

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Unit of Assessment: C22 Social Work and Social Policy
Title of case study: Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred: influencing policy at the governmental level
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Dr Chris Allen's research into Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred has had a direct influence on the political thinking and emerging policy developments of central government in the United Kingdom. Having been recognised as a leading expert in his field at the political level, his research has helped to encourage engagement, raise awareness and facilitate public and political debate. Allen's expertise and knowledge has been drawn upon in establishing the All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia, the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group and the recently launched, Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) third party reporting initiative that was recently noted in the Coalition's new integration strategy.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Research was undertaken while Dr Chris Allen was based at the University of Birmingham: as a postgraduate and doctoral researcher from 2001 to 2006, a research fellow from 2009 before becoming a lecturer in 2011. Outputs include a monograph (R4) and more than twenty single and co-authored peer-reviewed articles and book chapters (see outputs R1-R3 and R5 below).</p> <p>Allen's research has been at the forefront of critiquing existing theoretical and conceptual models of Islamophobia while comparing them with other similar discriminatory phenomena (2001 to 2006), rethinking existing definitions including usage and the appropriation of terminologies as a means of establishing a more policy driven and 'real-world' definition (from 2006 to 2010), before seeking to apply that new knowledge in a range of different applied settings, at the community, political and policy levels (from 2010 and continuing).</p> <p>In doing so, Allen's research has improved understanding of what Islamophobia is and how best to tackle it as a social phenomenon via policy and through political spaces. It has explored how Islamophobia is perceived and what its relationships are, or indeed might be with other similar discriminatory and prejudicial phenomena. This has included considering how other discriminatory phenomena have been historically tackled: socially, politically and through policy interventions also. Allen's research both links into and significantly extends current debates about Islamophobia, the role and place of Muslims and Islam in contemporary society, the legislation and policy relating to discrimination and equalities and how best to work towards a fairer, more equitable and equal cohesive society.</p> <p>Key research findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Islamophobia is an extremely complex and contested concept, one that in part has been caused by the overly simplistic definitions and theories that had been widely appropriated and employed • That a new theoretical and conceptual model for Islamophobia was necessary especially if Islamophobia as a discriminatory phenomenon was to be responded to and tackled via policy • That whilst it can be argued that Islamophobia is in many ways distinct and contemporary, it also has many significant similarities and overlaps with other discriminatory phenomena including racism and anti-Semitism • Established a new definition and conceptual model for Islamophobia, the latter a threefold approach that incorporates the ideological, attitudinal and exclusionary levels • Unlike existing definitions and models, the latter exclusionary level identified prejudice and discrimination as also violence as a tool for exclusion thereby allowing for greater scrutiny and enquiry as regards existing policy and legislative frames relating to equalities and hate crime amongst others <p>In the period 2001-2006, Allen was Co-I on a project funded by the European Union to map the spread of Islamophobia in fifteen member states following the attacks of 9/11. To this day, this project remains the largest monitoring project undertaken into Islamophobia; and its report is widely cited. Following the completion of his doctoral research, Allen continued his individual</p>

research through the production of papers and chapters, continuing to highlight the inadequacies of existing notions of Islamophobia and the need for an improved understanding of the impact anti-Muslim hate has at the community level. In 2010, Allen undertook primary research with Muslims and Muslim organisations in the West Midlands and elsewhere in the UK to build an evidence base of Islamophobic and anti-Muslim hate crime (as researcher for a project in collaboration with the European Muslim Research Centre). Following the publication of his monograph in 2010, Allen was commissioned by the newly established All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia to produce a report exploring the challenges in tackling Islamophobia. In 2010, Allen directed a team of researchers at the University as part of a project funded by the Department for Communities & Local Government to explore the discrimination faced by Muslim women in contemporary Britain. This project involved working with grassroots communities whilst also facilitating workshops for academics, community representatives, theologians and policymakers. Throughout his research, Allen has combined academic rigour with a concern for ‘real-world’ relevance. Alongside working within academic and policy frames, there has been a conscious recognition that research findings need to be disseminated and made relevant to stakeholders in the third and community sectors also.

3. References to the research

Research outputs:

- R1) Allen, C. (2013) ‘Passing the dinner table test retrospective and prospective approaches to tackling Islamophobia in Britain’ in *SAGE Open*, vol. 3 no. 2 [DOI: 10.1177/2158244013484734]
- R2) Allen, C. (2011) “‘We don’t do God’”: a critical retrospective of New Labour’s approaches to ‘religion or belief’ and faith”, *Journal of Culture & Religion*, vol.12, issue 3, pp. 259-275 [DOI:10.1080/14755610.2011.605272]
- R3) Allen, C. (2011) ‘Opposing Islamification or promoting Islamophobia? Understanding the English Defence League’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 45, no. 4, October, pp. 279-294 [DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2011.585014]
- R4) Allen, C. (2010) *Islamophobia*, London: Ashgate [available from HEI on request]
- R5) Allen, C. (2010) ‘Fear and loathing: the political discourse in relation to Muslims and Islam in the contemporary British setting’, *Politics & Religion*, vol. IV, no.2 Autumn, pp. 221-236 [available: http://www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/images/pdf_files/srpski/godina4_broj2/8%20chr%20allen%20vol.iv%20no.2.pdf]
- R6) Allen, C. (2011) ‘*A momentous occasion: a report on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia and its Secretariat*’. London: All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia, Houses of Parliament [available: <http://wallscometumblingdown.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/allen-appg-islamophobia-report-july-2011.pdf>]

4. Details of the impact

At the political and policy levels, Allen’s research has **informed political thinking, encouraged engagement, and seen him established as a key adviser to the British Government** on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate. At the public and community levels, he has **raised awareness and facilitated debate across broad audiences** whilst **sharing research findings and policy developments**.

Allen’s engagement activities began in 2009 when he was involved in a range of different activities with Muslim organisations across the UK – including the Muslim Council of Britain, Islamic Society of Britain, Cordoba Foundation and Muslim Safety Forum – identifying the need for Islamophobia to be afforded greater recognition politically. In November 2009 Allen was invited as an expert panellist (one of five panellists, including MEPs) to debate the problem Islamophobia presents to social cohesion with Members of the European Parliament at the European Parliament in Brussels. The following month, he facilitated a symposium at the University of Birmingham with approximately 150 local policymakers and community activists where the outcomes from that year’s activities were shared and discussed.

Impact case study (REF3b)

These activities **contributed to the calling of a closed Parliamentary meeting** in March 2010 that drew together a collaboration of concerned parties to lobby for the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Islamophobia. Allen supported the above groups (also including the Runnymede Trust and the European Muslim Research Centre) to draw together the necessary evidence to successfully submit to Government. An APPG on Islamophobia was duly launched in November 2010. Coinciding with the publication of Allen's monograph entitled 'Islamophobia' (Ashgate), the three co-chairs of the APPG – Simon Hughes (Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey & Old Southwark), Jack Straw (Labour MP for Blackburn) and Kris Hopkins (Conservative MP for Keighley & Ilkley) - requested copies of the book. This led to Simon Hughes requesting a meeting with Allen in February 2012 to discuss the future direction of the APPG and the best way to **inform Government thinking and the subsequent policies required**. A few months after, Hughes approached Allen to research and deliver an independent report - "A momentous occasion": A report on the *All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia and its Secretariat*. In it, Allen identified some of the challenges that might be encountered, those relating to Islamophobia's contested nature, its lack of definition and the need for it to be seen as an exclusionary phenomenon comparable with other similar phenomena such as racism, homophobia and others (see source 1 below).

On 14 November 2011, Allen presented these findings in the form of both oral and written evidence to the APPG (source 2). Making nine recommendations to the APPG including the **need to establish a policy-based working definition**, the need to **explore the evidence base for Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate**, collate quantitative data relating to anti-Muslim hate crimes and to work closely with the mooted Cross-Government Anti-Muslim Hate Working Group, Hughes suggested these would provide the APPG with an indicative work programme (work continues to move this forward). Since then, Allen has worked in partnership with the APPG and its Chairs, offering advice and support as also presenting further oral and written evidence (Muslims in the media, 24 October 2012; Islamophobia post-Woolwich, 16 July 2013). The co-chairs of the APPG are clear that through his work with the APPG and beyond '*Dr. Allen's research and knowledge on Islamophobia has been, and will continue to be, crucial in influencing the debate in Parliament and amongst the public*' (source 3).

In line with Allen's recommendation to the APPG, in January 2012 Allen was approached to sit as an independent expert for the newly established Cross-Government Anti-Muslim Hate Working Group in the Department of Communities & Local Government (CLG). As part of this, he participates in bi-monthly meetings to support Government in trying to **improve political understanding about Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate, its drivers, causes and manifestations**. In doing so, Allen regularly shares the findings from his existing and ongoing research to shape and influence political and policy thinking. This includes written submissions, a number of which have focused on: the social and political engagement of Muslim women; the political engagement of Muslim representatives; similarities with the phenomena of anti-Semitism; and Islamophobic attacks on mosques. As part of his role on the Working Group, Allen has been appointed co-lead of the Group's research workstream, a role that requires him to **highlight to Government where there are gaps in evidence and knowledge** in relation to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate. Allen's contribution has been described as '*instrumental*', indeed, one policy advisor from CLG states that Allen's work on the group and research contributions have helped him to '*develop and improve Government policy, particularly as it relates to increasing reporting of anti-Muslim hatred*' (source 4).

Out of the Working Group emerged a government funded project named 'TELL MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks)', a third party reporting service for anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents. Having been requested to sit as a member of the project's steering group by Government, Allen also spoke at both the London and Birmingham launches where he noted how he had called for the establishment of something similar in an article written for the Daily Telegraph in February 2010 (source 5). He also welcomed the project given it supported his earlier identification of **the need for greater evidence**. In November 2012, the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg announced further funding for the project following a recommendation from the Working Group (source 6).

Impact case study (REF3b)

Given her keen interest in the topic of Islamophobia and having seen the various written submissions made to the APPG and Working Group by Allen, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi (Minister for Communities & Faith) has since December 2012 been working in collaboration with him to **raise awareness and promote greater political recognition**. On 24 January 2013, Baroness Warsi referenced what she described as Allen's "excellent" research findings in a keynote speech in London (source 7). At the same event, Simon Hughes reiterated his admiration for Allen's research in a further public speech. Most recently, Warsi drew upon Allen's research knowledge about Islamophobia in the West Midlands following a series of bomb attacks on mosques in the Black Country region. Meeting face to face (16 July 2013), they discussed what might be an appropriate response by Government. Indeed, Warsi stated that 'the advice and evidence provided to us by Dr Allen - through his membership of our Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group; his position on Tell MAMA's steering group and through his direct engagement with policy makers and analysts - has helped us to **develop our understanding** of this complex issue. His depth of understanding of the issue following a decade of working on it, and the rigour of his approach are particularly valuable to us' (source 8).

In trying to ensure that research findings and policy developments are **shared at the public and community levels**, in November 2012 Allen facilitated an ESRC Festival of Social Science an event in Birmingham titled, "From Pavement to Parliament: Shaping the policies to tackle Islamophobia". Bridging the divide geographically between Birmingham and London as also the public and the political, the event brought together those involved in the APPG and Working Group with local policymakers, activists and communities. Allen also has an active and well-followed Twitter feed (@DrChrisAllen – around 1000 followers, daily tweets) and blog (<http://www.chris-allen.co.uk/>), which he uses for this purpose. Allen's engagement with traditional media in the UK and internationally is frequent and diverse, ensuring his research reaches wide audiences. Some examples of that coverage in the 2008-2013 period are through: Daily Telegraph (source 5); New Statesman (source 9); Huffington Post (source 10); BBC Radio WM (source 11).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] 'A momentous occasion': a report on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia and its Secretariat. London: All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia, Houses of Parliament, 2011. <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/files/appg-islamophobia-allen-2011-2.pdf>
- [2] Liberal Democrats, Press release: APPG relaunched (15 November 2011). [http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/APPGIslamophobiaRelaunched\(2\).pdf](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/news-events/APPGIslamophobiaRelaunched(2).pdf)
- [3] Factual statement provided by APPG on Islamophobia Co-Chairs
- [4] Factual statement provided by Anti-Muslim Hatred Policy Advisor, Department for Communities and Local Government
- [5] Allen, Chris. The worrying rise of attacks fuelled by hatred *Daily Telegraph* (12 February 2010). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/7221242/The-worrying-rise-of-attacks-fuelled-by-hatred.html>
- [6] Deputy Prime Minister extends funding to tackle hate crime against Muslims <http://www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/deputy-prime-minister-extends-funding-tackle-hate-crime-against-muslims>
- [7] Transcript of speech (24 January 2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/tell-mama-measuring-anti-muslim-attacks-speech>
- [8] Factual statement provided by Senior Minister of State (Faith and Communities), Department for Communities and Local Government
- [9] <http://www.newstatesman.com/voices/2013/06/their-attackers-mosques-are-seen-places-difference>
- [10] http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-chris-allen/islamisation-arson-attack-accusation_b_3417952.html
- [11] http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p01c7nrz/Nick_Conrad_on_BBC_WM_Iain_Lee_sits_in/