

## EDL duo get prison time

TWO members of the English Defence League (EDL) are beginning year-long sentences after attacking a mosque and two Asian-run businesses.

Steven James Vasey, 32 of Darlington and Anthony Donald Smith, 24, of County Durham, attacked the Nasir mosque in Hartlepool, spraying the letters EDL and NEI (North East Infidels) along with the slogan "no surrender" and images of poppies and the St George flag on the eve of the Muslim festival of Eid.

They also sprayed similar graffiti on a shop, which had a brick thrown through a window, and a guest house, which are both owned by an Asian businessman. Taxi driver Smith was arrested the next day.

Messages on his mobile showed him planning with then-girlfriend Charlotte Christina Davies, 19, of Aylesbury and Vasey. Smith, Vasey, and Davies all admitted conspiracy to commit racially aggravated criminal damage at Durham Crown Court.

Davies was given a 12-week sentence, suspended for a year, and 200 hours' unpaid work.

## 'Fake' robbers target family

ROBBERS posed as UK Border Agency (UKBA) officers to steal gold from a family.

The burglary happened last Thursday (6) when six or seven white men in their early twenties arrived at the property in Chesham, Buckinghamshire.

The men told the owners they were from the UKBA and had to search the property. After the men left, the owners discovered credit cards, cash, passports and gold stolen.

Anyone with information should call 0845 8 505 505 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



# Finding a common remedy to religion

## JEWS AND MUSLIMS COME TOGETHER

by IMRAN CHOUDHURY

**A GROUNDBREAKING group is aiming to bring British Muslims and Jews together and break the barriers created by conflict in the Middle East.**

By focusing on issues of shared interest such as business, they hope to overcome mutual suspicion. The Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester holds interfaith events every month to help the two communities to come together.

They will be holding a Business Networking Group on November 20 at the Manchester Conference Centre in a bid to get Muslim and Jewish businessmen working together to form new ventures.

They also have a Lawyers & Accountants Group and regularly hold women's events.

Councillor Mohammed Afzal Khan and Jonny Wineberg both from Greater Manchester, are the co-chairs of the forum.

Khan (right) established the forum in 2004 along with the late Henry Gutterman. He told *EE*: "We keep hearing about all the hostility taking place in the Middle East and political problems there, but we thought if you want to solve some of these issues, we have to talk."

"So the best way to do this is to have a venue or an organisation where we can talk together."



Khan admits there is a general antipathy between the two groups often exacerbated by events in the Middle East.

"The antipathy is usually ignorance, and as soon as you come

closer to each other, you realise that we are all human beings and the common humanity joins us together."

Khan said the forum generally tries to focus on issues where the groups can come together in a common cause, and there is much locally they can agree to work together on.

"We have agreed to disagree on the issue of Israel and Palestine. We live here, we need to focus here, we need to see how we need to work together here, how we can help one another and help society at large," he said.

Wineberg (left), who joined as the co-chair in 2007, said it's ironic that the Islam and Judaism are so closely linked, yet Muslims and Jews are so far apart.

He told *EE*: "There is no faith closer to Judaism than Islam. We stem from the two sons of Abraham. We have similar beliefs across a range of matters, from birth to death, and we need to know each other better to improve the way we view each other."

"The media has, for many years, portrayed Jews and Muslims as opponents and I wanted to do something to change this. The fear that has been created has meant that far too little education of each others faiths has happened in school and even less for adults."

Wineberg added: "The communities have also not associated together, which, again, has meant too little opportunity to learn about each other."

He added that there are many circumstances where individuals from the two communities do meet, particularly in business but also through sports like cricket.

"These give us the opportunities that we are looking to build on to try and improve relations," said Wineberg.

■ For more information, go to [www.muslimjewish.org.uk](http://www.muslimjewish.org.uk).

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