

Impact Assessment of: Operational arrangements for English Defence League(EDL) / Unite Against Fascism (UAF) protests 31st October 2009

Date Completed: 15th October 2009

Lead Officer: Lelir Yeung

Members of the assessment team:

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service
Lelir Yeung	Leeds City Council (LCC)	Head of Equality
Alex Hannant	Leeds City Council	Equality Team support
Liz Jarmin	Leeds City Council	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Nadeem Siddique	Leeds City Council	Prevent Coordinator
David Jackson	Leeds City Council	Community Intelligence Officer
Chief Inspector Julie Sykes	West Yorkshire Police (WYP)	Police liaison/ coordinator

Brief description:

There is a planned event to take place on 31st October in Leeds City Centre involving members of the English Defence League (EDL) and Unite Against Fascism (UAF). The EDL plan to stage a static protest against Radical Islam and Muslim Extremists. A counter protest to prevent EDL from demonstrating is being staged on the same day by UAF.

Nationally demonstrations in the last three months involving the English Defence League (including football risk supporters), UAF, and Muslim youth have resulted in serious public disorder on several occasions.

This event has the potential to impact on a number – if not all communities in Leeds.

Groups expected to attend EDL protest:

- English Defence League
- Groups with football 'risk' links
- Groups with Right wing linkages

Groups expected to attend UAF protest:

- ❑ Unite Against Fascism
- ❑ Socialist worker Party
- ❑ Anti racists and fascist groups
- ❑ Faith groups
- ❑ Student organisations
- ❑ Trade Unions
- ❑ Community / voluntary organisations

The legalities of the protests

Demonstrations occur in two ways within our legislation; a public procession (a march) and a public assembly (a static gathering).

In the case of a public procession, organisers are under a duty to give the Police 6 clear days notice in writing of their intention to hold a march.

Depending on the circumstances of the march, the Chief Constable can impose conditions or seek to ban it as appropriate. Should the Chief Constable seek to ban a march then he has to apply to the Local authority for an order banning all public processions in the district for a period of 3 months. The Local authority can grant the application subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

By law, both the EDL and UAF have a legitimate right to protest. However, recent events in cities such as Birmingham and London have shown that these events can attract people intent on disorder.

The challenge facing agencies and the wider community is finding the balance between lawful campaigning and peaceful protest, while enabling wider society to go about daily business in a safe environment.

The events proposed in Leeds on the 31 October are static protests, which are covered by the Public Order Act 1986.

Section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986 can be used to ban a march, but not a static protest. The Home Secretary could consider a ban if a march was proposed, however, as it is intended to hold a static protest, such action cannot legally be taken.

In applying the legislation to such situations, case law directs that the Police must at all time bear in mind the public's right to freedom of assembly enshrined in Article 11 of the Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as contained in the Human Rights Act 1998 and seek to maintain a balance between the rights of those who want to protest and the rights of those who want to go about their ordinary business.

The English Defence League and Unite Against Fascism have both specifically requested to hold a static public assembly on 31st October. Neither request offers any prospect, in law, of challenge.

Brief account of how the impact assessment was carried out:

A review of Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police operational arrangements was undertaken to consider the possible impacts of the planned protests.

Consideration was given to:

- Which community group(s) is the most likely to be affected by this event?
- What (if any) religious / cultural factors need to be taken into consideration?
- What (if any) specific individuals, organisations or groups are likely to be affected?
- What (if any) previous history of community tensions that have occurred ?
- What will be the possible adverse impacts on particular ethnic/ racial groups?
- Is the activity going to make it difficult to promote equality of opportunity or good relations between different racial groups?
- Could this activity lead to direct/ indirect discrimination?
- Could the activity damage relations between council/ police and any racial/ethnic group?
- What steps need to be taken to counter resentment from other racial groups?

Brief description of any potential adverse affects found:

EDL Protest::

With further demonstrations by the EDL planned in other UK cities, there is the potential for Leeds groups to become involved/ invited to protest. This could result in community tensions and issues being brought back into Leeds.

Predominantly white protest group aimed at Muslim communities.

Potential for far right sympathisers to bring racist discriminatory activity / messages

Potential for banners inciting hatred / inflaming situation – evident at Manchester

Potential direct discrimination against Muslim communities.

Long term impact on working relationship with BME communities across Leeds.

UAF Protest:

Impact is being felt across all BME communities and support for counter protest.

UAF planned leafleting concerning the EDL demonstration in communities across Leeds. There is potential that this could encourage residents, especially younger persons to become involved.

Such leafleting and awareness could be used to maintain tensions, and be used to suggest that the authorities did not react appropriately.

Potential for banners inciting hatred / inflaming situation

Longer impact within specific communities if any arrests / prosecutions happen and on working relationship with BME communities across Leeds.

Location of protests:

Leeds is a multicultural diverse city. Impact on feeling of safety for visitors and those working for example taxi drivers.

Visual impact of protest, and police presence versus protesters may give a distorted view of our approach to community relations.

Summary of Actions arising from Assessment		
Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
Threat assessment and reassurance and engagement plan developed by WYP	WYP	Ongoing
Community tensions discussed through the Community Intelligence Liaison Group, Silver Prevent meetings and at the Council wide Coordination meetings.	LCC/WYP	Ongoing prior to 31 st October
Series of meetings with Muslim community, faith and youth leaders to brief with key messages and to provide reassurance to gain their support and trust.	WYP/LCC	Ongoing prior to 31 st October
Far right activity and tensions within communities have been highlighted to local Neighbourhood Policing Teams and are being dealt with at an appropriate level	WYP	Ongoing
During protests pro-active removal of racist/ extremist banners and challenge of inappropriate language	WYP	Before, during and after protests
Formulation of key messages containing main facts for internal and external communication with key groups	WYP/LCC communications	Prior to 31 st October
Work with universities to reach the various Student Unions and to send out messages through university e-portal.	WYP	Prior to 31 st October
Liaison with businesses in immediate area to provide reassurance also a general statement for other businesses in areas not affected.	LCC/ WYP	Prior to 31 st October
Liaison meeting with Leeds United	WYP	Prior to 31 st October
Engage after event with wider BME/Faith communities to assess impact	Harmonious Leeds Partnership	November 2009
Meeting taking place post event with all Prevent projects where actions to mitigate any post event tensions will be discussed.	LCC	November 2009

Debrief to determine lessons learnt and evaluate impact on community relations	LCC/ WYP	December 2009
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To be completed by Equality Team