beaten 72:4	76:2 88:22 103:5	box 134:23	bundle 2:25 113:6	130:1 150:7
becoming 56:8	115:9 120:10	boxes 110:25	114:10 134:12	159:7
149:4	129:22 137:13,23	127:2	bundles 2:14,19	Casey 7:14 8:9 9:7
beginning 81:23	138:20 153:9	boy 30:6 74:10	burden 113:2	Casey's 8:16
82:2 106:6	bizarre 60:23	boyfriend 54:18	business 87:18	caste 58:1
behalf 111:20	black 1:9 2:24	boys 16:7	businesses 27:21	catalyst 30:3
128:17 159:13	4:22,25 5:2,4	brand 54:2,21	buy 60:21	category 62:24
behave 33:14	17:1 18:4 66:18	branding 54:5	buys 57:25	cater 17:3
34:11,22 39:15	119:8 128:18	braver 103:5		cause 32:25 46:17
52:25 72:7	130:5 153:25	breached 11:19	C	54:7 77:16,16
behaviour 70:4,25	156:9	14:20 95:19	call 29:19 66:15	100:8,17 140:16
71:6,11,12	blacked 108:19	break 2:12,13	68:12 69:12 70:5	caused 11:14
behaviours 52:2	blame 32:23 34:19	24:13 38:21,23	92:8 94:16	38:22 55:6
66:14	blamed 32:19,19	38:25 39:5,8	110:24 112:18	causes 40:10
belief 3:6 4:1,16	42:12 99:9	80:13 112:4,7,16	113:8 134:11	caution 110:7
59:4 114:17	blaming 32:23	113:23 151:25	called 53:19 58:12	122:4
115:2	36:12,15 37:3	152:7 153:19	128:21	celebrations 116:7
beliefs 99:11	39:11 85:1,14	breaking 113:24	calls 16:19,20	116:12
106:10 148:7,18	88:3	breaks 2:10	campaign 50:10	cent 97:2 151:14
believe 28:14	bleak 100:5,19	bred 145:1	50:13,17,18,25	central 95:23
51:19 62:14 85:6	blow 69:15	breeding 61:2	58:25 59:11	122:9
107:11 142:7	blowing 70:1	bridge 13:3	campaigning 5:25	centred 94:24
believed 74:6 76:8	blurs 71:17 72:9	brief 83:15 85:18	104:19	centres 101:22
believer 107:5	BME 5:4 6:1 12:15	151:25	camp 141:13	centring 94:20,21
belt 37:5	12:20 81:16	briefing 64:10	142:11,18	certain 6:21 30:8
benefits 79:4,4	94:22 101:8,9	briefly 58:22	capable 54:4	34:11 52:2 70:24
best 3:5,25 4:16	board 31:20,21	briefs 86:15	capacity 62:22,23	93:24 108:11
23:13 26:13	122:9,14,15,17	brilliantly 44:14	154:13	120:24 123:17
54:11 89:18	124:2 125:1,2	bring 23:17 41:22	captured 158:19	140:22 145:24
114:16 115:1	126:11 131:24,25	56:18 61:14	care 16:16 75:4,4	153:9,14,23
124:11	133:23 135:22	111:13 153:16	98:6	156:21 157:10
bestowed 115:15	145:16,19 152:19	bringing 30:14	careful 8:6 67:24	certainly 9:13 58:6
better 16:16 22:16	155:6 158:1	54:4 99:6 107:4	96:5	58:18 64:2,7
100:9 124:14	bodies 76:20,20	156:16	carefully 112:11	69:8,21 70:19
149:17	82:8,23 90:3,15	Brit 128:9	carpet 30:20	81:7,17 89:9
beyond 118:12	90:19 135:5	Britain 7:15 8:20	carried 59:3 120:4	105:5 109:10
bicultural 105:19	body 90:4,12,25	50:23 108:7	carry 98:4,5	111:23 123:10
	91:14 95:22,23	British 7:20	119:16	126:3 130:15,17
			case 7:9 48:15	

<p>137:5 147:3,5 148:8 151:19 156:5,10,15,21 157:15,17 159:2 cetera 50:21 60:22 119:9 137:2,2 138:7 156:12 chair 1:3,5 38:23 38:25 39:1 80:2 80:7,8,9,20 85:20 99:25 100:3 102:5,20 103:19 103:22,23 107:18 112:3,8,14 136:20 151:23 152:3 159:15,17 160:13,14,15,17 160:22 161:1 challenge 6:8 7:7 21:4 23:19 24:15 25:1 35:15 93:2 93:5 100:25 111:24,24 126:1 126:6 challenged 6:1 challenges 84:10 101:16,18 105:20 challenging 6:3 7:2 21:9 35:24 51:8 92:5 103:3 103:7 chance 114:19 chances 78:16 change 20:17 29:12 83:13 101:3,4 102:4,4,8 104:1,4 105:2,14 106:1 133:1 changed 37:1 100:11 139:4 144:25 changes 101:10 changing 87:23 105:6 111:9 123:7 147:7 148:24 149:15,16 character 140:5 characterisation 20:13,14</p>	<p>characterise 20:8 charge 76:17 77:1 77:8 93:22,23 94:14 charged 94:13 charging 77:20 charities 121:13 159:3 charity 10:7,13 95:22 145:15 155:17 160:10 chats 22:17 check 123:22 124:1 136:16 140:17,19,20,21 checked 140:18 141:2,3 checklist 95:5 111:2 checks 95:2 120:4 123:13 131:3,8 140:5 Cheema 124:12 child 4:24 6:18 8:14 12:11 18:9 18:10,24 28:9 29:17 36:18 37:16 38:5 39:18 40:19 41:6 45:6 48:22 49:14 58:23,25 59:6,8,9 59:10,11,18 60:19,25 61:2,14 61:24 62:1,15 63:2 64:18 65:18 65:25 69:1,23,25 73:13 74:25 78:9 80:15 83:21 88:13,24 90:17 90:17 92:25 95:3 95:7,9,18 98:8,23 99:1 103:18 106:23 118:14 121:6,17 124:4 124:19 125:25 127:25 128:25 130:21,24 132:7 132:13,15,17,24 133:2,16,25</p>	<p>134:16 135:13 139:3,8,14 140:4 141:7 142:25 143:3,9 144:18 149:12 150:25 151:4,11,11,15 152:15 153:22 154:20,21 155:1 155:10 156:3,16 157:23 158:10 159:20 child's 150:23 children 6:11 8:7,8 9:15 20:20 30:18 50:12,17,25 51:5 51:13 59:13 60:24 61:23 62:9 62:10,16,24 64:2 64:20 65:7 76:17 78:13 86:20 88:13,16 93:15 100:8 101:2,11 101:15 105:23 116:20,23 117:4 117:6,7,9,14 118:17,25 119:18 119:19,20,24 121:8 133:5 138:12 139:23 140:23 141:7,18 142:12,16,20 143:3 148:22 149:19 155:14 156:17 157:3,11 157:15 158:9 children's 94:20 95:13 117:20,21 141:13 142:18 155:9,11 chimes 9:13 choice 14:6,7,11 15:6 22:3 choices 24:19 choose 48:4 74:11 choosing 48:13,18 circulated 135:20 circumstances 35:24 52:21 claim 57:22 79:3</p>	<p>clamp 41:9 clamped 41:4 clarify 60:16 139:16 clash 50:19 class 58:2 115:22 118:7 119:17 127:13,13 classed 154:7 classes 116:23 117:2,3,12,15,21 118:2 119:16,23 119:24 120:5 130:20,20,25 classrooms 117:24 158:12 clean 54:14 clear 3:16 32:6 53:4,7 88:15 96:3 113:12 139:16 140:9 clearly 34:7 48:13 67:2 81:23 clergy 127:13 clients 25:17 climate 15:16 35:19,23 climates 21:1 close 41:8,9 128:19 close-knit 35:7 closed 12:16,22 closely 13:23 15:23 57:7,8 clubs 117:2 clued 157:4 code 11:19 148:23 148:23 coded 17:15 codes 34:12 51:10 52:13 codeword 93:20 codified 124:5 coercion 43:7 59:16 63:4,5 65:2 104:25 coercive 52:16 colleagues 100:15 159:18 collective 1:20</p>	<p>106:9 122:5 colleges 16:4 colour 81:4 combined 7:18 35:21 70:10 72:2 come 2:1,17 5:7 6:12 20:9,24 21:22 26:16 27:3 28:22 30:23 31:1 33:6 36:4 41:24 42:2,2,18 45:7 47:1 49:21 52:7 56:11,17,24 57:13 58:11 59:6 61:24 62:11 66:12 73:18,20 74:5,13,20 75:22 76:7 77:25 78:16 78:19,20,22 85:3 85:5,6,7 89:24 100:23 101:15,16 101:17 102:10,15 106:19 112:5 116:23 117:4,6 117:14,16 118:6 118:7 119:11 126:11 128:21 129:5,23 130:12 131:24,25 132:1 140:3 141:1,17 142:1,22 145:8 146:2 148:10 152:19 157:17 158:23 comes 7:13 12:4 21:20 40:18 84:5 86:1 100:20 156:16 158:14,19 comfortable 15:5 comfortably 56:10 coming 1:17 18:17 26:19 48:12 53:23 63:16 74:1 95:1 102:23 104:15 112:24 116:13,14 124:13 127:4 132:4 145:1 149:16 153:8</p>
--	---	--	---	--

<p>comment 1:23 55:9 104:2</p> <p>commented 100:7</p> <p>comments 8:16</p> <p>Commission 95:22 145:15 155:17 159:3 160:10</p> <p>commissioned 10:17 141:5</p> <p>committee 122:13 124:3 131:11,24 132:1,6 145:13 155:6</p> <p>common 56:13 148:8 150:6,6</p> <p>commonalities 33:25</p> <p>commonality 113:16</p> <p>commonly 147:6</p> <p>commonly-used 55:19</p> <p>communities 6:19 7:17 8:25 9:19 11:12 14:14,17 15:16 17:4 20:19 21:12,15 22:11 23:12,17 24:6,13 24:21 25:15,18 33:8 34:20 36:8 36:17 37:14 40:6 40:14 41:17 42:6 47:19 48:6,21 50:5 53:12 55:4 58:11,19 68:23 72:15,16 73:18 73:23 77:6,10,15 77:16 81:16 82:19,24 90:22 91:14 94:12 97:22 98:2,4 100:10,21 104:20 105:10 106:2 133:14</p> <p>community 1:8 5:10 6:4 7:3 10:11 12:20,25 13:2,4,8,10,12,13 13:16,16,22</p>	<p>14:21,24 15:11 16:22 20:25</p> <p>22:14 23:13 24:5 24:23 25:20,23</p> <p>26:18 27:19,22 28:7,8,20 30:21 32:13 33:11,17 34:4,12 36:22 37:25 38:1,3,9 39:12 40:23 41:12,15,20,21 42:15 43:17 45:18 47:5 49:2 49:3,11,15,25 51:18,22,23 55:23 56:7,9 57:3,4,23,23,24 58:3,15,16 73:24 75:24 76:21 77:4 78:1,6 79:21,22 81:10,11 82:22 83:2,2,5,6,12 89:18,19 91:2 92:11 99:5,6,7,13 101:17 102:23,24 103:2,4,7,10 106:4 115:19 116:19,19 119:4 121:8 128:15 129:14 133:6,9 137:17 141:8,21 142:14 144:16,21 145:22 147:1,17 147:19 149:7,9 151:12 152:13,14 154:11 155:7 156:1</p> <p>community/fami... 15:20</p> <p>comparison 39:16 64:23</p> <p>compelled 43:7</p> <p>competing 58:4</p> <p>complaints 145:6</p> <p>complete 34:24,25 49:1 90:6</p> <p>completed 124:12 124:13 134:4</p> <p>completely 12:16</p>	<p>20:14 37:12 38:18 46:12 68:21 103:17 123:4,8</p> <p>completing 65:12</p> <p>complex 44:21</p> <p>complexities 13:19 73:17</p> <p>complexity 75:12 79:10</p> <p>compliance 49:6</p> <p>complicated 76:2 79:19</p> <p>complicit 150:2</p> <p>complicity 77:18</p> <p>compromised 15:1 24:22</p> <p>compulsion 43:7</p> <p>compulsory 139:3 139:8 140:1 158:22</p> <p>concept 47:23 48:22 85:21</p> <p>concepts 53:16 152:11</p> <p>concern 130:5,13 140:16</p> <p>concerned 17:23 19:11,12 57:20 85:19 121:4 132:20 150:22</p> <p>concerning 92:14</p> <p>concerns 92:16</p> <p>concrete 97:6,9,11</p> <p>concur 102:6 110:1</p> <p>condition 78:24 99:10,12 123:21</p> <p>conditional 99:2</p> <p>conditioned 28:14 46:10 62:12,14 62:16 106:13</p> <p>conditioning 46:3 46:4 106:17</p> <p>conditions 15:14</p> <p>conducive 21:2 73:7</p> <p>conduct 34:12 148:24</p>	<p>conduit 25:4</p> <p>confer 2:9</p> <p>confidence 63:22 73:21 74:16 92:11 153:12</p> <p>confident 6:15</p> <p>confidentiality 14:20 25:17,19 27:15 81:13</p> <p>confidently 103:8</p> <p>confirm 3:3,23 114:10,23</p> <p>conflict 105:19 106:12</p> <p>conform 34:5,6</p> <p>confusion 44:4</p> <p>congregation 18:16,22 19:1,6 57:19 116:3 118:24 119:10 127:11 129:7 136:14 142:2 145:24 150:22 156:14,24</p> <p>congregational 116:6,16</p> <p>congregations 15:10 24:10 57:18 67:18</p> <p>connect 106:4</p> <p>connected 15:23</p> <p>connection 38:16 131:6</p> <p>connotation 129:4</p> <p>consciously 149:10</p> <p>consensual 47:23</p> <p>consent 47:23 48:19 59:15,16 60:10,18,18 62:25 63:3,5 64:14 65:3 154:13</p> <p>consenting 62:17 62:18</p> <p>consequence 84:24 87:19</p> <p>conservatism 36:16 56:7</p> <p>conservative 37:2</p>	<p>37:13 48:5,6 68:10 81:21 82:19 109:8</p> <p>conservatives 51:4</p> <p>consider 15:9 97:1 128:23 139:10</p> <p>considerable 43:9</p> <p>considered 36:19 36:25 37:17 59:10 66:19 112:11 147:1</p> <p>considers 15:24</p> <p>constant 32:23,23 93:9 127:21</p> <p>constantly 34:17 72:1 89:17 92:24 128:2</p> <p>constitution 123:17 124:5</p> <p>constitutions 124:7</p> <p>constructively 155:1</p> <p>consultants 91:15 91:17,22,25 92:1</p> <p>consultation 84:4 84:11 86:6,8</p> <p>contact 67:2,16 74:24 75:1 141:1 144:3</p> <p>contacted 61:19 143:23,25</p> <p>contacts 10:20,21</p> <p>contained 4:15</p> <p>contains 115:14</p> <p>contesting 123:24</p> <p>context 8:13,14 15:22 31:8 34:5 39:11 40:14 66:14 69:1,9 70:4 93:7 130:8 141:7 145:11 149:12</p> <p>contexts 79:12 101:25</p> <p>continue 13:25 101:4 117:19</p> <p>continuing 130:7</p> <p>contradictory 50:2</p>
--	---	---	--	---

contributions 112:10	78:22	19:9 32:12,16	dare 23:12 62:17 75:11	95:16 141:9 149:13 151:20
control 11:22 14:25 43:19,21 43:21 52:17,17 52:22,24 78:14 78:23 104:24 122:10 130:7	country 20:16 56:18 58:14 59:14 60:19 67:13 97:7 98:6 106:24 119:8 153:25	55:14,16 56:3,24 57:1 83:11 105:2 106:12 107:6 123:5 128:15 131:21 147:20,20 147:24 148:6 149:24	dark 37:6 data 63:12,25 date 10:15 33:11 134:10,22 daughter 44:10 72:23 115:11 118:7 150:10	deflect 55:24 degrading 93:17 degree 126:1 delegate 91:12 delegates 90:25 delegation 92:7 deliberate 14:6,11
controlled 48:3 controlling 17:8 controls 79:13 conversation 38:18 126:15 conversations 23:23 82:6	couple 119:12 128:2 139:20 courage 6:21 course 2:9 6:5 33:24 44:3 58:21 80:8 103:25 110:17 118:13 128:3 149:23	culturally 156:23 culture 12:5 31:12 32:3,4 33:19 34:20 55:20 56:2 56:9,22 57:6 72:21 75:7,8,10 75:12 95:4,5 104:2,4 107:2 109:5 111:11,12 148:17	daughters 55:5,7 day 1:3 21:18 116:7,8,9,13,15 119:11 126:3 127:21 day-to-day 11:3 123:11 126:2 days 26:2 36:20 DBS 95:2 120:4 123:13 140:17,18 140:19,19,21 141:3	deliver 10:17 13:10 43:13 128:9 129:25 138:21 141:10,18 142:13,15,15,18 156:17 158:3 delivered 19:20 138:15 142:2 delivering 10:15 81:19 137:20 139:19
conviction 97:8 convictions 97:14 convince 75:2,6 convinced 109:4 copy 134:8 core 99:25 115:23 125:14 correct 3:18,19 64:16 71:10 109:25 123:2 159:24	courses 142:24 court 60:11 147:12 courts 43:3 51:11 cover 138:24 covered 36:14,23 153:24 COVID-19 112:25 CRB 123:22 124:1 131:3 create 21:1 105:9 152:14 154:3	cure 71:3 72:22 curing 73:5 current 50:9 59:11 86:6 currently 84:7 85:1,13 119:6 122:21 123:5 133:22	deal 22:11 27:4 63:23 73:22 74:16 75:25,25 129:6,8,10 145:20 151:10 dealing 75:15 76:6 154:20 deals 120:21 155:6 dealt 28:1 49:17 61:13 75:12 death 72:4 debate 86:24 105:4,10,11 debates 22:19 decade 69:22 148:8	delivers 138:25 demarcated 34:7 demons 72:5 denial 31:7 32:17 44:23 49:1,5 denied 42:13 deny 22:12 dependent 78:25 depending 53:5 deportation 78:17 deported 81:2 deputy 110:16 Derby 10:11 describe 54:11 described 41:6 describing 8:21 description 51:21 deserves 89:8 desperate 42:4 despite 101:21 122:23
correcting 70:24 correction 71:8,23 cosy 22:17 25:22 council 50:23 90:5 90:10 120:8,11 120:15,16,20 121:3,4,12,22 135:8,9 141:17 154:18,19,25	creates 34:13 creating 14:22 104:9 crime 59:12,17 63:2 crimes 77:10 criminal 61:11 159:7 criteria 123:16,20 123:25 140:24	curriculum 51:1,4 cut 151:17 cutbacks 101:9 cuts 35:22 CVS 137:16 cycle 123:22	decided 138:2 decisions 24:12,19 46:13 63:19 111:6,6 dedicate 141:16 dedicated 124:11 deems 32:1 deeply 86:15 deferential 72:21 define 93:12 defined 15:20 definitely 73:15,19	described 41:6 describing 8:21 description 51:21 deserves 89:8 desperate 42:4 despite 101:21 122:23 destitute 16:5,15 destitution 78:18 79:3,5,16 detail 113:8 125:11 detailed 89:10 detection 88:13,23 detention 78:17
councils 43:2 counselling 78:8 101:23 150:17 151:4 counsellors 151:3 count 108:5 counter-narrative 106:11 counter-narrati... 100:24 counter-values 100:24 countless 7:11 8:3 countries 64:6,7	critical 89:7 90:2 102:11 104:22 cropping 98:19 crucial 48:1 66:24 98:13 cruelty 20:20 42:10 cultural 5:13 7:12 7:19 8:4,23,23 9:3,20 15:19	D 161:9 dad 119:21 daily 8:22 damage 28:19 damaged 29:1 Dame 8:9,16 9:7 dangerous 97:20 99:21 Danny 7:9 134:12 134:24 143:14 159:23		

<p>81:2 Dev 115:12 develop 92:16 100:24 135:13 155:9 developing 64:7 95:5 105:4 153:6 157:19 development 64:5 64:9 developments 50:2 50:4 DfE 155:18 dialogue 86:12 difference 33:22 33:22 34:1,1,16 35:4 47:6 108:1 differences 55:8 different 33:18 37:8,12 46:9 58:2,4 84:9,10 108:3 differently 46:10 difficult 6:8,9,20 6:25 7:6,7 10:11 19:9 24:20 29:3 31:8 32:9 34:14 35:19,24 48:16 49:10 55:21 63:24 65:4 67:22 68:19 70:10 78:14 79:25 104:1 124:6 125:11 128:11 138:20 difficulties 5:16 31:3,23 40:10 78:10,11 83:10 101:21 102:1 146:23 difficulty 28:9 dignity 94:3 diminishing 35:13 direct 2:4 87:19 directing 83:3 direction 89:15 directly 5:24 10:24 58:23 70:6 75:18 87:4 143:11</p>	<p>director 2:23 3:14 4:9 directors 110:16 disability 71:4 disappear 98:15 disappeared 38:12 98:18 disclose 6:12,16,22 7:6 14:17 25:21 26:5 30:6,18 32:10,19 34:15 57:2 144:21 disclosed 30:10 39:18 75:3 disclosing 27:17 31:3 74:7 81:9 152:15 disclosure 6:23 9:4 28:18 30:12 31:18 63:17 78:10 84:3 85:11 disclosures 26:16 37:22 42:21 76:19 97:25 discovered 29:21 discrimination 20:21 discriminatory 43:11 discuss 2:11 125:11 discussed 125:4,8 154:12 156:19 discussion 39:10 48:18 89:10 93:21 99:17,18 105:12 discussions 48:22 87:20 disempowered 74:19 disguised 49:6 dishonour 54:7 77:24 99:6 dishonourable 36:19,25 37:11 54:9,18 dishonoured 11:13 37:14</p>	<p>disowning 11:17 disparity 54:9 display 98:11 dispute 145:24,25 140:14 disrepute 54:5 140:14 disseminate 137:22 disseminated 135:18 137:6 dissent 21:12 dissents 94:15 distancing 56:15 56:20 57:10,11 distasteful 32:1 distinct 84:9 disturbing 8:16 9:12 58:7 divest 71:23 divorce 54:19 document 2:16 137:5 documentary 62:5 66:22,25 67:1,10 67:14 documentation 134:18 documents 113:7 113:8 137:22 doing 13:18,25 17:6 19:6 22:13 23:18 24:21 37:6 42:13 49:7 56:1 64:19 77:4 82:9 82:10 90:16 98:1 98:3 100:20 103:17 106:20 112:25 127:6 129:20 137:14 domestic 5:12 10:10,14 11:23 12:14,18 13:4 18:8 20:6 23:3 29:24 42:9 76:24 95:10 98:22 99:1 101:14 104:24 153:24 154:1 door 14:8 15:8 20:8 91:6</p>	<p>doors 12:16 127:4 double 7:18 double-check 69:8 122:6 doubly 54:21 doubt 46:24 151:21 152:1 dowry-related 5:14 dress 33:14 34:18 34:21 51:10 dressed 32:21 drink 33:15 69:16 drinking 37:7 drive 7:15 105:13 106:1 148:6,23 driven 101:10,24 105:2 122:24 147:23 drivers 101:3 drop 54:13 113:11 141:14 dropping 147:25 drumming 23:16 due 43:12 160:3 Duke-of-Edinbu... 131:5 dutiful 34:22 44:9 duty 86:23,25 87:3 159:6 dynamic 33:10,17 33:18 dynamics 11:23 28:17 33:4 52:12 73:17</p>	<p>easy 54:14 55:24 93:22 142:12 echo 96:24 97:2 106:22 echoed 99:3 economically 78:25 educated 149:21 educating 104:14 education 50:12 50:17 65:11 72:20 96:14 132:10 149:20 educational 60:21 educative 104:9 effect 56:14 116:18 effective 23:16 137:23 effectively 13:25 41:8 47:20 97:20 98:3 127:23 138:8 146:9 either 1:12 2:19 11:11 63:9 73:25 109:16 121:6 elder 41:12 elderly 78:4 136:11 149:5 elders 34:23 elect 123:19 elected 22:9 51:22 52:4 53:3 123:14 election 123:22,23 elections 123:15 123:25 element 60:18 129:19 142:19 148:7 elements 147:16 embarrassing 64:16 embarrassment 53:11 embed 95:6 embedded 8:24 40:23 95:11 emerge 72:25 emerging 106:2</p>
E				
<p>E 161:9 e-safety 142:24 Ealing 137:16 ear 91:18 earlier 15:15 20:7 51:24 63:15 65:19 93:21 94:10 107:4 112:4,6 139:2,13 144:24 early 137:19 easier 2:20 54:7,8 easily 98:15</p>				

<p>employ 124:19 127:22 employed 127:9 132:21,23 140:25 employees 139:20 140:15 empowered 24:12 63:18 74:5,13 empowering 24:18 24:25 85:3 102:10,14,19 105:22 empowerment 24:2 84:25 enable 102:15 113:19 enabler 84:13 106:19 enacted 7:12 8:4 32:11 encountered 8:2 encourage 50:11 153:11 encouraged 28:22 29:18 30:13 encouraging 83:1 90:14 131:25 endangering 25:20 endeavoured 23:23 endeavours 23:13 endorse 7:3 21:1 31:5 93:5 endorsing 50:24 enforced 159:6 engage 13:1 18:14 23:13,14 24:20 25:12,25 94:2 151:9 engaged 117:20 137:15 engagement 6:14 12:20 137:25 engagements 6:13 engaging 13:20 78:6 99:13 English 126:8 128:9,11 136:1,2 136:3,6,7,12,18</p>	<p>138:15,17,25 engrained 86:15 enhance 141:2 enhanced 123:22 140:19 enormous 72:21 78:11 85:20 101:19 125:23 enquiry 26:12,12 ensure 13:18,24 67:7,24 101:4 102:1 123:24 140:6 152:21 ensuring 52:25 87:8 88:13 127:1 enter 61:7 entered 60:14 entering 60:2 entire 58:19 64:24 99:7 entirely 53:4 109:25 140:9 entities 102:3 entrenched 56:8 environment 73:7 152:25 158:13 equal 123:4 equality 5:23 6:2 7:16 20:4 95:12 95:13 110:9,19 122:24 131:18,19 148:14 equally 74:22 131:7 equipment 74:15 erect 9:3,21 erected 79:21 especially 45:3 147:7 149:13 157:6 essential 107:12 essentially 34:2 established 4:25 10:8 119:4,5,6 148:11 estimate 81:21 estimates 97:10 et 50:21 60:22 119:9 137:2,2</p>	<p>138:7 156:12 euphemisms 37:25 Europe 115:20 EVANS 103:21 160:16 evening 127:23 event 2:14 113:24 events 116:10 117:13 119:14 148:20 everybody 38:19 56:22 58:14 73:6 89:22 145:17 everyday 48:20 evidence 1:18 2:9 2:11 3:17 9:24 26:3 40:4 43:9 48:24,25 49:12 63:11 64:3 85:21 91:16 104:16 110:4 111:17,20 112:6,24 113:14 113:25 126:20 144:14 147:15 152:10 160:19,22 exact 66:4 exam 128:7 Examination 1:16 112:22 161:13,17 example 13:9,14 18:6,6 20:3 30:4 33:12 39:17 43:3 68:5,25 71:3 74:24 84:7 86:24 90:4 108:13 118:6 121:11 134:14 135:5 141:12 150:1 153:24 examples 7:11 8:3 15:11,24 19:8 29:5 30:4 50:8 60:14 69:6 71:18 exception 82:3 exceptionally 87:23 excessive 33:13 exclude 51:5,12 73:6</p>	<p>excluded 73:3 exclusive 33:10 excuse 96:7 excuses 96:9 executive 3:13 exemplary 140:6 140:10 exert 14:24 exhausted 42:6 exhibit 159:22 exhibited 45:3 exhibits 2:16 exist 14:24 15:10 15:10 26:10 34:5 40:16 44:20,24 49:3 69:14 84:7 102:12 103:4 109:17 148:5 existed 10:8 24:7 existence 79:1 existing 13:3,5,24 97:12 98:15 exists 33:18 49:2 89:23 exit 5:19 exorcism 59:5 66:18 69:7,9,9,21 71:2 72:4 exorcisms 69:18 expect 34:19 61:24 expectation 39:25 expectations 39:15 39:24 46:5 90:9 expected 39:14,19 99:4 experience 9:13 28:5,11,21 30:16 45:24 46:24 52:4 55:16,18 57:8 70:23 74:6 81:8 87:2 100:6 107:24 109:25 130:11 149:22 150:8 experienced 29:24 44:6 56:23 57:8 141:11 experiences 9:14 19:12,18 44:15</p>	<p>52:6 56:25 100:23 experiencing 9:1 81:9 expertise 138:19 experts 138:8 156:17 explain 11:9 22:15 53:17 59:7 explaining 53:20 exploit 79:16,17 exploited 79:14 express 35:1 expressed 14:4 108:3 extend 39:23 extended 34:10 extensively 41:16 external 83:2 90:25 92:19 95:17,20,22,23 99:14 128:5 133:20,22 137:12 138:4 155:12,15 155:16 157:9,14 158:17 extra 82:21 eyes 96:18 158:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <hr/> <p>face 6:2 13:15 22:22 53:13 111:8 face-to-face 75:20 Facebook 143:13 143:16 144:8 faces 108:18 149:16 facilitate 67:20,23 69:1 facilities 96:9 116:1,3,6 facility 118:19 facing 7:17 fact 3:16 7:13 9:10 18:23 19:5,22 21:3 25:2 27:23 28:17 31:13 33:2 35:6 40:4 41:1 45:11 47:15 49:1</p>
---	--	---	---	---

50:1 57:7 59:23 64:13 65:5 78:19 86:12 91:20 110:22 113:19 122:23 151:14 factor 147:4 factors 83:11 facts 75:14 failed 107:3 146:19,22 failing 57:25 58:3 58:4 faith 14:4 25:23 26:3,6,20 52:7,7 53:5,5 70:14 71:2 73:4 91:3 92:11 100:9 107:10,13 108:7 127:14 129:17 faiths 129:18 families 6:18 16:22,23 17:12 34:9,20 41:3 72:13,24 79:1 148:21 family 5:10 8:24 11:12,13,14,14 11:20,25,25 12:2 12:2,5 17:13 25:20 28:20 29:6 29:16,21 30:8,21 32:13 34:3,10 35:6 37:13 40:22 40:24 41:11,13 41:15,16 42:5 43:8,15 45:6 46:14 50:20 52:17 54:1,2,4,6 54:10,21,22,22 54:24 57:4,5 68:5 70:14 73:3 74:9,11 109:21 117:13,14 150:2 150:10,25 151:2 158:9 family's 11:19 famously 122:24 131:18 fantastic 45:22	97:16 far 19:11,11 23:16 24:16 33:16 34:14 47:16 56:5 57:20 65:17 85:19 97:24 103:7 107:21 108:3 111:17 121:4,18 132:20 133:15 142:10 143:10 144:11 fashion 2:2 fast 96:12 father's 68:3 fathers 52:19 fault 28:13 29:9 58:1 85:2,14 88:5 fear 14:19,20 73:11,15,23 76:17 77:23,24 77:24 78:7,15,16 78:17,17 81:18 82:5,6,9 94:12 103:16 fear-mongering 103:10 fearing 74:2 fears 24:10,11,13 74:1 109:16,20 fed 5:24 feeding 37:19 feel 2:19 6:15,15 6:16,22 14:17 15:5 19:17,19 42:16 46:16 113:5 150:23 152:23,23 159:6 feelings 14:19 71:8 71:24 feels 60:23 felt 1:19 129:18,20 150:14 female 17:8,12,21 32:7 52:15 54:24 75:24 78:2 108:5 108:7,16,21,24 108:25 109:6,17 132:12	females 52:17 76:3 109:12 122:21 131:15,25 145:5 festivals 116:10 FGM 5:14 84:8 86:5,23 87:4,15 97:4,6,7,13 107:14 field 109:13 138:9 figure 66:4 99:19 figures 41:21 43:5 72:14,21,22 97:10,11 119:15 133:5 file 135:19 final 111:6 finally 18:19 102:20 107:18 finance 110:16 financially 79:17 find 2:20 22:21 26:9 38:22 42:6 52:18 62:16 64:16 78:12,14 79:13 97:4 111:16 126:16 145:3 148:9 finding 12:19 53:22 fine 49:20 118:9 Fiona 38:10 106:5 fire 139:24 first 2:21 15:24 26:7 27:11 38:14 42:18 58:24 59:6 66:12 68:2,3 73:9,14 74:17,18 76:14 77:23 89:16 97:5 100:16 110:10,19 112:8 115:14,20 115:24 118:11 126:7 128:12 136:11 138:18 139:21,22 145:7 148:9,15 149:5 155:20,24 156:4 first-hand 149:22 150:8	firstly 2:6 33:7 60:2,9 113:3 114:4 131:11 143:6,8 fit 125:18 149:25 fits 96:13 five 48:25 152:4 five-minute 151:25 fled 55:1 78:21 focus 19:21,24,24 19:25 58:22 focused 13:13,13 19:15 26:17,17 26:18 fold 111:14 folder 135:24 folk 66:16,19 69:11,12 70:5,11 folks 127:20 130:2 156:13 follow 33:5 43:12 46:7 113:20 follow-up 130:9 144:13 followed 90:10 followers 24:9 food 79:8,12 138:7 force 20:4 75:1 forced 5:14 10:16 10:23 22:25 29:19 48:13 62:20,21 63:6,7 63:23 76:25 79:11 86:6,7 87:10,12,15 101:13 105:1 106:14 147:22 fore 95:1 forget 77:2 forgotten 49:18 94:22 form 7:3 15:3 42:10 56:21 59:5 65:2 73:8 77:12 78:13 79:4,12 88:17 95:23 115:13 118:3 125:25 126:5	127:16 134:11 143:17 157:8 formal 43:18 66:15 67:21 70:4 70:11 71:9 forming 17:10,25 forms 5:11,12,13 6:6 8:25 31:17 77:1 144:16 fortunate 128:7 Forty 76:23 forum 157:6 forums 43:4,8,9,11 forward 28:22 29:16 30:2 47:1 53:24 61:15,24 62:11 63:17 73:20 74:5,13,20 76:8 85:4,5,6,7 99:20 102:11,15 102:23 104:15 106:19 148:2 found 5:6 6:5 16:5 founded 120:16 131:18 148:16 founder 54:25 115:12 foundries 119:9 fountains 72:19 four 48:24 fourth 148:12 framed 38:7 framework 95:7 95:12,17,21 96:22 111:25 Frank 107:18,19 112:2 159:18,19 159:24 160:2,6 160:12 free 2:19 14:23 93:16 96:1,2 113:5 freedom 93:12 freely 23:2 35:3 65:3 154:12 frequent 18:12 fresh 149:16 Friday 1:1 friend 91:12
--	--	---	--	---

friendly 91:11,12	34:6,8 50:20	136:4,16 137:5	150:2	127:22 130:3
front 2:15 113:6	51:8 58:1 93:8	137:12,15,15	giving 16:11 26:3	133:3 136:5
front-line 5:3,24	95:12 107:23	138:3 141:4,9	49:12 104:16	143:21,22 148:1
froze 38:18	110:9,19 122:20	142:10 143:7,19	glad 110:1	151:16 154:23
frozen 38:10	131:12,19	144:24 146:4,7	glitch 38:15,22	gold 54:13,14
fuel 77:5,6,11	gender-based 8:8	146:13 147:3,18	Gloucestershire	good 1:3,5,17 17:7
fuelling 77:5,8,9	gender-related 6:6	147:23 148:5,18	1:11 4:10 12:9	29:22 112:23
77:20	77:1	149:13 150:7	12:12 13:2	120:24 136:12
fulfil 123:25	general 36:11	151:6,14,22	GNG000001_005	140:15 150:19
fulfils 123:16	114:7 115:7	152:1 155:25	139:6	157:25 158:14,15
full 2:22,23 3:12	121:25 132:9	156:4,5 157:12	GNG000001_00...	goods 29:1
4:8 114:4 130:16	145:13 146:14	158:4 159:1	143:15	Gosh 122:17
133:24 137:5	generally 13:22	161:15	GNG000001_009	gotten 37:6 69:13
151:19	33:19 35:5 50:3	girl 28:19 62:5	142:24	governance 59:20
full-time 127:9	59:3	68:1 71:22 74:25	GNG000002_001	government 58:8
fully 36:14	generation 123:7	75:2,6,10,13,18	134:13	64:8 82:8,22
functional 157:20	126:7,7 144:24	76:3	GNG000002_009	95:23 99:19
fundamental 5:22	144:25 147:8	girls 8:13,17 9:1,4	134:23 159:24	120:23
fundamentalism	148:12 149:3,14	9:11,15 15:4	go 1:4 10:2 28:14	gradually 98:18
35:11,21 36:17	157:3	16:13,17 17:15	28:24 30:11 32:8	Granth 115:16
56:7	generational	17:20,24 19:11	34:18,18 44:17	127:15,16
fundamentalist	152:18	20:5 24:3,11	47:3 53:8 57:2	Granthi 127:12,14
17:17 48:6 68:10	generations 53:23	28:21 32:19	58:16 59:2 73:9	127:17,18 133:10
128:24	148:10	39:14 45:19	74:20 79:11	158:11
fundamentalists	generic 12:23	47:18 52:24	83:16 85:16	Granthis 127:8,22
17:17 50:11 51:5	13:15 157:25	65:23 66:2 68:7	98:23 99:17	128:11 132:20,23
fundamentally	158:14	71:13 76:7,16	101:21 109:16	133:4 139:2,7,13
53:25 61:3 66:3	genitalia 47:24	93:2 95:8 129:13	117:18 120:3	140:3,24
74:4	genuinely 122:8	129:16	123:18 130:10	grappling 31:24
funded 102:2	geographically	give 2:22 4:7 8:25	133:10 139:20	grass-root 91:17
funding 12:16	128:20	15:11,24 19:8	142:11 146:2	grateful 108:2
funds 78:24	getting 7:10 65:8	29:11 36:1 50:8	149:19	great 24:4 46:20
further 23:24	70:25 71:13 74:2	51:1 62:25 65:4	goals 64:5,9	101:25 138:22
25:20 99:23	95:1 97:25 123:9	69:16 74:23	God 115:14	greater 34:8
144:10 159:12	134:12,13 143:15	81:21 87:4	goes 40:21 104:9	groomed 129:16
160:17,22	153:6	111:20 112:6,24	124:8 126:2	150:11
future 29:12	Gill 112:5,18,20	113:14 126:20	going 1:22 9:24	grooming 17:14
	113:21 114:4,7,7	128:22 141:6	12:1 17:15 24:9	17:16,19,24
	114:12,14,15,18	144:14 150:8	27:16 29:22	129:13 130:12
	114:20 115:7,11	155:20,21	42:19 45:11	141:19 146:15
	116:7,17,22	given 8:11 65:3	46:14,18 49:20	ground 61:2
	117:12 118:11,19	86:21 100:6	50:8 66:12 69:4	group 106:8
	119:13 122:12,15	107:20 108:13	73:9 75:6 76:22	groups 7:7,25 9:16
	122:21 123:2,15	110:4 111:17	77:14,15 78:14	9:18 14:3 20:7
	124:5,17,22	125:21 127:14	81:10,12 84:22	20:21 107:10,13
	125:6,9 126:3,23	129:6 130:13	88:18 94:4	129:18
	127:13 128:1,7	131:17 135:22	105:23 106:5	growing 73:11
	129:2,9,11,12	136:7,9,17 141:8	109:4,7 113:17	153:5
	130:15,25 133:3	144:3 147:15	113:25 122:18	grown 10:15 69:21
G				
gag 21:11				
gain 19:19				
gaining 50:6				
gamble 60:22				
game 22:6				
gap 13:3 59:12				
61:1 62:21 88:15				
gate 30:17				
gatekeepers 30:19				
gay 7:24 71:7,8				
gender 7:16,18				

<p>149:18 guaranteed 27:22 guess 37:19 130:15 148:7 158:15 guidance 11:3 87:13 101:13 121:6 134:11 135:12 157:17,19 guide 121:13 guise 10:13 GUR00002_001 136:20 gurdwara 15:25 16:8 47:7 114:5 114:8 115:9,11 115:18,19 116:2 116:5,13,15 117:1 118:21 119:2,3,4,6 120:14,18,19 121:16 122:8,14 123:6 131:10 135:19 138:6 141:1,2,8 142:21 142:25 143:10 144:6 145:11 149:7,12 150:14 152:22 153:18 155:4 158:11 gurdwara's 142:8 gurdwaras 112:5 113:15 115:24 116:22 120:13 121:1,2,6 124:9 126:12 142:17 147:10 149:14 151:18 155:11,23 156:1,5,7 157:5 Gurmukhi 116:25 guru 114:8 115:8 115:12,12,13,16 119:2 127:15,16 148:13,19 gurus 115:15 148:21 guruship 115:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <p>hair 36:13,15,18 36:23</p>	<p>half 132:5 hall 158:13 Hameed 1:10,15 4:6,9,9,14,17,20 12:9,12 25:2,9 27:11,12,14 30:25 31:2 33:6 36:3,6,11 39:7,7 39:13,23 47:16 47:21 55:9,15,18 58:20 66:10,12 66:20,22 68:19 68:22 69:13 73:10 80:4,16,18 80:20,21,22 96:24 97:2 102:20,21 103:19 106:21,22 108:5 161:12 hand 2:2 44:3 74:14 108:6 113:11,12 hands 2:12 82:3,4 113:22 124:25 Hannah 75:19,21 happen 12:24 13:21 24:11 30:3 46:21,22 47:11 49:9 59:21 61:18 66:14 67:21 69:19,19 71:7 74:3,21 78:2 83:4 85:2 86:4 98:21 124:21 145:11,18 146:4 158:12 160:4 happened 26:9,13 28:11,12 38:11 46:16,16 47:5,9 61:21 64:10 65:19 107:2 134:5 142:17 143:24 146:5 148:21 150:9 happening 27:23 55:24 66:5 67:7 69:18,18 86:4 107:15 157:1 happens 67:13</p>	<p>124:22 happy 24:23 75:19 hard 19:13 54:21 hard-to-reach 13:1 14:13 104:20 Harmeet 112:20 114:7 161:15 harmful 59:23,24 81:16,22 107:10 147:19,20 harmony 24:5 45:7 hate 77:10 137:24 hatred 77:10 haya 53:17,18,19 head 79:9 89:13,14 head-on 103:6 headscarf 36:21 headscarves 36:21 healer 70:14 73:5 healing 70:20 71:2 health 5:17 11:1 65:22 138:7 154:4 156:12 healthy 47:22 48:2 48:19 hear 1:6 52:21 61:18 62:6 65:16 65:17,17 67:15 67:17 69:23 74:23 86:10 105:17,18 106:16 106:20 111:1,1 114:13 heard 19:23,23 28:1 36:1 38:19 40:8 67:18 74:8 85:20 97:23 98:10,20 99:2 102:18 103:25 109:24 129:13 130:4 147:13 150:7 152:9 hearing 1:4,18 12:25 105:21 106:10 161:5 heart 18:3 43:20 94:20,21,24</p>	<p>heavily 48:3 heightened 34:13 35:9 held 52:22 help 5:21,22 16:18 17:2 19:16,17,18 23:9 30:23 45:19 47:16,20 52:3 66:21 70:2,7 73:25 76:9 78:7 81:3 98:24,25,25 106:18 117:17 118:1 120:18 129:21 130:23 137:21 138:22 155:9 156:6 159:22,23 160:6 helped 77:17 helpful 7:8 9:23 12:8 40:3 51:15 66:9 80:2 83:7 85:22 86:25 87:6 87:9 88:7 89:1 99:22 104:13 118:3 131:9 helping 118:4,5 123:11 129:15 137:20 helpline 10:16,21 16:9,11,12 30:5,7 52:22 63:6,8 65:16 74:24 75:1 142:1 helplines 101:22 151:3 helps 104:19 107:16 159:21 herring 57:9 hide 22:12 30:19 39:20 40:1 57:18 hierarchy 122:7 high 39:16 66:7 82:18 131:19 high-profile 127:3 higher 36:9 48:5 highest 140:20 highlight 52:23 88:25 145:7 highlighted 53:11</p>	<p>highly 46:24 hijab 36:22 Hindu 17:16 90:10 Hinduphobic 77:9 historical 148:20 historically 150:7 history 33:16 hold 106:13 138:21 153:15 holidays 116:10 home 10:17 23:16 55:1 69:20 70:15 70:17 117:19 homeless 16:5,9 homelessness 5:16 homes 115:24 homicide 18:12 homogeneous 57:24 homosexual 71:7 71:24 72:23 honest 74:7 131:22 145:23 honour 10:14 11:20,25 12:2 28:17 29:2 37:9 37:17 38:3,4,6 52:12,12 53:15 53:22,24 54:8,10 54:15,25 57:4 68:5 147:5,13,14 147:19 148:7 152:12 honour-based 5:13 10:9,16,22 11:6,9,10 20:5 23:1 63:23 101:14 105:1 130:11 147:21,21 hook 16:21 hope 12:21 28:24 29:12 82:4 83:16 100:16,17,20 101:19,19 102:4 hopefully 86:5 132:3 hoping 114:2 horrible 89:20 hostility 15:14,17</p>
--	---	---	---	---

<p>102:1 hour 113:24 117:22,22 house 68:3,4 housing 79:5 hub 115:19 116:19 116:19 141:8 huge 25:1 26:19 28:3 42:16 47:21 55:6 61:23,23 67:18 92:15,18 105:9 106:18 hugely 87:9 91:23 Hughes 1:11 112:18 hundreds 17:1 81:15 91:22 husband 66:1 husband's 68:4 hygiene 138:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p>idea 38:11 57:6 85:22 91:11 92:16 ideal 45:22 46:20 47:10 ideals 109:8 identifiable 109:15 identified 45:3 62:2,3 64:11 69:6 84:15 128:20 143:17 149:2 identifies 7:10 identify 25:5 45:14 66:2 84:14 85:10 identifying 11:2 130:2 158:16 identity 106:5 ideological 111:25 ignorance 40:19 44:2 illegal 61:9 illness 71:3 illustrate 48:16 imagine 54:12 146:25 imam 27:20 108:17</p>	<p>imams 43:4 72:14 73:4 90:5 108:6 108:17 imbalance 107:23 111:12 imbalances 93:8 immediately 39:8 79:2 immense 15:14,17 immigration 5:16 76:11 78:10,11 78:13,23 79:13 79:23 80:14,24 immoral 158:5 impact 150:25 impacts 54:10 impartiality 26:21 imparting 72:19 implement 152:19 155:22 157:17 implemented 124:9 implications 48:11 imply 100:11 importance 37:9 important 18:11 19:21 37:24 41:14 51:3,6 52:11 88:6,24 89:14 93:14 94:10 101:1 105:13 106:7 110:5 impose 95:19 imposed 155:16 imposition 51:10 51:10 87:2 159:6 impression 107:19 improve 80:6 84:22,23 89:2 109:19 156:2 improvement 100:12 improving 83:16 84:16 85:16 88:11,23 102:12 102:13 in-house 27:4 133:20</p>	<p>inadequate 90:19 inaudible 117:1 141:16 incident 26:8 30:9 142:6 159:3 incidents 88:3 127:5 include 5:11 116:19 125:16 includes 6:3,19 including 9:16 43:16 59:18 152:14 154:13 incorrectly 69:7 increase 35:14 51:9 56:6 132:4 increased 16:1 36:17 increasing 87:6 129:12 increasingly 9:19 123:9 incredible 52:22 61:14 incredibly 9:21 18:11 35:23 51:6 79:25 88:5 100:19 inculcated 17:13 incumbent 14:15 independence 26:20 35:2 independent 71:14 96:21 102:3 122:9 India 116:2 149:21 Indian 5:8 indicate 4:12 45:15 indicated 137:11 indicating 55:21 individual 2:5 7:1 11:11,18 30:21 102:25 106:3 127:15 individually 1:22 individuals 1:6,12 25:5,21 51:22 53:7,7 60:14</p>	<p>62:25 108:21 127:8 132:11 140:7,10,21 industry 69:17 inept 90:20 ineptitude 90:6 inequality 7:18 93:8 inevitably 41:12 42:13 infantilising 103:2 infliction 72:10 influx 16:2 inform 5:21 29:12 informal 27:25 41:24,24 42:4 43:3 67:21 70:5 71:9 96:8 informally 43:1 information 4:15 13:10 26:25 27:3 27:16 44:18 50:7 51:1 63:14 65:5 98:12 109:21 135:24 146:8 153:2 informed 146:16 informing 15:9 90:14 ingredients 95:14 inhuman 93:17 injustice 21:2 42:17 44:13 77:15 injustices 22:11 innermost 14:19 inquiry 11:7 63:11 66:24 89:9 97:1 104:1 111:19 151:15 insecure 80:14 insensitive 93:4 156:23 insist 89:24 118:9 insofar 24:24 inspecting 90:1 inspection 94:9 inspections 91:1 92:20 95:17</p>	<p>96:23 instance 36:11 instances 72:11 108:23 instil 103:16 instituted 142:8 institution 84:15 108:15,16 110:8 111:22 126:24 institutional 6:3 20:25 111:11 institutionalised 43:2 institutions 14:24 15:3,8 19:10,25 21:4,10 30:17 32:13,15 46:19 46:25 65:22 79:9 79:11,14 83:22 90:1,8,21 91:2,8 91:19 92:2,11 96:11 102:16 107:21,23 108:22 110:6,11 111:5 instrument 117:4 instruments 117:5 integrate 128:16 integrated 156:24 intentional 103:11 interested 17:9 18:2 104:5 interesting 23:22 23:25 59:17 62:6 70:22 72:25 106:3 Interestingly 23:20 interests 18:3 58:4 58:19 interfaith 17:22 interfere 93:20 interference 29:10 126:14 129:24 interlinked 70:9 interlock 56:10 internal 145:21 internalisation 44:5 internally 49:16</p>
--	---	---	--	--

<p>79:21 128:5 145:20 international 64:9 internationally 64:18 108:6 internet 38:16 interplay 12:4 interpreted 151:6 interrelate 12:3 66:20 interrelationship 80:14 interrupting 129:11 intersect 79:19,24 intersection 78:9 intertwine 55:20 56:10 intertwined 27:20 56:23 57:7 intervene 75:16 intervention 96:4 96:20 interviews 6:14 intimated 33:21 intricacies 158:7 introducing 64:25 intrusive 92:5 invest 140:1 investigate 144:9 145:9 investigating 67:2 investigation 62:1 invisible 9:20 61:15 invited 69:20 invites 70:14 inviting 156:10 involved 111:3 121:5 123:9 124:23 126:11,13 126:14,24 128:13 128:14 129:2 131:22 137:18 144:15 155:8 involving 73:4 irony 79:6 irrelevant 13:18 irrespective 75:10</p>	<p>Islam 69:9 106:25 Islamic 69:5 71:21 106:25 108:14 Islamically 68:1,9 Islamophobia 73:12 76:17,18 77:20 81:25 82:20 93:22,23 94:13 Islamophobic 77:8 isolation 47:14,18 issue 15:6 18:25 27:5 37:5,5 38:2 48:1 49:4,5 50:16 60:6 63:13 65:20 81:22 87:11,18 89:8 102:24 103:18 145:6,25 151:11 153:15 154:3 155:1 156:20,22 156:22 issued 64:4 issues 1:7,19 5:10 5:15 6:16 10:12 10:19 12:2,4 13:16 18:10,24 20:5 21:11,14 22:23 28:23 31:8 38:24 41:2,7 49:3 58:22 60:2 60:8 73:16,22 75:25 76:11,24 76:25 77:3 79:19 83:6,17,18 84:9 84:18 86:13 87:7 89:18 92:25 93:1 102:12,13 103:4 103:6 120:21 121:18 126:22 129:6,8,10 136:24 140:13,16 142:14 144:24 147:18 149:17 152:18 153:14,23 154:8,13,15,20 156:11,13,18 157:1 issuing 11:15</p>	<p>ITV 62:1 izzat 53:17,18,21 53:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> <p>Jaspal 137:15 Jasvinder 55:1 JATINDER 112:21 161:16 Jay 100:1 jeans 74:12 Ji 115:13,16 127:16 jigsaw 104:18 jinns 66:17 job 2:22 3:12 4:8 13:25 21:3 22:12 22:13 23:4 82:10 114:5 124:23 jobs 119:8 join 20:1,1 judging 109:22 judgment 109:16 judicial 59:16 60:18 justice 5:23 6:2 19:20 35:18 43:13,17 justification 64:17 justify 66:13 69:4 70:3 justifying 64:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <hr/> <p>Karma 1:10 3:14 10:4,7 29:11 102:9 keen 157:16,18 keep 24:16 30:19 41:11,13 43:15 99:4 102:10 152:18 keeping 99:12 149:8 key 19:20 20:16 32:14 76:7 79:4 94:7 102:9,14,19 kicking 20:8 82:18 kids 141:14 156:25 kill 105:6</p>	<p>killings 72:3 147:21 kind 6:1 13:15 14:24 16:11 19:3 21:14 27:19 32:22 34:13 35:18 36:21 42:25 44:2,4,23 46:7 49:4,18 50:5,24 55:20 58:12 61:7 67:5 67:6 69:11,12 70:3,20 72:1,4 73:24 78:23 79:8 88:21 89:25 90:22,24 91:2,14 91:15 92:7 93:2 94:6 95:23 97:21 99:18 103:15 104:23 105:8 106:9 122:9 137:9 138:23 139:20 142:19 149:18 155:12,14 157:13 kinds 48:9 79:20 Kingdom 120:22 145:2 155:5 kinship 12:5 34:4 40:22 knee-length 37:4 knock 15:8 knocked 14:8 knocking 20:9 know 8:19 9:7,7 11:6,8 14:18,21 15:22 16:3 18:21 19:3 20:15,18 21:8,17,23 22:21 23:20 24:3,11,15 25:22,24 26:2,12 27:21 28:13 29:1 30:6,25 31:10 32:2,8 33:2,12 34:7,14,24 35:6 35:18 36:3,8,14 36:19 37:3,15 38:20 39:24 41:10 42:19 46:8</p>	<p>46:12,21 48:3,5,8 48:19 49:11,11 49:16,24 50:14 51:8 54:2 57:11 58:3,15,25 61:3 61:17,20 63:18 63:21 64:17 65:13 66:4,7 67:19 68:17 70:12 72:14 74:5 74:9,22 75:8 76:22,25 77:20 81:1,12 84:21 85:17 86:14,22 87:3,12,18 88:10 88:21 89:21,24 90:14 91:1,11,17 92:12 93:25 94:7 94:13,19 95:9,11 96:8 97:22 98:17 102:7 103:10 104:4 106:8 107:13,24 110:5 110:16 111:15 112:24 113:1 117:2 120:23,25 121:1,16 125:15 126:24 127:3 130:17 131:25 132:4 134:18 135:7 138:8,23 140:15 141:11,14 142:17 144:8 145:17 146:21,21 146:23,24 148:2 149:25 152:21,22 152:23,24 153:1 153:6,7,10,11,13 153:14,14,15,23 153:25 154:3,15 155:23 157:2 158:2,20 knowing 45:9 124:13 knowledge 3:5,25 4:16 40:16,17 44:18 50:6 72:20 74:16 87:7 114:17 115:1</p>
--	--	---	---	--

known 62:9 142:13	109:17,18	Let's 41:11	120:10 134:9,23 137:13	103:25 110:3 112:25 117:12,12
knows 49:14 56:22 89:18,23	leaders 21:19 23:14,14 25:23 42:15 51:17,18 51:21,25 52:1,8,9 53:6 55:12 56:1 57:15,21 58:6,7,8 58:9,10,17 68:11 85:6,25 94:25 107:3 108:7 109:13	letter 125:8 137:25	lived 57:8	117:17 119:7,23 124:8,8,14 126:6 127:4 128:11 136:9,11 142:17 147:14 148:18,19 149:14 151:7 153:2 156:23,25
L		letting 81:1	lives 13:20 14:25 98:21 115:23	lots 65:21 83:23 87:12
lack 27:14 32:6 40:5,13,15,17,18 40:20 42:23,24 43:24 44:1,6,11 44:12,15,16,17 44:18,18,19,22 44:24 93:25 96:7	53:6 55:12 56:1 57:15,21 58:6,7,8 58:9,10,17 68:11 85:6,25 94:25 107:3 108:7 109:13	level 6:4 7:1,2 14:22 95:20 131:2,2 132:15 136:12 138:19 139:22 140:20	living 16:6 34:9 115:15 123:17 148:11	136:9,11 142:17 147:14 148:18,19 149:14 151:7 153:2 156:23,25
land 67:9,11	leadership 18:24 19:2 51:25 57:14 57:16,17 90:7 122:5,25 125:22	levelled 77:2 94:14	local 12:17,20 15:25 27:21,22 51:22 58:8 91:12 95:21,25 121:11 121:12 135:4 141:16,22 145:16 145:19 150:18,19 155:17 158:25 159:8	louder 22:4 loudest 22:1 loudly 21:25 Louise 8:9,16 9:7 love 71:24 107:9 lower 36:8,9 ludicrous 39:22 lumped 106:8 lunch 80:3,4,7 lunchtime 2:11 68:16 lured 48:14
language 11:8 31:13 32:7,16 40:8,9 47:13,15 47:17 49:24 50:3 110:25 116:24 128:12 136:11 137:18 138:18 149:6	leadings 15:21 41:21	levels 123:10	lockdown 134:5	M
languages 31:19 31:21 138:23	leading 19:2 64:18	Levy 91:16	long 6:14 21:10 50:10 94:23 101:4 102:3 134:19 138:4 141:13	machinery 105:3 magic 66:18 main 119:17 142:2 maintain 57:3 81:13 maintaining 32:4 maintenance 119:3 major 50:13 101:7 104:3,7 majority 5:7 82:2 111:18 makers 67:1 101:3 making 19:22 22:6 28:18 63:2,17 76:5 104:2 125:18 Malcolm 103:19 103:21 160:15,16 male 16:15 33:3 34:23 41:22 51:19 109:13,18 132:12 146:17,17 male-dominated 123:6
large 16:14 78:19 115:10 117:25 118:24 122:17 125:22	leads 108:24 127:7 127:17	LGBT 15:4 20:21	long-running 50:18	
largely 25:3 45:13 123:6	learn 108:2 116:23 117:4,6 157:7	liaising 133:23 134:2	longer 107:5	
largest 118:22	learning 117:18,21	liaison 141:22	look 2:17,20 9:25 39:21 54:25 63:25 72:13,16 95:15 106:3 111:8,9 125:3 134:25 136:25 139:11 148:3	
late 65:18	leave 24:13,25 46:8,9,10 60:21 61:22 63:19 79:2 118:14	liberal 108:10	looked 32:21 62:3 135:14 150:23	
lately 107:22	leaving 46:13 98:2	liberty 93:16	looking 54:3 61:22 65:11 86:18 108:12 109:23 125:14 139:5	
law 60:5 62:20,21 64:20 67:9,10,11 67:25 82:12,12 97:7 105:6,8 106:24,25 107:16 159:7	lecture 141:18	lid 21:10 22:12 29:21 35:17 43:15	looks 157:14	
laws 22:25 23:1 51:11 97:12 98:7 101:13,14,14	led 118:2 147:20 157:23	life 8:24 48:20 78:6 93:15 140:7 140:10	looming 148:3	
lawyers 96:15	left 14:14,15 97:22	lift 35:17	loose 36:20 123:19	
layers 53:12	legal 21:22 22:19 43:18 105:3 148:25 159:1 160:9	lifted 29:22	lose 19:21	
LBGT 9:16	legislate 107:12	lifting 153:8	lost 12:15 38:4	
lead 50:6 127:8,19 129:14 133:7,8 137:17 140:6 143:20,25 147:19	legislative 104:3,8 104:12,17,22	light 77:4 154:2	lot 8:10 12:25 16:4 23:24 30:10 38:8 52:21 53:4,14 54:7 65:19 66:11 86:24 89:9	
leader 22:8 70:15	legitimate 21:1 93:6	likelihood 81:10 82:17		
	length 3:2 36:13 37:3	limited 24:3,17		
	lengthy 100:6	line 26:11,12 47:4 61:21 71:1,14 106:12 124:10		
	lens 54:3	lines 23:24 58:1		
	lesbian 7:24	linguistic 47:13,17		
	lessons 117:3 118:11	link 16:21 87:16		
		linked 15:2 37:10 43:6 72:2 95:8		
		links 150:19		
		listen 153:20		
		listened 42:11		
		listening 24:10		
		lit 154:1		
		literally 17:1 38:3 40:9 133:7		
		little 4:22 10:4 12:19 14:10 26:1 35:1 40:12 115:9		

male-on-female 147:2	37:10,18	measures 104:23 155:4	156:12	mobilisations 50:9
male-on-male 146:24 147:11	marriages 37:21 59:19,21 60:7,12	mechanics 47:25 95:16	mental-health-r... 10:13	mobilise 96:12
males 68:23 122:22 131:16	60:12 61:16 62:7 62:18 65:10,14	mechanism 27:10 41:14 43:18	mention 2:16 66:10 67:3,10,25	mobilised 96:13
malfunctioning 56:16,18	88:12,13,16,19 88:24 147:22	media 96:15	68:1 107:4 146:11	model 58:13
man 32:21 54:12 71:21,22	married 28:25 29:7,18,23 59:13	mediate 41:23 146:1	mentioned 39:25 53:18 66:23	models 84:7
manage 114:3	59:14 63:8 64:2 64:22 65:8,25	mediation 41:15 41:15,18,20,24	103:14 106:6 143:12,25 144:24	modern-day 8:20
managed 29:8 105:9 128:13	68:6 78:3 88:16	42:7,14,25 43:4 145:21	156:9	modest 34:17,18 34:21
132:3	marry 39:19,25 40:1 60:10,24	mediator 91:13	mentioning 47:24 47:24	moment 9:2 12:7 13:24 35:14,20
management 113:15 122:10,13	61:6 62:4,15 64:20 67:4	mediators 42:14 91:15	message 56:5 84:24 98:3	38:21,25 50:14 59:1 60:5 66:23
123:6,10 124:3 131:11 132:1,6	marrying 62:14	meet 79:8 140:24 157:10	102:19	80:3,7 101:7 112:3 131:16
managing 58:13	marshalling 139:24	meeting 125:7 155:15	messages 23:16 76:7 102:14	112:3 131:16 137:6 138:24
mandatorily 86:7	mask 88:21	meetings 42:8 108:24 122:18	104:14	140:24
mandatory 83:20 83:23,24 84:8	massive 28:16,20 35:15	125:5	middle 38:17	Monday 48:24 160:25 161:6
85:19,24 86:23 86:25 87:3,14,16	massively 62:18 65:15 87:6	member 29:6 30:8 120:14,17,20	Midlands 118:23	monitor 97:23
97:3,16 159:6	matching 81:4,5	123:18,20 124:19 150:22	midwifery 65:24	monitored 46:23
manifest 83:18 93:11,14 102:14	material 2:16	members 9:16 11:12 25:20	migrant 78:20	monitoring 91:1 96:22 99:17
manner 27:25 98:8	matter 42:3 54:16 86:8	46:14 54:24 102:22 108:17	migrants 16:2	monopolised 22:2 22:2
mantra 93:9	matters 2:6 5:17 41:16 43:8,16	116:11 121:2 127:11 129:18	migrated 119:8	Month 154:1
March 134:4	113:3	131:13,24 135:12 145:24	migrations 20:16	months 128:3
marginalised 9:18	maturity 68:24	membership 120:19 123:16	MINAB 26:3 90:4 90:10	moral 19:3,3,4 21:21 148:23
marital 6:17 42:9 104:25	mean 11:6 31:12 36:10,11 41:18	127:11 129:18 131:13,24 135:12	mind 7:10 46:3,11 53:20 71:14 94:8	1:17 10:2 89:3 117:23 127:23
mark 37:15,17	48:23 56:22 59:7 74:9,11 81:18	145:24	134:12,13,24 143:15 148:1,4	141:14 144:15 147:14 152:11
marriage 5:14 10:17,23 22:25	89:9 92:24 94:4 108:6 125:23	members 9:16 11:12 25:20	157:13	147:14 152:11
29:19 37:18,21 48:13 54:19	135:14 140:11 150:1 153:23	46:14 54:24 102:22 108:17	mind-set 46:9 149:15	mosque 18:7,9,13 30:11 67:2,12,14
58:25 59:7,8,9,9 59:11,18 60:3,4	meaning 5:8 62:23	116:11 121:2 127:11 129:18	mine 114:15	69:19 70:18 108:11,15
61:2,8,21 62:1,20 62:21 63:2,6,7,23	meaningful 95:5,6	131:13,24 135:12 145:24	minimised 42:12	mosques 43:6 62:3 62:4 67:15,17,20
64:5,8,12,14,18 65:12 67:7,17,20	means 53:24 78:25 90:24 111:3	men 10:18 17:25 23:20,21,22	minimum 155:15 157:10	90:5
76:25 78:3 86:6 86:7 87:11,12,15	122:1 135:7 151:16	51:20 52:8,10,13 52:25 54:6,7,8,10	mind-set 46:9 149:15	mother-in-law 52:20
101:13 105:1	meant 64:17 86:9 100:18 123:5	55:8 109:2,8 111:18 122:20,24	mind-set 46:9 149:15	mothers 52:19
marriageability	140:9 145:17	123:3,8 131:20 132:11	mine 114:15	move 49:21 80:5 99:20
		mental 5:17 62:23 71:3 154:4	minimised 42:12	MP 150:19 151:8
			minutes 38:23 151:24 152:4	mud 54:13,14,16
			misbehaviour 83:3	multi-cultural 58:13
			missed 158:16	
			missing 66:3	
			mistake 139:9	
			mixed 152:12	

<p>multi-faith 58:13 mum 119:21 murdered 48:12 48:14,15 music 117:3 119:24 Muslim 18:1 36:22 50:11,22 75:22 75:23 76:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p>N 161:9 naive 85:5 naively 84:20 name 2:22,23 3:12 4:8,9 7:12 8:4 11:14 22:6 54:1 54:2,22 59:4 114:4,4 115:16 133:24 137:15 Nanak 115:12 119:2 narrative 84:25 85:8,12,23 86:11 86:14 87:22,24 88:1,5 Natan 91:16 Natasha 1:9,14 3:13 37:20 161:11 national 10:7,16 90:4 135:9 native 128:9 naturally 128:10 nature 6:17 53:9 59:24 83:25 146:23 navigate 44:19 96:16 Navraj 124:12 NCVL 135:6 NCVO 135:5,9,11 nearly 82:1 necessarily 30:17 109:4,16 110:9 110:18 133:10 140:4 need 2:13,18 5:5 11:24 13:10 16:18 17:3,20,21</p>	<p>20:17,18 21:9,14 36:2 51:13,25 57:3,16,17 72:23 74:13,21 75:25 77:13 78:3 79:8 82:24 86:18,18 88:21,22 92:19 92:20,20 93:5 94:8,23 99:16 102:1 103:5 106:10 111:1 113:7 114:1 120:25 125:14 127:20 130:7 153:8 154:7,8 155:14 156:7 158:2,10 needed 19:16 71:23 104:12,16 needing 13:7 needs 5:1 17:3 18:1 57:22 58:5 58:15 74:3 88:10 88:11 95:6 111:12 146:2 neglected 94:23 neighbourhood 91:13 neither 80:20 net 44:20 networks 40:23 never 7:16 22:25 23:1,2 24:7 27:3 42:11 74:8,20 97:19 108:9 111:23 158:10,20 new 22:24 106:2 128:3 131:23 134:1 149:3,16 nice 152:24 Nirvana 1:10 3:14 10:4,7 29:11 102:9 no-one 22:9,9 nodding 58:21 non-discriminat... 43:14 non-existent 48:23 non-registered</p>	<p>60:11 nonconformist 70:25 71:6,10,12 norm 62:15 normally 118:11 121:13 125:14,16 129:24 141:21 norms 46:5 93:4 110:12 128:15 148:24 149:24 note 122:3 151:23 notes 2:7 113:4 notice 90:11 135:22 notified 144:5 notions 40:24 notoriously 124:6 125:11 November 136:21 160:3 NSPCC 142:22 nuance 45:14 number 6:13,13 41:7 42:1 63:9 64:24 65:14 72:11 85:21 108:5 116:4 132:2,4 137:16 152:10 159:22 numbers 64:21 65:6 66:7 116:3 nutshell 147:23 148:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p>objection 155:18 155:19 obligation 158:21 158:22 159:1 obligations 131:6 observation 23:22 23:25 obstacles 20:25,25 obtain 79:25 140:5 obvious 125:10 obviously 8:6 11:6 27:8 63:6 86:21 86:22 124:9 128:10 130:4 133:13 134:5</p>	<p>138:23 153:10 154:17 occasion 145:7 occasions 15:7 104:1 occupy 121:24 occupying 110:4 occur 88:4 occurring 49:15 49:18 October 154:2 odd 82:3 111:10 offence 61:11 offences 61:12 offend 73:23 offensive 81:6 offer 96:2 offering 11:3 office 10:17 121:24 125:17 135:25 145:5,8 officer 75:17,20 85:9 119:3 124:11,15,18,19 124:20 141:22 officers 11:1 110:16 124:10 offices 145:3 official 119:3 124:17 Ofsted 95:21 157:13 Oh 16:12 49:21 56:15 75:21 100:16 okay 75:19 89:6 122:3 155:3 old 67:4,5 68:8 149:17 older 45:4 66:1 69:14 119:22 149:14 oldest 115:20 118:22 once 68:1 78:15 84:21 ones 125:17 137:7 147:24 online 10:21</p>	<p>141:19 142:25 onslaught 7:18 onus 61:14,23 open 3:20 78:16 105:13 117:25 153:9 154:7 openers 30:18 opening 99:5 154:16 openly 30:18,23 147:9 153:14 operate 15:14,16 96:8 112:1 operating 5:3 16:9 35:20,23 101:25 opinion 104:5 opportune 29:23 opportunities 65:21 66:2 102:7 106:17 opportunity 3:8 4:3,18 7:16 115:4 142:11 151:1 155:21,22 oppression 21:15 42:10 optimism 100:8,17 options 76:9 order 3:15 5:22 41:23 60:11 67:7 71:23 72:22 orders 97:13 organisation 5:1 14:12 19:24 23:25 26:8,18,22 27:8,13,15,17 28:15 31:3 48:24 75:18 99:12 109:5,7 120:13 120:21 121:17 125:23 127:3 128:19,21 140:14 141:9 143:19 144:19 146:14 155:21 158:24 organisation's 87:2 organisations 1:7 6:22 8:14 14:3</p>
---	--	--	--	--

<p>17:18 18:4 20:10 23:7,11 25:6,7,13 25:14,18 26:4,11 26:15,20,21,24 27:9 28:7 35:15 42:2,18 45:10,15 45:16,17,18 46:19 48:25 49:12 50:22 86:2 92:3,10 97:25 98:9,11,14,16,19 98:24 100:20 101:1,6,7,8,9,25 121:7,13,14 130:6 135:9,10 140:6 141:25 151:2 152:10 organise 121:8 organised 128:5 organs 31:16 orientated 117:13 158:9 ostracised 78:5 out-of-date 134:17 outdated 55:25 outside 48:21 50:15 76:20 79:22 96:21 116:2 145:18 outsider 55:23 outsource 138:8 outsourcing 92:8,8 outstanding 86:8 overcome 19:17 78:7 overcoming 10:1 overlook 155:23 overnight 84:22 override 111:6 overrides 106:24 overseeing 90:25 overspeak 113:20 overspeaking 29:4 59:25 125:6,7 129:7 131:14 overtake 87:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <p>packages 139:21 page 3:2 4:11,12</p>	<p>114:22 143:16 159:22,24 pages 3:1 paid 127:24 130:25 pain 30:10 painted 100:4 Pakistan 48:14,16 Pakistani 5:9 pandemic 113:1 panel 1:5 85:20 100:2 112:12 123:23 136:20 159:16 161:14 paper 2:14 40:7 64:10 paragraph 134:15 139:5,11 142:23 143:20 146:11 paragraphs 143:14 parallels 33:24 parcel 8:11 59:4 130:6 parent 118:9,13 parental 59:15,16 60:18 63:3,4,5,5 parents 50:12 78:1 78:4 96:14 117:9 117:15,16,19,23 117:25 118:4,5 119:1,20,25 120:1 129:21,25 130:2,13,22 141:6,13,20 142:3,12,16 143:3 156:17 157:2,7 158:9 parents' 60:10 part 8:11 9:12 11:6 13:22 19:10 31:25 49:19 50:10 56:4 58:12 59:4 71:12 72:4 75:7,8 88:17 91:9 95:14 104:17 115:23 117:4,20 124:23 130:6</p>	<p>participants 99:25 participate 104:21 participating 78:6 particular 2:4 4:23 8:12 9:2 14:4 16:8 18:7 28:10,21 29:14 39:15 40:6,10 47:2 50:8 52:7 53:1,13 54:4 62:2 70:11 89:15 103:24 112:24 124:3 129:15,23 136:25 137:7 146:7 147:4,10 151:4 154:21 157:22 particularly 1:7 5:7 6:17,25 7:5 8:15 15:4 16:3 17:8,23,25 34:7 35:8,8 41:1 48:4 48:5 50:11 59:1 70:22,23 71:1,19 78:2,14 88:12 103:17 104:20 109:5 137:7 157:15 partly 72:12 110:24 partner 29:18 48:4 48:13 partners 79:1 Partnership 133:25 parts 20:17 48:19 50:25 51:3 107:8 pass 99:25 152:9 pastoral 150:17 Patel 1:8,13 2:21 2:23,23,25 3:4,7 3:10 4:21,21,25 8:15 9:23 14:2,5 14:10 20:2,14 25:12 27:12 30:25 31:1,5,20 33:9,24 36:5 39:7 40:6,12,15 41:20 45:13</p>	<p>49:21,22,23 51:24 55:10 56:11,12 66:11 66:12,17 70:2,7,9 73:10 76:10,14 80:2,19 89:1,4,7 91:5 96:24 100:16 102:5 104:7 110:1 130:4 161:10 patriarchal 31:25 32:3 33:3 34:3,3 40:23 43:12,14 44:1 93:4 110:12 110:12 111:11 130:7 148:17 patronisingly 103:1 patterns 72:25 peace 107:9 pending 132:19 134:3,6 penis 31:16 penniless 16:6 people 14:17 15:3 16:9,12 17:10 18:25 21:5,23 22:14 24:18,25 29:5 30:22 32:9 33:12,13,14 39:16 42:13 45:5 47:1 48:8,10 49:10 53:6,23 54:17,19 56:17 57:22 58:16 60:7 63:7,8 64:1,21,23 67:23 70:24 72:16,17 73:12 76:18,20 77:19 77:21 86:12 87:17 88:2 96:1 102:10,15,25 104:14,15 105:23 106:9,11,19,20 111:18 113:19 116:5,13,14 119:7,11 122:7 122:19 123:19 125:10 127:4,9</p>	<p>127:10 135:20 138:11 142:7 145:1,3,7 149:5,9 152:22,23,24 153:8,11,19 154:6,15 155:8 156:6,9 158:2 people's 96:18 153:17 perceive 9:25 20:10 23:15 71:10 87:24 perceived 15:2 38:8 148:16 percentage 63:7 perception 11:12 11:18 perform 44:9,10 69:20 72:23 122:25 155:13 157:11 performance 70:16 72:5,9 performances 73:2 performed 158:8 period 6:14 68:2,3 68:4,8 periods 68:25 peripatetic 127:10 permitted 135:16 perpetrator 28:1 99:8,9 perpetrators 42:16 52:15,16 80:25 82:25 88:2 103:7 person 1:24,25 27:17 32:22,22 41:6,13 63:16 70:15,16 73:5 109:1,15,21 155:6 person's 153:16 personal 81:8 personally 126:23 personnel 90:21 persons 139:1 perspective 13:17</p>
---	---	--	---	--

25:10 56:3 61:1 phone 63:7 phoned 143:21 physical 11:16 72:2,8,10 116:3 156:12 pick 39:9 80:4 picked 12:23 picking 39:13 picture 7:24 83:9 84:22 88:17 100:5 108:20 piece 54:12 100:12 place 6:24 7:4,17 26:23 30:9 39:21 40:20 41:25 42:24 46:4,22 50:10,13 59:20 59:25 60:4,7 62:7 65:15 67:8 70:20 71:17 73:2 73:4 84:6,19,21 88:14,20 89:23 94:3 95:2,3 96:16 115:18 142:6 145:10 151:15 152:20 157:22 placed 39:24 128:25 places 14:4 16:24 18:19 45:16 55:14 79:7 105:25 140:12 placing 17:12 platform 113:19 121:2 156:5 play 45:11 49:4,9 51:17 67:1 117:4 played 147:3 please 1:4,11 2:2 2:19,21 3:12 4:7 45:14 100:12 107:19 112:18,19 113:5,12,22 114:6 134:14 143:15 150:4 159:19 pleased 160:23	plenty 19:8 plight 8:17 plunged 79:3 plunges 79:5 pm 80:8,10,12 112:14,15,17 116:9 127:21 151:23 152:6,8 161:4 point 10:8 17:5 39:13,23 46:13 52:11 56:13 61:24 75:4 76:4 100:19 110:19,21 123:2 126:9 158:4 points 36:6 46:1,7 80:22 police 11:1 13:23 62:11 75:1,5 85:9 141:17,23 141:24 143:23 144:2,3,4 145:14 145:20 146:3,16 150:13,18 158:24 159:2,8 policies 26:10 49:13,14,16 82:12 84:18 95:3 121:14 124:10 125:20 134:7 135:23 136:6 137:21 152:20 153:7 155:10,22 policing 17:11,21 32:7,24 90:1 92:13 policy 5:25 125:2 125:13 134:9 135:13,14 136:13 136:16,19,19,23 136:23 139:18 145:6 159:21 polite 21:6 22:5,5 politely 20:9 political 15:18 21:21 50:4 111:25 128:24 politicians 150:19	politics 124:8 polygamy 5:14 poor 96:8,10 population 16:15 populations 35:7 portray 100:18 pose 84:9 posed 92:12 101:17,18 poses 105:20 position 15:1 22:10 60:9 108:11 154:18 positions 19:2 52:10 53:6 57:16 109:12 110:4,5 127:24 possessed 72:6 possibility 149:13 possible 112:7 138:18 147:3 possibly 2:3 post 143:13,16 144:9 posters 18:8,15,16 18:18,20 98:12 potential 67:3,4 146:15 potentially 109:21 poverty 5:16 power 11:22 21:13 21:13 22:10 33:3 33:3,4 72:15 76:22 93:8 111:4 111:5,12,16,24 151:7,9,10,12,18 powerful 9:21 20:4,24 21:23 44:23 83:9 100:5 154:17 powerfully 34:7 powerless 9:18 practicable 45:21 practicalities 158:7 practically 47:11 145:11 practice 11:3 89:21,22 120:24	124:11 127:1 151:13 157:17,25 158:14 practices 56:8 81:17,22 93:24 107:6,7,10 123:5 134:8 147:20,21 147:24 148:6 practise 117:19 practised 41:16 70:12,23 practises 131:18 practising 123:21 Pragna 1:8,13 2:23 24:1 36:16 80:23 98:16 102:6 106:22 161:10 Pragna's 97:18 pray 69:15,16 prayers 127:17 133:7,8 157:22 praying 70:1 preached 148:14 precise 121:22 precisely 43:23 50:16,18 precursors 61:7 predecessor 146:9 146:15 predecessors 126:25 predominantly 51:19 52:9 preference 55:4 pregnant 65:25 preliminary 2:6 113:3 premises 142:8 prepared 45:23 62:4 present 5:11 57:23 57:24 presented 5:9 presently 13:23 presents 35:14 presided 43:4,4 president 125:17 145:13	pressure 14:25 34:5,6,11 54:23 150:18 pressures 35:8,13 35:14 55:2 57:1 149:19 pressurise 45:4 pressurised 30:1 presume 153:1 pretends 90:11 pretext 70:21 72:10 pretty 30:9 prevalence 40:13 40:19 69:21 71:4 97:11 prevalent 7:22 69:13 148:9 prevent 17:21 18:16 21:13 43:17 47:19 50:5 96:4 103:14 147:11 preventative 97:14 preventing 7:19 17:24 prevents 73:19 previous 33:15 140:6 priest 29:15 127:13 priests 72:14 primary 50:15 principle 47:23 68:2,11 106:25 155:18,19 principles 68:6 Prior 125:9 priority 19:20 private 73:2,6 privilege 33:3 privileged 72:15 proactive 127:1 154:19 proactively 90:14 141:6 153:21 probably 31:22 81:20 89:8 108:5 118:19 123:23
---	---	--	--	---

125:12 126:15 148:9 149:3,23 151:24 158:18 problem 19:10 22:22 27:1 32:14 55:20,22,25 58:12 91:8,22 94:17 130:13 133:9 136:4 151:15 problematic 91:5 91:7 92:6 problems 42:5 83:11 91:10,10 92:18 101:7 113:9 152:13 procedure 120:3 136:21 procedures 26:10 43:12 49:16 84:17 135:24 152:20 153:7 155:10,23 proceed 146:18 process 43:13 108:8 121:10 135:10 154:5 produced 64:11 121:5 producing 64:25 PROF 103:21 160:16 professional 12:13 27:2 74:2 85:10 102:18 professionals 10:25 11:2 63:14 63:20,22 65:23 73:16,21,21 74:8 74:15,23 76:6 81:15,21 82:1,7 82:11 85:8 87:1 87:8 103:9 Professor 100:1 profoundly 43:11 43:12 programme 140:2 progress 20:18,22 20:23 87:14	115:25 progressive 101:10 111:9 prominent 18:19 promote 154:1 prompted 137:25 promulgated 121:5 proportion 63:9 65:1 78:20 131:19 propose 83:19 propped 58:9 prosecution 61:13 146:18 prospects 37:19,21 78:4 protect 17:20 87:18 protected 100:9 protecting 86:19 protection 5:20,23 9:4,22 18:10,10 18:24,25 27:23 59:12 61:1 62:20 80:1 88:15 90:17 92:9 95:3,18 97:13 98:8 99:15 101:15 103:18 104:23 121:6,17 124:4,19 125:25 127:25 129:1 130:21,24 132:7 132:14,18,24 133:2,16 135:13 139:3,8,14 140:4 141:7 151:11 154:20 159:20 protective 103:3 protests 50:14 proud 107:6 provide 6:23 19:15 23:9,11 45:19 93:7 116:4,22 120:18 126:1 128:6,25 133:6 135:12 142:23 150:16 151:3 153:11,12	provided 127:18 provider 128:6,7 131:5 provides 128:16 133:21 providing 5:3 19:3 90:7 95:25 105:3 129:3 134:3 provocation 105:7 puberty 68:13 public 1:4 11:7,7 22:3,19,20 50:24 78:24 95:2 105:4 105:9,11,12 111:8 publicly 22:15 pulling 96:18 punishment 11:15 11:16,17 Punjab 115:21 119:7 149:22 Punjabi 116:23,24 116:25 118:2,7 119:16,23 136:1 136:3,10,14,19 137:3 138:16,17 138:19,22 149:5 157:7 Punjabi-speaking 128:14 purchased 119:6 purity 32:5 152:12 purple 154:1,2 purportedly 72:5 purporting 71:21 purpose 125:18 149:25 purposes 45:6 put 14:19 18:7,14 18:15,18,19 21:10 22:9,12 25:23 46:22 55:1 81:2 84:21 93:3 113:12 121:10 150:17,21 152:20 154:23,24 155:3 puts 26:21 54:23 putting 19:5 84:5 109:21 113:10	Q	qualifications 130:22 qualitative 33:21 34:1,16 35:3 qualities 57:17 quantify 65:13 quantitative 33:22 question 46:18 49:19 57:14 76:14 80:17 81:18 83:3 91:24 93:24,24 111:13 118:16 128:17 129:5 130:9,9 138:11 139:9,10 143:7 144:13 149:1 155:25 156:3 159:5,19 questioning 156:19 questions 1:22 2:4 26:7 35:17 85:17 94:15 99:23,24 100:2 103:20 107:18 113:17 159:12,13,16,17 160:18 161:14 quickly 37:22 41:4 57:13 96:12 quite 36:16 38:3,7 39:16 49:10 54:14 63:17,24 65:6,9 66:11 67:2 74:7 82:18 84:9 100:5 107:22 108:17 111:21 117:20,21 118:7 120:1 122:17 129:12,22 134:17 135:15 136:9 145:23 147:6 148:17 149:5 151:7 153:2 quo 15:18,18,19 quote 62:17	Rabbi 91:16 race 58:13 81:4 129:19 racial 77:5 94:1 racism 76:11 77:5 77:12,12,16 80:15 81:25 82:10,14,20 83:1 93:23 94:13 racist 73:11 77:3,7 77:7,24 raise 2:2 22:23 35:16 41:2 53:16 60:6,17 61:25 76:12 82:3 89:17 92:25 129:24 159:2 raised 21:14 39:14 60:3 76:24,24 raises 41:6 136:24 raising 20:5 21:13 77:3 82:4 104:13 156:18,22 rally 103:8 ran 149:14 rang 30:9 range 141:15 rape 6:18 31:15 33:12 40:9 42:10 104:25 raped 38:1,5 39:19 rapist 39:19 40:1 rare 63:16 65:9 Rattu 1:9,14 3:11 3:13,13,19,24 4:2 4:5 10:3,7 11:5 11:10 12:8 23:6 23:10 25:11 27:11 28:5,9 29:10 31:2 39:7 39:9,13 45:11,12 45:22 51:16 52:3 52:4 53:17,18,21 55:10 58:20,24 59:6,9 60:16 61:5,12 63:11 64:16 65:4 66:8 66:23 73:10,13 73:15 80:19
			R		

<p>83:12,15 84:4 86:3 87:6 88:9 89:1 102:5,6,20 105:15,16 106:22 109:10 161:11 Rattu's 97:4 re-introduced 64:12 reach 14:12 46:25 58:16 68:23 104:19 reached 68:12 141:10 reaching 68:12 reaction 8:5 read 3:8 4:3,18 64:11 114:19 115:4 127:18 reads 127:15 real 18:5 23:18,18 24:14 59:12 61:1 82:6 101:3 105:20 106:1 109:20 149:13 realistically 121:10 145:6,12 154:6 reality 24:7 47:12 73:20 74:19 75:23 96:19,19 126:19 really 16:13 18:2 19:21 24:1,17 39:23 43:25 47:10,25,25 52:11,23 62:8 63:1 65:6 66:23 66:24 79:19 88:17 89:7,7 92:14,14 96:12 98:6 107:10,11 107:16,16 110:5 144:8,9,21 151:10,13 157:2 reappeared 38:13 reason 20:23 32:9 73:12 84:12 96:20 126:4 reasons 25:10</p>	<p>26:15 125:10 131:20,21 rebuild 54:21 receipt 137:25 received 15:12 139:14 144:5 recognise 46:2 51:2 58:1,3,5 60:19 61:22 62:8 62:24 63:15,21 86:21 156:23 recognised 52:8 55:3,5 57:21 60:12 62:2,19 69:10,10 recognises 62:22 recognising 28:10 47:5 54:1 55:7 85:7 138:5 recommendation 85:18 88:8,23 97:5 recommendations 80:5 83:13,15,19 89:2 96:25 97:1 97:2,18 100:7 recommending 83:14,14 reconstituted 10:18 recount 44:14 recourse 78:24 recruited 123:12 123:13 recruitment 123:15 red 57:9 redress 107:22 refer 2:8 7:8 145:18 159:7 reference 8:7 134:10,14,17 136:23 140:5 144:3 referring 9:8 16:25 18:3 152:18 reflecting 156:15 reflects 8:10</p>	<p>reform 104:3,8,12 104:17,22,24 105:8 refresh 146:10 refreshed 128:2 regain 54:8 regard 3:21 regards 120:22,23 155:10 registered 59:22 60:3 65:9 88:16 88:19 registering 61:16 registration 155:13,15 regulate 97:23 regulated 140:21 regulating 90:3,20 99:17 regulation 59:20 61:16 88:12 92:20 93:19 94:9 regulator 157:9 regulatory 90:18 91:14 92:17 95:17 96:21 relate 8:7 12:6 58:23 88:12 related 3:16 5:15 70:7 relation 6:6 18:8 20:19,20,20 41:15 42:8 44:10 44:23,25 53:21 78:9 79:22 90:16 relations 58:14 61:8,9 relationship 27:2 29:20,24,25 39:22 48:17,20 54:19 relationships 17:10,22,25 19:13 25:22,22 47:22 48:2,3,8 relevant 2:16 120:4 131:8 138:19 146:3 153:16 155:8</p>	<p>religion 8:22 12:3 12:5 51:20 55:11 55:15,20 56:4,9 56:22,23 57:6 58:23 66:19 68:1 69:1 81:5 93:11 93:12,14 94:5 101:24 106:13 107:8,8 131:17 religions 35:11 religious 6:19 7:12 7:19 8:4,13,23 9:3,20 14:2 15:2 15:8,18,20 17:11 19:10,25 20:10 23:7,11,14 25:5,7 25:12 26:24 27:8 27:9,13 28:7,15 30:17 31:3,12 32:12,15 35:10 35:20 41:3,21 42:14 43:5 45:10 45:15,18 46:18 50:19 51:16,18 51:20,25 52:9 55:12,13,17 56:1 57:1 58:2 59:4 59:19 60:6,11,12 60:13 65:14,22 66:13,15 67:10 68:6,11 69:4,10 70:4,6,16 71:9,17 72:13,14 79:9,11 79:15 82:19 83:17,21 84:15 85:6,25 88:20 90:1,8,15,20,21 91:18 92:2,22,23 93:10,19 94:1,16 94:18,25 96:7 98:10,14,18,24 99:11 102:16 105:17 107:3,7 107:21 110:6,8 110:11 111:17 116:10 118:25 122:25 125:23,24 127:7,8 131:20 133:14 144:19</p>	<p>147:16,24 148:7 religiously 48:6 61:10 92:17 93:3 109:8 relocate 24:23 reluctance 76:10 76:14,16 reluctancy 23:18 45:24 reluctant 6:11 18:13 24:8 rely 148:20 relying 63:20 remain 27:16 57:1 102:2,2 remaining 77:17 remains 7:21 19:25 remarkable 148:15 remedies 19:19 36:1 41:7 remedy 11:15 63:2 remember 54:17 54:20 103:14 133:24 139:24 remiss 88:9 remit 11:7 remove 60:17 85:15 removing 63:3 repeat 100:13 repeated 42:20 replicated 149:8 report 27:7,13 28:6,22 42:3 44:17 47:20 51:3 73:13 76:11,15 76:16 83:25 85:25 86:23 150:3 158:22 159:2 reported 30:24 84:1 86:7 143:9 145:12,14,15 150:12 reporting 27:10,24 40:11 64:1 78:12 83:10,20,23,24</p>
---	---	---	---	---

<p>84:8 85:15,19,24 87:14,17 97:3,16 131:6 152:15 reports 42:8 159:3 represent 12:9 57:22 58:19 111:19,22 representatives 110:8 representing 1:6 reproduced 32:11 reputation 28:19 30:20 37:15 54:22 require 124:7 required 19:4 115:25 124:12 139:7,17 requirement 46:22 83:21 84:5 87:17 requirements 84:8 requires 89:11 requisite 126:16 126:18 research 8:10 40:7 43:10,10 45:2,8 64:24 residents 7:21 resistance 98:10 resolve 42:5,25 43:8 57:2 145:25 resort 42:3,4 resource 11:3 96:11 98:17 resource-poor 96:9 resourced 101:5 resources 19:16 22:1,2 24:3,17 74:16 96:7,10 130:16 respect 9:14 11:20 11:25 12:2 33:19 34:23,25 39:14 53:22,25 54:10 87:9 88:15 94:3 94:4 109:11 114:5 128:25 130:19 131:11</p>	<p>154:18 respectable 140:7 140:10 respectful 21:7 respects 87:10 respond 22:10 42:20 44:25 78:1 response 21:8 25:8 31:4 76:5 77:11 responses 15:12 93:25 responsibilities 21:21,21,22 responsibility 21:20,20 56:21 57:12 92:8 124:3 124:24 132:7 responsible 33:20 92:13 129:3 137:19 rest 122:21 restore 54:15 restriction 123:3 result 13:20 36:15 37:2 54:20 65:2 148:24 149:16 results 86:8 resume 160:25 retired 126:8 return 39:1 80:8 112:4,14 Returning 4:21 reveal 32:3 revealing 31:11 91:23 111:21 revere 115:17 reverence 51:16 72:16 133:5 review 7:9,14 8:2 8:9 125:3,20 134:22 135:2 137:13,20 160:3 160:8 reviewed 125:9 134:25 136:21 159:21,25,25 160:5,8,11 reviewing 125:16 125:18 127:2</p>	<p>157:13 158:15 160:10 reviews 135:3 rich 96:11,11 98:17 rid 72:5,6 right 24:19 29:25 36:9,16 44:19 49:6,7 60:15,16 64:6,15 69:12 74:17,18 76:5 81:23 93:11,11 93:13,14,16 98:1 98:4 104:5,15 107:12 110:24 119:25 120:1,8 122:6,14 123:1 129:8 148:25 157:9 right-based 94:19 rightly 65:5 150:13 rights 5:22 7:20 93:15 94:20,21 94:22 95:13,13 104:10 rights-based 94:18 rile 73:24 ringing 75:5 rise 8:25 9:20 35:10,12,20,21 119:14,15 rises 119:12 risk 109:22 ritual 69:11 70:17 72:4,9 ritualised 70:20 71:16 72:8 rituals 66:18 71:9 72:24 73:2,3 road 130:14 robust 84:17 role 45:12 52:20 109:7 114:5 119:3 120:2,7 121:22,23 124:5 124:23 127:1 137:14 141:8 154:19</p>	<p>roles 34:8 50:20 53:3 109:9 122:25 123:10 rolling 87:25 roof 79:8 room 18:20 28:2 109:1 rooms 22:17 root 32:25 rough 68:22 roughly 117:7 118:23 147:13 round-table 99:18 run 9:24 63:6 116:18 120:5,14 122:19 133:16,20 143:2 running 123:11 126:11 runs 128:4 133:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <hr/> <p>Sabha 114:8 115:8 116:1 Sadia 1:10,15 4:9 14:13 15:15 56:12 94:10 100:25 161:12 sadly 72:11 73:20 safe 5:19 6:23 14:16,23 51:2 85:10 141:19 152:23,24 safeguard 84:17 safeguarding 32:24 75:9 90:12 121:14,17 124:9 124:10,18,20,24 125:2 126:13 132:8,16 133:23 133:25 134:9 137:12,17 139:23 145:16,19 155:7 155:9,11 158:3 safety 5:20 24:22 44:20 59:13 138:7 142:25 Sahib 115:16 127:16 sake 127:3</p>	<p>salad 67:6 Samia 48:15 sanction 32:15 sanctioned 32:11 32:12,12 61:11 sanctions 95:19 Sandwell 133:23 133:25 135:8 Sanghera 3:17 55:1 81:6 99:3 108:13 SAS 128:21 129:2 129:18,22 141:5 141:9,25 143:18 143:25 146:13 sat 109:2 152:2 satisfied 144:1 Saturday 117:23 119:13 Savvy 96:15 saw 16:8 26:1 48:23 86:5 87:10 87:14 103:12 105:5 saying 9:12 24:2,5 24:6 31:5 35:5 37:20 44:22 49:6 49:8 50:23 52:1 57:15,15 64:19 80:23 82:17 84:20,23 86:17 89:4 90:18 93:10 93:20 102:23 103:1 111:2 128:22 130:6 136:9 150:3,22 151:5 157:23 says 7:23 8:1 134:22 139:6 148:19 SBS000001_004 7:10 scenario 66:25 scheduled 146:19 scholar 71:21 scholars 73:4 school 50:25 51:4 119:17 150:12 school-based</p>
---	---	---	--	---

<p>113:10 schooling 149:20 schools 50:13,15 50:15 51:9 117:22 157:13 Scolding 1:4,5,16 1:17 2:25 3:5,8 3:11,15,20,25 4:3 4:6,11,15,18,21 7:8 9:23 11:5 12:1 14:1,6 20:2 23:6 25:2 27:6 28:5 29:4 30:25 31:19 33:5,10 36:3,10 38:11 39:1,3,7 40:3 41:18 45:2 47:13 49:20 51:15 53:14 55:9 56:11 58:20 60:1 61:4 61:6 63:5 64:4 64:21 66:8 68:15 68:21 69:3 70:2 73:9 76:10 80:2 80:9,13 83:7,23 85:19 86:21 88:7 89:1,6 91:4 96:24 99:22 100:3,4 112:3,8 112:18,22,23 114:9,13,16,19 114:21 115:1,4,7 116:5,14,18 117:7 118:5,16 118:20 119:19 120:7,10 121:4 121:15,21 122:1 122:3,6,12,17,23 123:12 124:2,15 124:18 125:1,7 125:19 126:18 127:7,25 128:4 128:17 129:8,10 130:4,19 131:9 131:14,17 132:6 132:11,13,17,20 132:24 133:3,9 133:13,19,25 134:7,22 135:3,6</p>	<p>135:14 136:1,4 136:16 137:11,24 138:10,15,18 139:2 140:3,9,17 140:19 141:4 142:4,21 143:2,6 143:13 144:7,13 145:9,17 146:4 146:11,21 147:13 147:25 148:13 149:1 150:1 151:5,22 152:4,9 153:18 154:10,17 154:23 155:12,25 157:8,21 158:21 159:5,11,17,23 160:22 161:3,13 161:17 screen 2:18,20 108:25 109:2 113:9 139:12 scripture 115:14 115:16 116:25 127:16 scrutinise 76:22 scrutinising 155:6 scrutiny 94:6 123:23 SCVL 135:6 SCVO 135:5,8 se 158:11 seat 22:2 second 49:19 68:4 71:6 88:8 110:21 126:7 139:22 secondly 60:6 113:5 seconds 2:18 secrecy 31:7 32:17 99:2 secret 29:20 48:9 54:18 secretary 114:7 115:8 121:25 132:9,10 145:13 146:14 sector 12:13 62:8,9 102:17 sectors 105:17</p>	<p>sects 58:2 secular 94:18 secure 5:20,20 6:15,23 see 8:21 20:17,18 20:23 36:12,13 36:21 37:12 47:11 48:10 52:10 58:6,6,8 59:12,15 66:25 67:7,12 76:19,19 77:21,22 80:20 81:5,17 86:4,5,11 90:22,24 91:5 93:8,9 94:17 96:17 98:7 99:8 100:8 101:10 102:24 109:12 110:18 111:22 113:9,25 130:10 133:10 135:21 140:14 150:4 151:8,8 154:25 155:24 seeing 16:14 21:15 31:23 35:12 41:5 56:6 61:12 69:17 79:20 95:4 102:7 109:10 123:8 seek 11:15 41:10 78:15 81:2 156:6 seeking 26:14 43:17 129:21 seen 7:24 9:11 15:2,17,19,23 20:21 22:22,23 32:18,18 33:8,19 42:1 48:10 50:19 50:22 51:7 58:20 64:19 71:13,14 74:10 80:24 81:7 99:6 103:15 104:24 105:3 108:23 133:5 sees 135:18,20 segregation 51:9 selection 108:8 self-appointed 57:22</p>	<p>self-identification 106:7 self-regulation 89:16,25 90:23 91:6 97:20 98:14 99:20 self-styled 21:19 57:21 seminars 83:24 85:21 sending 56:4 98:3 104:14 senior 108:10,16 108:18,18,21,24 109:1,6,9 125:17 sense 42:16 44:4 sensible 136:8 157:12 sensitive 92:18 93:9,19 sensitivities 92:22 92:23 sensitivity 94:1,1 94:16 96:7 sent 111:19 separate 55:19,22 70:10 separated 57:7 serious 44:24 69:25 146:1 159:2 seriously 150:15 150:24 service 5:18 10:21 12:14,18,22,24 13:21 61:20 82:16 services 5:3 12:19 12:21,23 13:3,5,5 13:24 15:10 18:8 23:9,10 25:4 35:22 62:10 78:8 79:23 81:5,14 82:8,22 83:5 98:12,17 99:14 101:23 116:4,8 116:16 118:17 127:19,22 158:8 session 81:19,24</p>	<p>82:2 141:20 sessions 142:24 143:3 set 12:12 16:4 43:22 68:25 83:9 89:12 90:5 95:22 116:1 123:23 131:23 155:5,15 158:17 sets 137:1 138:5 setting 19:4 22:7 56:24 67:21 69:19 70:18,18 84:16 88:20 90:7 96:22 settings 6:19 8:13 28:8 41:3 66:15 67:12 83:17 84:13 105:17 settlement 41:24 severely 15:1 severity 95:20 sex 32:1 47:23,25 48:18 50:12,17 68:7 71:22 96:14 154:10 sexting 150:12 sexual 4:24 6:10 6:12,17,18,18 8:7 8:14 10:6 12:11 12:18 13:5 17:19 19:12 28:9 29:4 30:2 31:9,15,15 32:4,10,10 33:16 33:20 35:2 37:16 37:16,16,22,23 37:23 39:20 40:1 40:5,9,13,19 41:2 42:9 45:6,20 48:22 49:2,2,15 50:7 51:14 53:9 58:24 59:3 61:2 61:4,8,9 69:2,5 70:19,21 71:6,11 71:17 72:1,8,10 73:13 78:21 80:15 83:21 86:1 91:21 92:25 95:10,12 98:22</p>
--	---	--	---	---

<p>98:23 99:1,1 100:9 142:6 143:4,9,17 144:18 146:25 147:2,10,22 149:9,12 151:11 152:12,15 153:22 154:21 155:2,10 156:3,16 157:24 sexuality 17:8,12 17:21 31:9,15 32:1,7,25 33:1 40:24 43:22 50:20 91:21 154:11 sexually 29:6,15 30:7 47:3 66:13 74:25 75:13 79:16 shadow 108:19 Shahid 48:15 shame 11:14 28:10 28:15 29:2 30:15 31:7 32:17 47:8 53:10,15 55:3,6 57:4 77:23 109:17 147:14,18 148:6 152:11 153:4 shameful 62:12 shape 15:3 44:1 93:7 share 30:5 39:17 100:23 108:2 109:20 120:24,25 shared 52:5 130:5 Sharia 43:2,3 51:11,11 sharing 84:24 102:14 Sharpling 103:22 103:23 105:15 106:21 107:17 160:13,14 sheer 43:7 111:12 sheet 108:12 shelter 79:12 shift 65:7,10 85:8 86:11,12 107:2</p>	<p>107:15 109:5 126:12 shifting 85:12,22 86:13 87:22 88:1 88:5 shifts 84:25 127:23 short 39:5 80:11 80:22 112:16 152:7 shortage 76:16 shout 22:4 shouted 22:1 shouting 21:25 show 18:23 22:8 34:24 57:17 94:16 110:22,23 111:8 showing 77:4 94:3 95:1 shown 90:6,13,19 showpieces 111:7 shows 65:7,10 108:21 151:15 shrinking 101:8 shrouded 31:7 shut 16:4 76:4 shy 21:9 siblings 78:2,3 side 18:20 32:8,8 42:15,16 124:24 155:7 158:19 sides 158:19 sign 3:3 114:15 signals 104:15 signed 3:23 4:13 64:9 114:11,23 114:23 significant 31:18 38:14 47:17 152:13 signpost 151:2 156:5 signposting 45:16 46:19 signs 65:20,21 Sikh 15:25 16:19 17:9,17,24 29:14 29:15 47:3,7 48:24 51:19 52:7</p>	<p>120:8,11,15,16 120:20 121:3,4,7 121:22 123:17,21 128:23 129:13 133:9 142:1 143:18 147:19 151:3,3 152:14 154:18,19,25 156:1 157:7 Sikh-specific 158:1 Sikhism 122:8,23 148:15 Sikhs 115:12,21,21 116:24 119:7 120:22 121:7 129:17 147:8 silence 21:11 32:17 77:18 silenced 77:21,22 silent 28:23 30:15 57:2 77:17 silk 54:12,16 similar 1:19 7:24 119:16 simply 14:7 27:2 76:1 91:6 111:7 simultaneously 49:8 Singh 112:20,21 114:7,8 115:8 116:1 161:15,16 singing 24:5 117:5 single 81:19 82:1 94:10 96:21 97:24 111:19 Sir 103:19,21 160:15,16 sisters 1:9,11 2:24 4:10,22,25 12:9 12:12 13:2 17:1 18:4 52:19 55:2 55:3 128:18 130:5 156:9 sit 22:16 89:11 114:1 117:15,25 145:4 158:9 sites 146:18 situation 9:5,10</p>	<p>69:5 80:6 89:3 98:9 145:14 situations 24:25 41:5 79:2,7 six 55:2 skill 131:23 138:5 skirt 36:12 37:3,4 slight 136:4 slightly 112:4,6 114:2 152:2 slim 81:12 slip 93:23 Slough 71:19,20 slowly 149:15 154:5 small 10:10 64:21 65:6 119:21 141:25 142:19 Smethwick 118:22 119:2 so-called 17:23 50:19 70:24 71:3 social 7:19 11:1 43:7 47:14,18 50:4 55:14,16 62:10 75:3,4 79:5 82:15 96:15 131:21 147:16 socially 32:11 societal 44:20 society 16:20 21:24 34:19 36:11 37:13 39:16 65:7,10 73:12 102:22 103:1 130:3,8 156:25 solution 91:8,9 solutions 10:1 somebody 26:19 28:15 29:2,20 37:25 38:8 55:22 55:23 60:4 61:6 61:9 69:15,20 70:1 75:17,21 82:16 108:9 121:15 126:19 somebody's 69:20 somersaults 67:6</p>	<p>son 72:23 sons 55:5 soon 2:3 30:9 sorry 108:18 121:21 129:9,10 134:21 147:25 148:1 160:7 sort 12:4 14:7 20:11 25:3,22 38:24 66:16 69:9 70:5 89:12,19,21 116:20 120:11 121:1,11 122:6 126:7 128:15 129:19 130:23 135:12,16 137:1 137:1 139:18,25 140:13 147:5,7 147:16 148:11,14 148:22,23 153:4 153:5,6,12,15 154:2 155:5 157:25 158:13 sought 23:10 25:6 25:7 30:22 141:6 144:9 sound 110:7 sources 138:4 South 20:16 South-Asian 1:8 5:8 8:24 31:11 31:19,21 33:11 33:17 35:5,11 39:12 40:6,14 41:17 47:18 51:18 53:13 55:4 144:16 152:13 Southall 1:9 2:24 4:22,25 16:6,10 17:1 18:4 114:8 115:8,20 116:1 128:18 130:4 131:15 space 6:23 25:3 47:4 73:6 85:10 86:22 spaces 14:16,16,23 19:16 22:20 24:18 35:1 86:11</p>
--	---	---	---	--

96:8 100:21,22 101:5 102:17 spaghetti 67:6 spate 72:3 speak 1:25 25:19 26:8 29:8,11 41:11 75:18 81:11 104:21 106:19 116:24 147:9 153:14,16 153:19 speaking 1:24 25:15 27:9 55:23 62:13 110:25 speaks 128:9 137:18 special 72:15 119:14 specialist 12:14,24 specific 5:12 132:7 specifically 26:6 63:12 113:17 speed 104:3 spell 68:15,17 spelt 92:22 spend 140:22 spirit 71:15 spirits 72:6 spiritual 59:2,5 69:3 70:3,15 133:6 spoke 30:7 55:12 125:8 150:21 spoken 28:2 147:9 spontaneously 138:1 sporadically 65:16 spot 137:2 154:24 154:24 158:17 spotted 65:20,21 spouse 67:5 spring 86:9 Sri 114:8 115:8 staff 124:19,22 129:3 135:23 137:8 140:25 145:2,4,5 stage 63:15 128:21 142:2 156:14	stages 147:9 stamp 151:13,17 stance 23:3 stand 22:4,14 standards 19:4 90:7,9 92:20 95:18,19 96:22 155:16 157:10 start 24:12 82:8 85:7 86:13,16 87:25 89:4 100:16 116:9 started 138:3 starts 86:17 state 6:4 96:4,19 101:18 155:16 statement 3:1,3,22 3:23 4:6,12,13,19 7:9 8:11 53:19 66:10 68:18 71:20 76:13 113:7 114:9,11 114:15,22,24 115:5 137:11 139:4,5 142:5,23 143:12 146:12 150:9 statements 2:15 53:16 statistics 97:6 status 15:18,18,19 30:21 54:2 72:15 80:15,24 110:5 statutory 25:4 62:9 76:20 81:13 82:8,16,22 87:13 94:11 134:17 stay 16:22 51:2 118:8,12,13 stays 135:19 steeped 11:8 stem 148:19 step 145:10 155:20 stepfather 75:1,14 stereotypes 34:6 77:6 stigma 13:16 28:16 47:21 53:10 62:15	85:15 153:4 stop 11:5 60:1 77:14 113:23 stopping 21:14 stories 71:18 105:22 straight 146:2 street 17:14 streets 16:6,10,14 17:9 strengthening 97:12 strict 157:2 striking 111:16 strong 34:7 126:9 stronger 26:23 strongly 107:11 structural 6:1 structure 31:25 34:9 structures 33:3 34:3,3,4,4,10 40:22 43:15,22 44:1,24 89:23 93:2 struggle 46:15 47:11 125:13,20 struggled 24:1 126:16 149:23 struggles 101:16 students 16:3,5 stuff 55:13 style 20:8 subgroups 9:15 subject 29:4,7 48:17 78:13,22 79:13 144:18 154:7,11 156:8 subjects 156:21 subjugation 35:1 submitted 150:9 subscribe 110:14 subservience 34:24 succeeded 105:9 suddenly 94:25 suggest 71:7 84:12 90:13 99:18 suggesting 91:3	suggestion 67:16 summary 137:6 summer 141:13 Sunday 117:22,23 119:13 superintendent 150:20,21 151:8 supervision 117:17 118:14 support 5:4 10:9 10:18,22,24,25 12:15 13:7,11,11 16:11 17:2 23:20 26:13,14 41:10 43:13 75:16,20 78:15 81:3 98:25 99:10,15 103:9 109:14 120:18 150:17,17 supported 47:7 102:2 supporting 5:19 6:5,9 10:25 13:19 26:22 46:19 47:6 94:11 suppose 20:2,6 105:24 130:8 142:16 144:13 149:1 153:12 supposed 90:3 134:4 supposedly 50:23 sure 19:22 22:7 35:25 76:5,15 89:24 96:20 118:16 125:18 127:5 154:14 surface 17:6 surprise 136:18 survive 35:25 survivor 13:13 20:7 26:5,14,17 27:24 29:14 46:3 47:2 survivors 4:23 6:9 6:21 7:6 10:5,24 13:7,11,15 19:16 25:13,24 26:22 27:7,13 28:4,6	29:10,13 35:16 35:18 36:1 44:3 44:11,25 45:20 46:8 49:25 52:6 58:10 74:4 77:22 77:23 79:25 82:23 83:4 100:22 101:2,21 104:21 105:19,21 survivors' 105:25 suspect 38:18 160:23 suspicion 84:2 suspicious 91:24 swallow 98:15 swear 1:12 syllabus 141:15 system 1:24 43:18 79:23 92:17 93:18 97:21 98:5 147:6 149:20,20 systems 52:13 57:25 96:16
T				
				tab 2:25 3:22 4:7 114:10,22 134:12 136:20 table 22:3 109:3 taboo 7:5 24:9 146:23 147:1,4 154:7,11 156:20 tackle 77:13 83:6 tackled 111:13 tackling 6:6 tactic 55:19 56:14 56:15 tainted 78:4 take 6:24 7:4 18:23 38:21,23 54:13,15 59:20 60:4 65:15 73:2 73:3 80:3 86:14 88:14,20,21 92:21 112:4,6 127:11 145:10 150:24 154:19 taken 7:17 23:4 30:9 38:6 39:21 59:25 153:17

<p>takes 6:13,20 41:25 42:24 46:4 67:8 70:20 71:17 157:22</p> <p>talk 10:12,14 11:7 12:7 14:18 17:16 17:19 18:14 28:15,23 29:16 30:2,11,13,18,24 31:8,13,24 32:2 32:10 47:4 48:1 48:20 49:23 50:1 50:3 51:13 53:14 56:24,25 59:2 63:12 66:17 67:9 75:22 76:3 86:13 91:20 92:19 93:18 94:8 100:23 102:11 122:18 130:12 141:17,18,21 152:11 156:8,13 156:20,25 157:5</p> <p>talked 14:13 23:2 25:2 38:2 40:4,7 47:14 51:24 69:3 69:5 89:3 91:16 91:17 138:10 143:19 147:6,13 156:11</p> <p>talked-about 87:11</p> <p>talking 8:18,18,20 9:8,10,17 11:21 17:19 20:15 21:17 26:4 28:17 31:6 32:14 33:2 33:7,16 34:2,8,16 35:6 39:8 45:5 47:22 48:14 49:24 50:7 52:12 52:14,15 56:3,13 59:19 74:22 77:14 80:13 86:15 106:2 109:17 146:24 154:10 156:9</p> <p>talks 107:8 129:6 129:25 142:2,4</p>	<p>142:13,15 156:17</p> <p>targeted 129:17</p> <p>teach 55:15 130:19 130:20</p> <p>teacher 75:3,3 85:9 102:18</p> <p>teachers 11:1 118:2,15 120:6 130:20,25 133:15</p> <p>teaching 141:2 158:12</p> <p>teachings 148:19</p> <p>team 23:21 67:2 125:15 127:22 160:10</p> <p>tear 20:11</p> <p>technical 38:15,22 38:24</p> <p>teenage 129:16</p> <p>tell 4:22 10:3 12:10 41:11,12 42:7 76:10,15 77:25 115:9 118:23 120:10 122:19 137:13 143:24 144:18 150:4 159:20</p> <p>telling 149:9</p> <p>tells 18:5 38:7</p> <p>template 155:3</p> <p>templates 135:12</p> <p>temple 15:25 47:3 47:7 70:18</p> <p>temples 90:15</p> <p>ten 115:15 126:15</p> <p>tend 52:9 138:7</p> <p>tended 115:24 126:6 144:20 149:4</p> <p>tensions 73:24</p> <p>term 121:19,23</p> <p>terminology 31:14 31:17</p> <p>terms 6:9 7:1 8:7 9:14 19:18 20:1 24:22 30:16 34:19 36:6,12,13 38:1,5 52:5,16,23 53:2,23 58:23</p>	<p>62:8,12 63:19 65:8,9 70:2,22 76:6 87:21 94:9 95:15,16 97:3,18 104:9,13,13,14 108:7 109:11 116:3 122:24 131:10 136:23 147:4 151:7 153:8</p> <p>terribly 148:1</p> <p>test 2:7 113:4</p> <p>testimonies 105:22</p> <p>testimony 29:11</p> <p>text 70:11,16</p> <p>texts 66:13 69:4 70:3,4 71:9</p> <p>thank 1:17 3:15,20 10:2 12:8 14:1 23:6 36:5 39:1,3 39:3 51:15 66:8 80:9,9 83:7 96:24 99:22 100:3,13 102:5 102:20 103:19,21 103:23 105:15 106:21 107:17 112:2,2,9,12,23 113:2 114:16 122:4 131:9 151:22 152:4 159:11,11,16,17 160:12,14,16,17 160:18,20,22 161:1,3</p> <p>theirs 42:11</p> <p>themselves 63:16</p> <p>theological 123:2 157:23 158:4</p> <p>therapies 101:23</p> <p>therapy 71:8</p> <p>thing 19:14 33:23 37:9,24 42:19 46:1 50:23 57:13 67:23 76:4 77:23 82:18 87:24 89:16 92:15 98:13 100:19 102:9 103:15,17</p>	<p>110:10 118:21 135:17 136:8 137:9 144:17 153:10 154:5</p> <p>things 24:6 28:3 29:12 30:3 31:11 31:14,24 33:5 35:17 37:1 40:16 42:25 48:11 49:4 49:7,7,9 50:4 60:20,23,24 61:25 67:24 72:18 74:4,7,21 82:11 84:21 85:2 92:4 94:7 95:14 98:1 99:4 100:11 102:8,21 105:12 108:11 116:22 117:16,18 120:24 125:11 126:13 127:2 135:15 141:19,19 144:22 147:6 148:15,20 149:8,8 153:9 155:7</p> <p>think 7:13 8:6,10 8:12,16 12:1,3,7 16:25 17:6 20:3 20:10,12 25:10 26:6,20 27:14 31:6 33:11,13 35:3 38:10,13 40:16,21 41:1 45:20,22 47:10 49:5,11,18 52:20 55:7,18 58:11 62:12 64:11,22 65:1,6,10 68:19 70:9 73:15,18 74:3 76:21 78:1 81:6 82:7,21 84:4,6,6,10,13 85:16 86:3,3,3,10 86:16 87:6,22 88:9,10,24 89:7 91:2,20 92:13 94:9 95:14 97:1 97:3 99:16 102:9 102:19,21 103:5</p>	<p>103:12 104:22 105:13,21 106:7 106:15,18 107:3 107:14,25 108:13 108:14,21 109:24 111:1,15 117:7 118:17 125:21,24 126:5 129:14 130:15 131:23 136:15 137:18 138:20 139:13 140:24 141:21 142:1,16 146:22 148:5 149:6 150:1,8,11 151:9 151:17,23 153:5 153:7 154:10,18 154:22 155:20 156:1,19 158:18 158:21 159:12</p> <p>thinking 13:9 29:13 46:10 47:2 51:24 56:19 65:12 84:20 156:14</p> <p>third 19:14 62:7 92:15 102:17 134:15 148:11</p> <p>third/fourth 147:8</p> <p>thirdly 71:12</p> <p>thought 9:8 37:14 88:11 89:11 103:14</p> <p>thousand 119:12</p> <p>thousands 67:19</p> <p>threat 15:17,19</p> <p>threaten 76:21</p> <p>three 1:6,21 11:8 27:6 86:22 118:2 123:19 131:15 132:3 133:1</p> <p>threshold 36:7 37:7,11</p> <p>throw 82:21</p> <p>tick 108:12</p> <p>ticking 110:24 111:2 127:2</p> <p>tie 25:11</p> <p>tied 27:21 36:24</p>
--	---	---	--	---

53:10	traditions 66:16	tried 15:8,12 21:10	turn 2:21 3:11	25:25
tight 36:22	trained 81:15,20	21:11 23:12,13	4:11 10:3 45:9	unconsciously
tight-knit 25:15	124:23	24:16 46:25	45:11 79:7	149:10
34:9	trainer 128:14	75:16 152:19,20	100:15 101:20	uncovered 36:24
time 1:24 2:8,12	133:20	trigger 28:25 30:1	118:20	under-reporting
9:7 12:17 16:1	trainers 131:7	troublemakers	turning 23:6 83:8	80:15
28:2 29:23 32:19	138:19	22:23 92:7	102:25 114:21	undergo 125:25
38:14 41:25 42:1	training 60:21	true 3:5,25 4:15	141:4	undergone 128:1,2
42:1 49:8 51:7,7	81:19,20,24 82:2	15:15 17:16	turns 127:11	131:1 139:3
63:14 70:13	84:18 87:7 95:11	31:20 66:4 70:17	tweaked 92:21	underlying 129:19
74:18,18 82:1	95:25 96:1,2,23	114:16 115:1	two 15:11,24 19:8	understand 11:23
86:14 97:5	124:12,14 125:25	truly 65:2	26:2 27:19 32:8	18:9 23:15 44:13
105:24 108:16	126:5,17,18,20	trump 93:15	33:5 48:11 49:4	45:7 53:15,24
113:11,23 114:1	127:25 128:2,4,6	trumped 93:13	49:9 50:8 55:19	64:4,10 68:21
115:25 138:4	128:16,22,25	trumps 67:11	58:22 60:1,8	73:16,17 88:22
140:22 141:16	129:3 130:21,24	trust 6:16 15:5	70:9,9 74:4,21	118:5,21 120:8
143:2 146:7,14	131:2,8 132:13	72:13,17 91:18	83:15 108:16	120:11 125:13,15
148:22 151:1,23	132:18,25 133:2	trusted 16:24	112:5 118:11	125:20 127:7
157:18	133:16,19 134:3	72:24	122:21 132:2,11	129:4 136:7
time-honoured 2:2	134:4 137:8,20	trustee 119:2	141:25 142:7,24	142:5,21 149:17
times 69:22 143:5	138:4,11,11,13	123:10 124:2,16	two-thirds 67:15	157:7
tiptoe 73:22	138:15,21 139:3	124:17,25 125:4	twofold 84:12	understanding
title 2:22 3:12 4:8	139:8,14,19,21	126:16	type 36:22	13:14 40:5,13,17
114:5	139:25 140:2	trustees 110:17	typical 116:7	40:18,21 42:23
today 36:20,22,23	141:5,6 142:16	122:14,15,18	typically 115:22	42:24 43:25 44:1
98:20 99:3	142:19 143:3	123:12 125:1,3	116:11 127:18	44:7,11,12,15,16
112:10 115:13	153:11 158:3	125:19,24 126:6	129:15 130:25	44:17,22,25 53:2
123:5,8 152:2	transcriber 1:21	126:11 132:17	141:12 142:17	63:21 88:17
160:19,23	68:16	135:4 136:10		95:12 102:13
today's 98:11	transgress 34:12	138:6 139:19	U	126:5 156:2
told 30:14 34:17	34:15	149:4,21 158:24	UK 64:8,13 69:18	157:21
34:21,22,22,24	translate 34:10	Truth 156:14	90:10 120:8,11	understands
75:3,16 89:17	110:9,19 128:10	try 2:3 9:24,25	120:15 121:4	128:15
92:4 93:3 106:23	137:21 139:1	22:3 25:7 26:9	147:8 148:10	understood 18:1
143:22 144:1,4	translated 136:13	27:4 54:21 55:19	154:25 156:24	74:2 124:14
156:14	137:3 138:17	57:24 89:2	ultimate 111:4	149:18
tomorrow 101:3	149:11	100:23 103:11	124:24	undertake 139:7
tools 51:13 74:15	translates 8:12	117:16 142:14	ultimately 32:9	140:21
total 63:9 148:14	9:13 53:21,25	145:25 146:1,8	43:20 93:11	undertaken 45:8
totally 46:12	115:11	151:12 153:18,19	94:17 111:21	124:1 131:7
touch 121:10	transliterate 68:20	153:20 155:1	ultra-conservati...	undertaking
130:18	transparent 3:21	156:2 159:23	35:12,21	157:14
touched 148:23	trauma 5:17 19:17	trying 14:12 18:7	umbrella 14:3	undocumented
touches 1:18	44:5	18:9 24:16 35:16	90:12 120:12,12	16:2
tradition 66:19	treated 108:22	35:16,17 41:9	UN 64:4	unequal 7:11 8:3
69:12 70:6,11	treatment 7:11 8:3	51:5 83:6 85:14	unable 90:20	unfair 20:13,14
113:10	93:17	89:11 100:18	unacceptable 52:2	unfortunate
traditional 81:17	trend 129:12	110:23 138:21	90:8	147:12
81:22	trial 146:18	151:20 154:5	uncles 52:18	unfortunately
			uncomfortable	

<p>123:4 unhelpful 149:11 Unit 87:12 United 120:22 145:2 155:5 unpack 12:1 unquote 62:17 unregulated 53:5 unsupervised 117:9 140:23 unthinkable 48:7 untied 36:19 unwilling 90:20 up-to-date 134:11 136:22 updated 134:19,20 134:25 upheld 52:13,14 uphold 11:24 54:24 110:12 uploaded 143:16 upscale 13:4,6 upset 18:22 upwards 116:12 urge 100:12 use 2:7,19 21:12 36:8 37:24 57:10 64:13 66:13,17 68:11 69:4 70:3 70:11,16 71:1,9 79:15 80:25 82:12,12,12 84:7 96:6 113:5,10 118:17 130:16 136:14 142:14 145:21 151:10,12 151:16,19 156:5 156:7 useful 1:19 87:3 135:6 usual 132:2 usually 34:23 41:20,20,21 42:3 42:6 63:14 71:2 78:23 120:5 121:12 utilised 97:13 utilising 107:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p>	<p>vagina 31:16 validate 74:6,17 validated 19:17 76:8 valuable 45:12 87:21,23 value 57:25 values 7:13 8:5,5 8:23 9:3,20 15:20 17:13 31:12 32:12,15 32:16,16 50:19 50:20 86:16 93:4 93:10,19 106:10 110:13,14 vanished 12:22 various 83:11 135:20 144:16 vary 84:6 verbal 67:5 versa 113:21 version 136:17,18 versions 136:8 vet 16:23 vice 113:21 victim 11:10,13,16 11:17,18,23 13:12,19 26:5,13 26:17 27:24 28:1 36:12,15 37:2 39:11 46:4 47:6 53:8 61:19 74:1 74:19 85:1,13 98:22 99:8,9 109:15 147:12 victim-blaming 36:7 victims 6:9 10:24 12:10 13:6,11,14 25:13,24 26:22 27:7,12 28:4,6,11 52:6 53:8,13 73:18 74:4,7 81:1 82:23 83:4 84:25 85:13 88:2 94:11,21,22 98:3 105:19,20,25 153:20 video 38:10</p>	<p>view 47:5 108:2,4 109:19 110:1 123:3 157:8 158:4 viewed 29:1,1 51:23 viewing 85:14 views 106:10 109:13 149:8 vigorously 58:21 vilified 78:5 violence 5:12,14 6:7 7:21 8:9 12:18 13:5 19:12 20:5,6,19 21:2 23:1 33:20 37:16 37:16,23 40:9 49:3 76:24 77:1 93:1,5 95:8 98:22 99:1 101:11,14 105:1 130:12 146:25 147:2 153:24 154:1 visibility 83:16 84:24 102:12 visible 110:15 visitor 18:13 vocabulary 31:17 91:20 voice 14:15 41:9 42:11 105:18 106:15 147:25 voices 19:23 21:11 35:25 77:22 105:25 voluntary 120:13 121:12 135:8,10 volunteer 120:2,3 volunteers 118:3 119:20 129:4 130:19,22 131:1 132:21 133:15 136:10 137:8 138:12 139:19 140:25 vote 60:22 vulnerability 61:23 79:14,16</p>	<p>vulnerable 14:13 18:11,25 21:24 24:18 58:5 79:25 86:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <hr/> <p>wait 2:18 99:24 159:15 waiting 86:10 want 2:1 13:18 15:23,24 19:25 20:12 23:17 25:25 27:4,7,13 28:6 42:19 49:23 49:25 57:13 58:15,16 63:1,18 75:2,6,21 76:19 76:19 77:11,21 77:21 81:11 89:4 89:5,16,25 90:22 90:24 94:2,17 96:12,17,19 98:7 98:24 110:3,18 110:21,25,25 113:12 117:18,20 120:14 139:11 140:14 145:3 148:3 wanted 26:25 30:5 30:25 31:1 36:3 36:4 39:9,10,17 39:22 46:1 47:3 49:21 52:23 61:25 75:17 83:12 105:16 126:21 135:17 137:10 139:15 141:10 144:21 150:15 160:2 wanting 20:11 62:17 73:23 wash 54:16 wasn't 29:18,25 47:7 57:14 136:13 watch 62:6 66:24 watched 71:22 watching 25:13,14 water 69:16,16 way 12:5 21:6,7</p>	<p>25:19 29:9 32:18 32:20,21,24 33:14,14 34:11 34:21,21 38:7 39:15,20 42:20 43:14 44:14,25 46:23,24 53:1 55:24 56:20 57:9 57:11 61:13 70:24,25 71:5 72:7 73:1 79:19 79:24 85:16,23 92:18 93:10,12 94:1,5 96:16 109:1,19 142:13 144:20 157:21,22 158:8,16 159:7 ways 8:22 9:2 27:22 40:21 42:22 43:25 44:21 51:11 54:11 56:19 71:16 79:18,22 we'll 87:25 we're 8:18 9:23 16:16 20:15 31:23,23 49:7 64:19 95:4 122:5 157:13 we've 15:12,12 wear 36:20 74:12 wearing 37:4 web 27:19 website 90:13 135:11 Wednesday 26:2 49:1,13 55:12 67:19 103:12 week 20:7 38:14 97:24 141:13 weekend 119:12 weekly 116:6 117:10 118:18 119:10 140:23 welcome 1:3 118:13 157:16 welcomed 30:23 welcoming 92:3 welfare 79:4</p>
---	--	--	---	---

<p>well-being 156:12 went 10:12 16:1 108:14 146:16 weren't 65:20 127:2 129:20 144:2 150:15 West 118:23 whilst 24:4 80:25 white 75:21 wholly 64:16 wide 56:5 widely 55:5 wider 7:2 13:21 31:22 34:19 37:12 44:19 90:25 93:1 95:7 95:12 99:6 104:18 105:4 111:11 wife 44:10 wilful 40:20 42:23 44:2,23 willing 103:9 120:18 wipe 54:14 wisdom 1:20 72:19 72:19 wish 25:21 67:4 witchcraft 71:2 withdraw 50:12,17 50:25 withdrawal 96:14 withdrew 112:13 160:21 witness 2:15 3:1,3 3:22,23 4:6,12,13 4:19 7:9 8:11 40:4 53:16,19 66:10 68:17 76:12 103:24 113:6 114:9,11 114:21,24 115:5 137:11 139:4,5 142:5,23 146:12 witnesses 98:11 99:3 103:13 107:20 112:9,13 146:19,22 160:18 160:21</p>	<p>woman 14:19 18:12 36:18 37:4 37:10 38:5 48:4 48:12 54:12,15 54:20 67:3 71:25 108:19 111:19 women 5:2,4,4,5,7 5:8,19 6:2,5,11 7:12,17,21 8:4,17 9:1,4,11,15 10:9 10:10,19 12:15 15:4 16:7,13,17 17:9,20 19:11 20:4,19 23:20,24 24:2 32:18,24 33:7,19 34:5,9,14 34:17 36:20 40:24 42:2,7 43:6,13,17,21 45:3,4,4,19 48:10 51:12,20 52:8,14 52:22,24 54:3,6 54:10 55:8 56:24 71:13 72:3,5 76:16 78:12,19 78:20,21 79:11 93:1,6,15 95:8 98:20,25 99:14 101:2,11,17,18 101:20 104:21 105:6 110:4,7,13 110:13,14,18,23 110:23 111:3,3,4 111:14,15,22,24 122:20,24 123:3 123:9 131:20 132:11 144:14 148:22 150:2 women's 12:13 14:25 26:15 32:4 83:5 98:16,17 101:6,6,15,24 152:10 153:25 wonderful 107:8,9 wondering 136:13 wool 96:18 word 67:6 68:14 68:15 110:7 115:11,14 127:14</p>	<p>134:1 words 38:3 work 4:23 5:24,25 8:22 10:5 12:10 13:6,23 14:2 19:9 20:12 23:7 23:21 24:24 25:3 25:8 27:1 35:16 51:7 86:22 87:3 92:25 97:15 104:19 105:5 112:25 123:14 127:12,22 129:22 130:17 131:10 132:22 138:3 140:12 157:16,18 worked 9:6 12:14 48:9 87:1 126:10 137:16 141:24,24 153:25 worker 75:19 82:15 158:11 workers 11:1 working 12:17 19:15 27:21 59:1 81:16 82:15,16 82:23 100:10 105:3 115:22 127:20 130:11 137:21 160:9 works 25:3 79:23 125:13 138:12 155:24 world 20:17 45:22 46:20 worried 16:17 63:1 89:13 134:16 worries 65:15 94:25 95:4 worry 91:14 93:21 worrying 62:19 worse 9:5 90:6 worship 115:13,18 115:23 116:8 117:5,14 118:25 127:8 157:21 158:8,16,19 worth 130:11</p>	<p>wouldn't 18:18 25:25 27:1 37:5 69:25 104:23 107:2,14 125:10 133:10 134:13,24 140:3 148:18 155:19 156:21 written 116:25 134:18,20 136:6 136:12,17 wrong 26:11 32:20 44:8,9 46:11 74:3 82:17 86:17 103:17 104:5 139:14 157:24 158:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <hr/> <p>X 161:9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>yards 17:2 yeah 24:19 75:19 106:16 121:3 year 10:20 64:23 121:19,20 136:22 137:19 141:12 160:3 years 5:2,6,25 8:19 8:19,20 9:6,9 20:15 29:17 47:4 48:12 67:4,5 68:8 76:23 101:12,19 123:19 126:15 132:4 137:16 149:17 years' 130:11 yesterday 3:17 81:6 99:3 108:14 young 16:6,9,17 16:17 17:9,20,24 30:6 32:19,22 41:6 46:5 48:8,9 63:16 65:23 66:2 67:3 68:1,7 71:13,21 74:24 76:7 102:10 129:13 142:7 146:17 younger 45:4</p>	<p>53:23 69:14 126:10 YouTube 62:6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>Zoom 38:12,13 113:19 Zs 89:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p> <hr/> <p>002 134:14 004 136:25 005 136:25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1 4:7 114:10 131:2 139:22 159:22 161:10,11,12,13 1,000 119:11 1.45 80:8,12 10 2:18 10,000 119:10 10.30 1:2 160:25 161:6 100 97:2 151:14 161:14 11 68:7 11.30 2:14 38:20 39:4 11.45 39:2,6 112 161:15,16,17 12.45 80:10 13 68:25 13,000 10:20,20 14 67:4 150:11 14-year-old 62:5 75:10,13 15 1:1 2:18 8:19 38:23 150:11 151:24 16 59:15,18 60:5,8 60:9,15 61:6,10 62:15 63:8 64:14 64:22 65:8 17 59:10 63:8 65:9 18 45:5 60:3,4,9 62:4 64:6,8,13,22 65:9,19 67:17 131:16 161:6 19 65:19 159:22</p>
--	--	--	--	---

<p>1950s 115:22 1958 119:5 1961 119:7 1979 4:25 1985 97:8 1993 10:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>2 114:22 131:2 132:15 2.32 112:15 2.50 112:14,17 20 8:19 65:19 146:11 20-odd 123:19 20,000 116:12 2003 134:16 2010 120:16 2013 62:1 2014 12:16 81:20 2015 134:20 2016 8:18 12:12 142:7 146:5 2017 126:24 134:21 135:1 159:25 2020 1:1 161:6 2030 64:5 21 67:5 122:15,17 125:10,12 131:13 250 119:18,19 26 139:5,11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>3,500 64:23 3.00 116:9 127:21 3.50 151:23 152:6 3.55 152:8 30 4:12 149:17 160:3 30,000 116:12 30/11/2019 134:22 38 3:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>4 2:25 4,000 116:8,14 4.10 161:4 40 5:2,6,25 8:20 9:6,9 101:12,19</p>	<p>130:11 40,000 116:12 44 143:14 45 143:14,20 46 143:14 47 143:14,14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>5 119:21 134:12 136:20 5,000 116:8,14 52 142:23</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>6 1:3 119:21 60-plus 126:8 600 81:21 118:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>70-odd 20:15 700 118:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>8/9 68:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>9.00 116:9 127:21 90s 105:7</p>			
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