



The Missing Muslims

Unlocking British Muslim Potential
for the Benefit of All

Report by the Citizens Commission on Islam,
Participation and Public Life.

*The Missing Muslims:
Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All.*



Citizens UK is the both the home of Community Organising and the UK's largest and most diverse Community Organisation. It was founded in 1989 with two core charitable objectives:

- to develop the capacity of the people of the United Kingdom to participate in public life.
- to strengthen the civil society institutions they come from in the process.

We are blessed with a growing and diverse institutional membership of schools, colleges, trade unions, voluntary associations, University departments, Churches, Synagogues and Muslim institutions. There are Citizens Alliances in several parts of the UK, all with member groups, and many with a long-standing presence and deep roots in their communities.

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112 Cavell Street

London, E1 2JA

www.citizensuk.org

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Editor: Esmat Jeraj

Art Director: Salman Farsi



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Members of the Commission

Chair

Rt Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP

Vice Chair

Jenny Watson CBE

Members of the Commission

Bishop Dr. Eric Brown
 Fiona Cannon OBE
 Sir Trevor Chinn CVO
 Professor Mohamed El-Gomati OBE
 Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray
 Poppy Jaman
 Hashi Mohamed
 Charlotte Milner
 Ifath Nawaz LLB
 Peter Osborne
 Sir Stephen O'Brien CBE
 Kawsar Zaman
 Dr Zuhair Zarifa

Advisors

Dr. Muhammad Abdul Bari MBE
 Hélène Balazard
 Christina Dykes
 Sunder Katwalla
 Saskia Marsh

Muslim Leadership Group

Akeela Ahmed
 Sahar Al-Faifi
 Usman Ali
 Qari Muhammad Asim MBE
 Dalwardin Babu OBE
 Shenaz Bunglawala
 Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala
 Dr Musharraf Hussain
 Jehangir Malik OBE
 Sajid Mohammed
 Syed Musa Naqvi
 Kamran Rashid
 Miqdaad Versi

Youth Leadership Group

Usman Ali
 Mehdi Al-Katib
 Alaa' Al-Samarrai
 Jessica Baker
 Louiza Chekhar
 Ian Cole
 Sahabi Choudhury
 Mohammed Adel Chowdhury
 Daphne Giachero
 Josie Hicklin
 Sukbir Kaur
 Hamzah Lambat
 Anneessa Mahmood
 Mohamed Mohamed
 Dr. Mohammed Mozaffari

Secretariat

Neil Jameson CBE
 Executive Director – Citizens UK

Esmat Jeraj
 Secretariat & Project Manager

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The Commission is grateful to all those who have taken a supportive interest in the Commission's work, and is hopeful that the goodwill that has been established will contribute to the report and its recommendations being widely disseminated, discussed and, hopefully, implemented to help ensure we can support the unlocking of the potential of Muslim communities in the UK.

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FOREWORD

The Rt Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP

The hearings of the Commission were designed to strengthen dialogue and reflection across both Muslim and non-Muslim communities on what they themselves might do to better promote Muslim participation in public life.



THIS COMMISSION was set up to examine the ways in which the participation of Muslims in the public and community life of our country, outside of their own faith groups, might be improved. As so much has been written on Muslim participation in public life, its aim has been to try to identify solutions to the obstacles to participation rather than examine or comment on the source of those obstacles. What we believe is different about this Commission, however, is the process through which we have arrived at the Commission's recommendations. The Commission has held evidence-gathering sessions throughout the country. These sessions have been an immensely valuable educational experience for the Commissioners. They have also revealed, as this report will show, that there is much about which to be positive.

But we Commissioners are also conscious that our work has taken place against the background of a sense of increasing division and polarisation within the UK. As this report has gone to press, we have just experienced three episodes of murderous violence in London and Manchester, justified by their perpetrators in the name of religious belief. The fact that those beliefs may be utterly rejected by the vast majority of British Muslims does not mean that such events have no impact on the relations

between them and the rest of the British population.

Polls demonstrate significant scepticism across British society about the integration, and even the shared allegiance, of their British Muslim fellow citizens. In turn British Muslims have mixed views about the extent to which they have equal status or access to equal opportunities within the UK. This dynamic creates the risk of a downward spiral of mutual suspicion and incomprehension, which makes the need for action to break down barriers and bring people together all the more necessary.

For the purpose of this Commission, it has taken its understanding of 'public life' as follows:

1. The opportunity and the ability, of all who wish it, to be able to engage in political and civic life at both local and national levels, which we see as lying at the heart of a successful democracy living under the rule of law. This includes the desire and ability to engage with others of all backgrounds to enrich the shared environments within their community.
2. Public life is also recognised to have a broader meaning to include those who participate in the delivery of public services and in maintaining the vitality of civic life.
3. Even if public life is vibrant, the exclusion of minority groups undermines the possibility of creating a cohesive and strong society.

4. Interaction between human beings, the exchange of ideas and their moderation by being challenged are the basic building blocks through which a degree of consensus can be reached that enables individuals to cooperate to create societies where, despite differences, it is possible to work together for the common good.

It is with these aims in mind that the Commission has proceeded with its work. First, the Commission has sought to highlight the areas in which false (and potentially dangerous) assumptions are being made about the views of British Muslims. Secondly, in the subsequent sections of the report, the Commission has set out what it hopes are practical and actionable recommendations on how to enable British Muslims to take on a more active and visible role in public life. In doing this the Commission is in no doubt that there are considerable challenges within Muslim communities that need to be addressed and it does not seek to downplay these. Its recommendations seek to enable the UK's Muslim communities to speak up and act against the barriers to participation from within their own communities.

The Commission has also heard, forcefully expressed to it, the fear of many Muslims that, even in seeking to participate in public life or to work on a cross-community basis, they become subject to a much greater degree of adverse scrutiny, or to allegations about their motivation, than would be considered normal or acceptable for their non-Muslim counterparts. This is a matter for which there is overwhelming evidence. The Commission hopes that its proposals may help to address this as well, by providing ways of building greater cross-community understanding. If it is to work, it must include taking into account the views of non-Muslims, particularly those living in areas that have witnessed significant changes in their ethnic makeup over the past fifty years, and where a lack of interaction inevitably creates obstacles to trust and cooperation.

The Commission has worked on the principle that British society is an open one. It therefore believes that all faiths and beliefs should be open to challenge and criticism. The Commission has thus been careful to distinguish between statements, actions or sentiments that imply hatred of people because of their

faith, which it believes has no place in a civilised society, and the right to question and disagree with elements of the theology and practices of religious groups.

The hearings of the Commission were designed to strengthen dialogue and reflection across both Muslim and non-Muslim communities on what they themselves might do to better promote Muslim participation in public life. The Commission's method to take forward its recommendations is to focus on galvanising civil society through existing networks of civic groups, and community organisations and advocates. The Commission, therefore, sees this report as the start of a process not an end. Bringing people together, across ethnic and religious lines, to get them to listen to each other and organise together is going to be a painstaking task and long term in nature. But if carried out well, it is more likely than other approaches to generate the change that is needed. The benefits that can flow from that change are immense, both for Muslims and for our country as a whole. The Commission hopes that the integration strategy outlined by the Prime Minister Theresa May recently, and which the Commission welcomes, can also benefit from our work.

I want to thank my fellow Commissioners and the staff from Citizens UK for their participation and help in this project, and in particular the Barrow Cadbury Trust for its financial support.

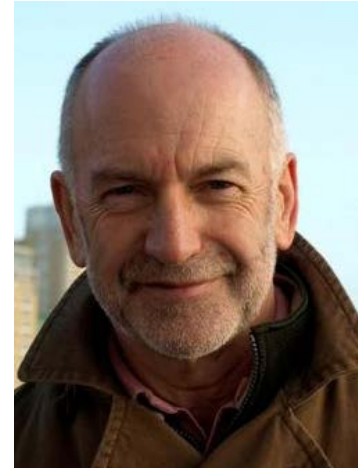


The Rt Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP
*Chair, The Citizens Commission on Islam,
 Participation & Public Life*

FOREWORD

Neil Jameson CBE Executive Director – Citizens UK

Citizens UK wanted to find a way to initiate conversations and new relationships – both within Muslim communities, and also between Muslim communities and broader British society – about some of the challenges – as well as opportunities – of integration in the twenty-first century.



MUSLIMS ARE PART of the social fabric of the UK's plural society, and Muslims in the UK form one of the most diverse Muslim communities anywhere in the world. There has been a Muslim presence in the UK for several centuries, and for even longer the world's mathematics, science, philosophy, arts and architecture have been influenced by the Islamic world. Today, Muslims make a significant contribution to the country, adding an estimated £31 billion plus to the economy¹.

Over the last fifty years, significant numbers of British Muslim citizens have become active across a wide range of professions in the public and private sectors, including the NHS, legal and banking services, and journalism. This Commission is partly intended to celebrate and mark this healthy development, but also to consider the root causes for why, over the last ten years, many British Muslims now feel they cannot participate or are not encouraged to participate fully in public life in the UK.

The stimulus for this Citizens Commission was partly a negative shift in the dominant narrative of the media and public officials, but also in Citizens UK's own daily experience on the streets and neighbourhoods of the UK's great cities, where the recruitment of mosques and Muslim groups into a Citizens Alliance, which was once relatively easy, was

becoming more difficult and the leadership of these institutions had become more anxious about the welcome they would receive. There are, of course, honourable exceptions to this; for instance, the East London Mosque, as a founding member of The East London Citizens Organisation (TELCO) in 1996, and the Hyderi Islamic Centre, in Lambeth, was instrumental in the founding of South London Citizens in 2004.

In tandem with the growing reticence of many Muslim institutions to join a Citizens Alliance, or similar evidence of a general reticence about participation, we were also conscious of the dramatic change in discourse on Islam as a result of several devastating events in public life, perhaps most clearly, in the UK context, the tragic bombings in London on 7th July 2005 (preceded, of course, by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11th September 2001). The growing confidence of the UK's Muslim communities was inevitably shaken by this series of negative events. Citizens UK's trustees and policy makers in general were concerned about the unintended, long-term consequences for any one significant community in the UK in feeling pilloried, isolated or not welcome. At the same time, Citizens UK wanted to find a way to initiate conversations and new relationships – both within Muslim communities, and also between Muslim communities and broader British society – about

some of the challenges – as well as opportunities – of integration in the twenty-first century. Citizens UK is very grateful to all the Commissioners for the time and outstanding commitment they have given to this task, and especially to the Chair and Vice Chair who have gone beyond the call of duty to ensure a balanced and rigorous process and analysis in the hope that this will lead to positive change and the greater confidence of all communities in working together for the common good.

From the beginning, we decided to invite participation from weighty civic leaders with years of experience of Islam in the contrasting settings of business, academia, the law, politics, the military and the media – only a few of whom were Muslim. The Commissioners agreed to follow the pattern of previous Citizens Commissions, and spend most of their time listening to communities and their membership before reaching any conclusions or recommendations. To ensure balance and other voices, we invited a diverse group of young Muslims, and a group of scholars and advisers to act as sounding boards, and provide counsel and ideas at the Commission's deliberations and for the final report. The Commission also welcomed written evidence and examples of good practice, and held sessions 'in camera' and some women only sessions too.

One of the most unique things about this Commission and report is that both were initiated by civil society through the Citizens UK trustees, and will be returned to civil society for implementation. Although there are sections addressed to the business community and to the Government, the primary thrust of the Commission's recommendations is for civil society to note and act on where the will and the power exist. Citizens UK hoped for practical and workable solutions from the Commission on the challenge of active participation in public life by all communities – recognising how crucial this is to being full and active citizens in any democracy.

Crucially, it was never the intention

that this Commission would make unrealistic proposals that were unworkable, too expensive or indulgent. Neither was it the intention that all the recommendations and solutions would be laid at the door of the State. Being a good neighbour is a basic expectation that is open to all. As this report goes to press, 'The Great Get Together' weekend has seen large Muslim participation in cities across the Country, with Citizens UK having directly organised 54 events, and attending or partnering with over a hundred events. This initiative was a perfect example of communities coming together to celebrate all that we have in common.

This Commission is absolutely not about seeking 'special treatment' for British Muslims. Rather it is an ambitious and timely attempt to find ways of encouraging full and active participation in public life for all communities, challenging the systems and narratives that threaten this, and promoting the many examples of good practice by our Muslim communities that the Commission has heard up and down the country.

Citizens UK appreciates that the hard work starts now, but we welcome this challenge and know the importance of harnessing any untapped talent pool of energy and enthusiasm from which UK public life and the common good can benefit.



Neil Jameson CBE
Executive Director, Citizens UK

Executive Summary

The increasing absence of Muslims from British civil society is a growing problem in the UK and is identified as such in this report. However, the picture is more complex than it initially appears. While there is evidence that Muslims are not participating in public life to their full potential, in some areas British Muslims are just as active and engaged as – if not more than – their white British counterparts. The reasons for the lack of participation goes beyond the black-and-white explanations of either British Muslims not wishing to participate in ‘mainstream’ public life or of endemic discrimination preventing their participation in all areas. The intention of this Commission has, therefore, been to provide a balanced and nuanced view of the trends behind these ‘missing Muslims’.

The key findings from the Commission’s hearings are summarised as follows:

1. There is not a homogenous Muslim community in the UK and therefore British Muslim experiences are more diverse than is often assumed. It is important to rebalance a public discourse that can focus on Muslims either as a disadvantaged group or as ‘a threat within’; i.e. a distinct subset of British society with a worldview that is inimical to that of ‘the mainstream’. Unlocking a fuller Muslim presence in and contribution to British public life could help to reduce perceptions of increasing polarisation within British society. Actions that enable the current generation of British Muslim citizens to develop confidence in their equal standing should, in turn, reduce fears around British Muslim integration and enable the wider society to reap the benefits of more active involvement by Muslim fellow citizens.

2. Increased scrutiny in and coverage on ‘Muslim’ issues can result in an ‘us vs them’ dichotomy, which produces its own cycle of separateness, with young Muslims growing up in a climate of being ‘othered’. The events of 7th July 2005 acted as a watershed moment for the development for British Muslim identity politics, and prompted a similarly seismic shift in attitudes from some towards British Muslims, as well as understandable fears around the threat of extremist Islamist ideology. A coherent, yet inclusive, British identity needs to be forged,

particularly among young Britons, if all our citizens are to feel confident about their role within a cohesive and multicultural society.

3. British Muslims, for the most part, live in concentrated urban areas, reflecting the initial settlement patterns for the migrant communities that arrived to the UK in the twentieth century. This has had some implications for the concept of integration as, particularly amongst British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, children attend schools where most other children are of the same ethnic group. Yet integration is a two-way street, which, if it is to be achieved, requires both British Muslims and other ethnic groups in the UK, including the majority white British population, to find ways of engaging across ethnic lines. The Commission finds that the lack of integration is most apparent in areas of high deprivation, which points to the need to address structural barriers, including a lack of economic opportunities and discrimination. Contrary to the popular representation that there is a ‘lack of integration’ by Muslim communities, the Commission encountered a wealth of positive community work by British Muslims (as well as other groups) at a local level, across ethnic and religious lines. These initiatives should continue to be encouraged and supported.

4. Employment disadvantages, and discrimination, act as barriers to integration for British Muslims. Disadvantages in employment are

particularly acute for Muslim women, and is compounded by cultural pressures some feel from within their own communities. Employers are already making headway on addressing issues around unconscious bias – affecting both British Muslims and other groups – within their organisations. However, more needs to be done, not just to provide more equitable access to opportunities for British Muslims but to allow the British economy to harness the full potential of this significant section of the population.

5. The Commission heard a great deal about the need for better leadership within the UK's Muslim communities. The management committees of a number of the UK's mosques need to better understand, and respond to, modern British life. It is of great importance that British-born Imams, who have a good understanding of British culture and who fluently speak English, are encouraged and appointed in preference to overseas alternatives. The appointment of Imams and other assistants who engage in the teaching of youngsters needs to comply with legal requirements, and should be a transparent process undertaken in conjunction with the community. There is also more work to be done on building partnerships with non-British Muslims on local issues of concern, and standing together with others to combat hate crime.

6. The practical challenges that must be overcome for Muslim women in the UK to participate fully in public life vary based on ethnic origin, which demonstrates that resistance to greater female participation is cultural, not religious. What is clear is that there is no shortage of talented women who could make a significant contribution both to the UK and to their own community, if some of the barriers standing in their way could be removed.

7. Discrimination, and fears of being discriminated against, are actively discouraging participation and contributing to disillusionment with the political process amongst young British Muslims. The Commission is a strong proponent of the belief that the Government should cast a wider net when talking to the British Muslim communities, and be

prepared to engage with views with which it disagrees and challenge these in discussion. Bridging the gulf by increasing the space for open and frank political dialogue is of critical importance, and the onus is on both the Government and British Muslims to find ways of doing so. In tandem, *biraderi* (kinship) and clan politics within some of the UK's Muslim communities stifles progress, and are keenly felt by women and young people as a barrier to participation. Whilst this is a challenge that can only be met by action from the UK's Muslims, those seeking elected office from outside Muslim communities, and statutory agencies that engage with mosques, can help.

8. Anti-Muslim prejudice, and a lack of action against those perpetrating or condoning hatred, is a notable obstacle to integration and participation. The Commission is also concerned about the impact of some recent media reporting and how this may deter talented individuals, particularly youth, from playing a full part in British society. The impact of the Government's Prevent Strategy on Muslim communities came up in most of our hearings across the country. The Commission's overriding concern is that the country needs an effective way of tackling extremism and radicalisation. The Commission is of the belief that this would be better achieved with a programme that is more greatly trusted, particularly by the UK's Muslim communities. This trust, in turn, would lead to better understanding and participation, and enable more collaborative efforts to better tackle a very real problem. There is a need for debate within Muslim communities about what are, and are not, acceptable views for the Muslim 'mainstream'. However, attempts to define this through it being imposed from the outside are unlikely to be helpful and more likely to be counter-productive. There is a strong sentiment that Muslims, as a monolith community, and Islam as a religion are unfairly targeted. This too creates a sense of alienation, which undermines a common aim of creating a united and strong society.

Recommendations

The Commission's recommendations are given in the spirit of providing practical suggestions on how to expand the possibilities for British Muslims to participate in public life, which it views as a win-win situation for both British Muslims and wider society. These recommendations seek to enable British Muslims to develop confidence in their equal standing as citizens in the UK, but also aim to provide the broader population with the confidence to view British Muslims as active contributors to, and an integral part of, British society.

The Commission has categorised recommendations according to those agents the Commission believes hold the primary responsibility for enacting them; Citizens UK will seek to support all the recommendations, either via a direct role in their implementation, by working with partner organisations, or through advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Recommendations for civil society and the business sector

1. For local authorities and civil organisations to work together to strengthen existing structures at local levels to develop cross-community relationships. Local authorities are required to promote such engagement, but, in practice, are often ill-equipped or under-resourced to fulfil this function. Where they do carry out such activity, they should actively reach out to interfaith groups, women's groups and other organisations active in the community, or consider contracting out responsibility for promoting engagement to such organisations through an open procurement process. Citizens UK is a good example of this model in action, where diverse communities of faith and no faith are working together on issues for the common good, and so this may see the expansion of Citizens UK chapters into new geographical areas where it is not currently present.

2. For existing mentoring schemes, such as those offered by Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince's Trust), to adapt elements of their service offering to address the specific needs of Muslim individuals. Alongside developing aspirations

so that individuals want to move up the career ladder, there needs to be a mechanism in place where individuals can support each other and 'open the doors' for those at different levels.

This could entail the following:

- Employers providing mentoring of young people from Muslim backgrounds in their local communities. There are several organisations that have successful models that can be learnt from, including Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince's Trust) and Step up to Serve.
- The development of a national role model awards or some form of public recognition, with Muslim professionals actively giving a helping hand to those starting off.

3. For Business in the Community to establish local compacts, to which employers are asked to sign up. The content of these should be determined locally, but could include commitments on the following:

- Name- and address-blind applications
- Unconscious bias training
- Religious and cultural literacy training
- Supporting mentoring initiatives

4. For employers to deepen their engagement with earlier stages of the education cycle and with non-Russell Group universities. Expanding outreach to schools will help promote the earlier development of soft skills while engagement with a broader set of universities on, for example, offering internships that will help promote opportunities amongst a wider talent pool, particularly in secondary schools – to support the development of soft skills.

The responsibility would ultimately lie with employers, and organisations such as Business in the Community could lead such an initiative.

5. For local authorities, schools, colleges and youth clubs to champion and expand opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to meet and share experiences, by encouraging schools, colleges and youth clubs to put in place outreach programmes using activities attractive to young people. This may include:

- Activities between schools with a predominance (75%+) of one faith with other schools of a different faith to increase the understanding and respect of other faiths and cultures.
- Using existing youth groups such as the Army Cadets, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, and the National Citizen Service to consciously bring together young people of different cultures and faiths.
- The production of more detailed guidance and training by the Department for Education and the Equality and Human Rights Commission on how to facilitate discussions in the classroom around discrimination and difference.

6. For the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to consider providing guidance on accurate reporting on Muslim issues, to ensure that faith is not being conflated with extremism. This could cover points including the following:

- **Relevance:** Would the story be newsworthy if it did not concern an individual of the Muslim faith? Is the individual's faith relevant?
- **Statistics:** Polling results need to be treated with care, and with appropriate context.
- **Terminology:** Use of Arabic terms needs to be in line with their actual meaning, e.g. Sharia, etc.

Recommendations for Government and Local Authorities

7. For the Government to reassess the way in which it engages with the UK's Muslim communities, and both the Government and Muslim communities to play their role in ending the current stalemate. There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this. The Commission suggests that wider engagement, including the robust challenging of views with which it disagrees, rather than the apparent boycott of certain organisations, could best enable the Government to hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK's Muslim communities, including young people and women. Muslim communities will also need to devise ways of allowing for engagement that better reflect their pluralistic nature. The Commission may be able to identify those who can support and facilitate these discussions, and create a forum with which the Government can engage.

8. For the Government to develop an **integration strategy**. This should include work at a local level to ensure progress towards a shared goal of a cohesive British society built on common principles. The Commission has heard much evidence from the UK's Muslim communities, which would also support this activity. One pillar of such a strategy could, therefore, take the form of local engagement boards that can engage with national and regional devolved institutions, across age groups and ethnicities.

9. For the Government to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice, and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to set up administrative systems to look at Anti-Muslim prejudice in the same way other hate crimes are considered. This definition should have broad consensus on the boundaries of hatred and prejudice, and could be informed by the definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the Government in 2016.

10. For the Government to convene an Independent Review of Prevent via an independent panel comprised of individuals with relevant expertise and representatives of, for example, schools, NHS, prisons, etc. This review could consider options such as the appointment of a Prevent Ombudsman, definitions of non-violent extremism and how to incorporate emerging evidence / best practice from overseas programmes that tackle extremism.

11. For local authorities to develop a Prevent Advisory Group made up of local stakeholders to share best practice and raise concerns. This could be integrated within existing safeguarding advisory groups.

12. For local authorities to safeguard investment in shared common spaces that bring people together in a secular environment, and enable cross-community friendships to develop. These include, for example, community centres offering group exercise classes, parks and libraries. The Commission recognises that there also needs to be a willingness on the part of the local community to utilise such spaces, and that, in a time of constrained financial resources, protecting funding will be a challenge.

13. For the public appointments' unit within the Cabinet Office to develop a comprehensive online platform that explains the civic engagement opportunities available at a local level as well as nationally. This would ideally provide information on everything from standing as a school governor, to how to be part of a Safer Neighbourhood team, serving as a magistrate, being elected as a councillor (with a breakdown and explanation of the party system) and beyond.

14. For a cross-party committee to develop a charter for a voluntary code of conduct for political parties to sign up to. This should be established on a cross-party basis, where parties give a public commitment that they will uphold the highest standards when campaigning and selecting candidates, and put in place some mechanisms to enforce these. This would include the following:

- An oversight mechanism within political parties with the ability to make

recommendations.

- A renewed commitment from MPs and councillors to not shy away from difficult conversations with local groups, including faith institutions – particularly on contentious issues and foreign policy.
- A requirement that MPs and councillors, and those seeking election, refuse to attend male-only events / those where women do not have equal access.
- Ensuring female potential candidates are not unfairly excluded.
- Making it clear that reliance on kinship networks, and the use of pressure through these networks for candidate selection or election to office is unacceptable in the modern UK and may also be unlawful.

Recommendations for Muslim communities in the UK

15. For Muslim umbrella bodies to introduce voluntary standards for mosques and Islamic centres. This would explore issues of governance – particularly reforms to mosque committees – along with strategy and access for women. The Commission would envisage this should be managed primarily by Muslim umbrella bodies such as the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB). These standards could include commitments to (and regular assessments of progress against) the following:

- Undergoing, and providing, training to produce fit-for-purpose leaders, and organisations that produce a cohesive vision and strategy so as to move away from being reactive and become more outward facing.
- Taking a stronger stance against the persecution of others; e.g. anti-Semitism, Christian persecution and other branches of Islam.
- Contributing to the development of a broader range of voices. This could be achieved through mosque committees supporting the development of a spokesperson network, which would include youth and women.
- Youth and women are to have equal access to leadership opportunities across Muslim organisations.

16. For mosques to explore partnerships both within and outside the Muslim communities to develop capacity. This could include training, twinning with another local faith-based institution, and some pro-bono assistance from local employers who have relevant expertise in governance issues such as accounting and constitutional matters. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), for example, could provide support on the coaching and training of mosque trustees.

17. For mosques to invest in British-born Imams who are to be paid a decent living wage, funded by Muslim institutions in the UK, and equipped with pastoral skills so they are able to deal with the challenges facing British Muslims. To achieve this, the Commission would recommend that universities consider pairing with seminaries so that educational schemes for Imams become accredited, meaning that Imams would receive an educational qualification as well as a religious qualification.

18. For Muslim professionals to invest in helping strengthen their own communities by, for example, lobbying for the establishment of the voluntary standards noted above, establishing a brokerage body to connect mosques with external capacity-building support or directly funding schemes to help modernise mosque committees.

State of the Nation:

The British Muslim Presence in Public Life Today¹

There is not a homogenous Muslim community in the UK, and therefore British Muslim experiences are more diverse than is often assumed. It is important to rebalance the public discourse that can focus on Muslims either as a disadvantaged group or as ‘a threat within’ i.e. a distinct subset of British society with a worldview that is inimical to that of ‘the mainstream’. Unlocking a fuller Muslim presence in and contribution to British public life could help to reduce perceptions of increasing polarisation within British society. Actions that enable the current generation of British Muslim citizens to develop confidence in their equal standing should, in turn, reduce fears around British Muslim integration and enable wider society to reap the benefits of more active involvement by Muslim fellow citizens.

Muslims are the largest and fastest-growing faith minority in the UK, making up about one in twenty of the population. The 2011 census records 2.71 million Muslims in England and Wales. This is a rise from the 1.55 million in the 2001 census. Around 95% of Muslims in the UK live in England, concentrated in urban areas, with three-quarters living in Greater London, the West Midlands, the North West, or Yorkshire and Humberside. The 2011 census shows there were 77,000 Muslims in Scotland (1.4% of the Scottish population), 46,000 Muslims in Wales (1.5%) and 3,800 Muslims in Northern Ireland (0.2%).

Just under half of Muslims in the UK in 2011 were British-born (46%). Although most Muslims in the UK are British citizens, just under a million of the Muslims resident in the UK in 2011 were born in Asia or the Middle East (36%), 10% in Africa, and 6% in other European countries. Seven out of ten of British residents born in Pakistan and Bangladesh hold British passports, a considerably

higher proportion than for several other migrant groups. While two-thirds of Muslims in the UK are of Asian ethnicity, around a million Muslims in the UK are not Asian, something that is often overlooked in public and media discourse. Muslims, therefore, make up around a third of the overall ethnic-minority population across the UK. A tenth of Muslims in the UK are white, reflecting a combination of white British converts to Islam along with migrants from Europe and elsewhere.

The UK’s Muslim population has a strikingly younger age profile than that of the population in general. Half of Muslims in the UK are aged under twenty-five, and a third are aged under fifteen, while the median age of the general population is under forty. Almost nine out of ten Muslims in the UK were aged under fifty in 2011 (88%), while just one in twenty-five Muslims (4%) were aged sixty-five or over, compared to 16% of the UK population being over sixty-five. Muslims therefore make up a large proportion of the

¹ Note that there are some important limits to the data on British Muslim citizens. There is currently a considerably patchier approach to data collection and monitoring by religious belief and faith than by ethnicity. This has often led to a tendency to treat data on Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups as the best available proxies for data about Muslim experience, when these groups make up just over half (53%) of the UK’s Muslim population and have distinct socio-economic profiles. This lack of robust data makes it difficult to make valid comparisons about the differing patterns of experience within Muslim communities, and the extent to which public policy debates are driven by subjective and anecdotal claims that are difficult to check.

school-age population both nationally and in the areas with a significant Muslim population².

A third of Muslims in the UK live in London – just over a million people and 12% of London’s population. Birmingham’s Hodge Hill has the largest Muslim population of all parliamentary constituencies (52.1%), and a tenth of local authority districts in England and Wales have a Muslim population of 10% or more: Tower Hamlets (34.5%) and Newham (32%) in London, and Blackburn, with Darwen (27%) and Bradford (24%), are the districts with the highest proportions of Muslims. The youthful demographic profile of the UK’s Muslim population is a factor in the younger age profile of the UK’s most diverse cities. The median age in Birmingham is thirty-two – giving it the youngest age profile of any major city in Europe – while in London it is thirty-three, compared to the median age of forty across the UK. There is also now a growing Muslim population in suburban areas across the south of England, with Slough (23%), Watford (10%), Peterborough and Wycombe (both 9%), and Crawley, Reading and Woking (all 7%) being examples of local authorities with an above average and rising Muslim population, and a correspondingly larger proportion of Muslim students of school age in these areas.

British Muslim Representation in Public Life

The number of Muslim MPs in Westminster has tripled in a decade, rising from four in 2005 to eight in 2010 and thirteen in 2015. As this report went to press, the outcome of the 2017 snap general election showed a record number of fifteen Muslim MPs were elected. Eight of the fifteen MPs are women, making national politics a sphere where the prevailing norm might increasingly become one of an equal share of power, and voice for men and women from Muslim backgrounds. This total of 2% of the House of Commons still lags behind the proportion of British Muslims in the electorate, but recent progress has largely laid to rest lingering assumptions among political parties about whether voters in particular areas were ‘ready’ for a Muslim or other minority politician, especially as MPs elected in 2010 and 2015 represent a range of both low-diversity and high-diversity seats³.

However, increasing ethnic diversity in Westminster politics is not reflected in local government. In 2013, 96% of councillors were white and 4% non-white, with no change in these proportions over the previous five years. Figures by faith background are not available. The higher age profile of local councillors, with an average age of sixty, could be one factor here among others⁴.

Both the civil service and legal professions can be credited with an increased effort to assess progress by faith as well as ethnic background, which is usually an indispensable foundation of any serious or sustained effort to increase participation in this area. That said, Muslims appear to be comparatively under-represented in the civil service compared with other ethnic and faith minority groups, despite promising initiatives such as Prime Minister May’s call in 2016 for an audit of public services to reveal racial disparities⁵. There are around 5,000 Muslim civil servants, per the 2016 civil service employment statistics from ONS, which reported the civil service responsibility level by religion or belief for the first time. The 4,950 Muslim civil servants constitute just over 1% of the total of 418,340, or 3% of civil-service respondents who have made a declaration about whether they have a religious belief. The survey found thirty Muslim civil servants among the 5,000 most senior civil servants (among whom half recorded information about whether they have a religious belief). Muslim respondents make up 0.6% of this overall group, or 1.2% of the top civil servants giving a response about their faith. Overall, 11% of the civil service are from an ethnic-minority background (2016); this was a rise from 9% in 2010 and 4% in 1988. This falls to 7% among senior civil servants⁶.

There were just under 3,000 Muslims among the 130,000 solicitors holding practising certificates, based on research by the Law Society (2014), making up just 2.4% of the total. While ethnic-minority solicitors are estimated to make up 13.7% of the total, Muslims are under-represented within the profession, compared to those from other ethnic and faith minority groups. There appears to be a similar pattern among barristers, per the Bar Standards Board 2016 survey: only 1.1% of barristers gave their religion as Muslim, while the survey shows that

12% of barristers are now from ethnic minorities, falling with seniority to 6% among QCs. This is a large but not a comprehensive survey, with a response rate covering around one-third of the profession⁷.

Current data is considerably patchier in other areas of public life. Across several professions, as in the civil service and the law, the overall pattern would appear to be that of a rising ethnic-minority presence, but often tapering at the most senior levels, and, to the extent that data is available, there is a tendency for Muslims specifically to remain under-represented compared to other ethnic and faith minority groups.

There is limited data on the diversity of the news media. A City University 2016 survey, covering 700 news professionals, reports that 0.4% of British journalists are Muslim, while 6% of those surveyed are from ethnic minorities⁸. These are strikingly low figures, especially given the concentration of the media in London and other major cities. Senior figures in major media groups have acknowledged that the profession has been slow to make progress on ethnic diversity. Media organisations will rightly place important emphasis on their ability to report freely and frankly on important social issues, but would appear to have few good arguments against media organisations adopting increased transparency about recruitment and demographics, particularly when the media is rightly vocal in seeking and scrutinising such data from other institutions, both public and private, which have influence and power in our public life.

The Diversity of the Muslim Experience in the UK

There are increasingly different experiences within and across the Muslim population in the UK. Partly, this reflects the different experiences of new migrants and settled minority communities, with large, settled Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities now in their third and fourth generations in the UK, while those from Africa, Europe and the Middle East are more likely to have arrived in more recent times.

However, what is equally important as the range of ethnic and national origins is the range

of experiences, across and within generations, and by geography as well as gender. Education and socio-economic status play a key role in this divergence. Some of the UK's Muslims are becoming increasingly upwardly mobile, while others are at risk of becoming more marginalised and left behind; also, there is a growing spreading-out of the Muslim population across suburban Britain, alongside a growing concentration in some inner-city areas. Muslims are more likely to be unemployed than the population generally, and, compared to other ethnic and faith minorities, there is also an increasing Muslim middle-class in high-status professional roles. A total of 11% of the population are in the top 'higher managerial and professional' category of jobs in the labour force survey: this includes 7.3% of people from a Pakistani background and 9% of Bangladeshis, lower rates than for those from other ethnic-minority backgrounds.

One in four Muslims in the UK holds a university degree, which is a comparable proportion to the population as a whole. This reflects a rapid improvement in educational performance over the last decade, especially in London. At the same time, around a quarter of those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds report being unable to speak English well or at all. The Muslim Council of Britain notes that this group amounts to around 6% of the Muslim population of the UK overall, yet these figures on language fluency are also an indicator of the shift in educational expectations and experiences across just one or two generations, especially for young British Muslim women⁹.

Muslim women are considerably less likely to be in paid employment than non-Muslim women: 57% of Muslim women aged twenty-five to forty-nine are in paid work compared to 80% of women of that age range in total in the UK. However, there are also considerable differences between different groups within Muslim communities: women from Somali backgrounds have an 87% inactivity rate compared to 65% for women from a Pakistani background¹⁰.

The divergence of the Muslim experience in the UK has important implications for the Commission's aim to increase the presence and



contribution of Muslims in public life. An effective long-term strategy to unlock the full potential of the UK's 3 million Muslims undoubtedly requires a deeper understanding of how spatial segregation, socio-economic disadvantages, cultural factors and discrimination can limit opportunities, and the networks, confidence and capacity to pursue these effectively.

Yet it is now important to rebalance a public discourse that often portrays Muslims as a disadvantaged group facing complex, long-term barriers to opportunity and power in British society. That captures important parts of the truth, but as a sole focus it would overlook the significant opportunity to capitalise on progress made to date. It should be as important to seek to capitalise on the fact that, for example, Muslims in the UK are increasingly present in our universities (in contrast to their peers in other European societies) and consider how that can become a springboard to increasing success in public life, as it is to understand the causes and responses to their over-representation in the prison population and among the ranks of the unemployed.

Conversely, the fact that there is not a homogenous set of British Muslim experiences may serve as a counterbalance to the still small but growing signs of fear of (and sometimes hostility towards) British Muslims in parts of the media as well as within elements of the non-British Muslim population. For example, the many positive examples of where British Muslims already do play a role in British public life should not be overlooked as these can provide powerful role models for other British Muslims, while demonstrating to the broader population that British Muslims can and do contribute to the 'greater good' in many ways already. Programmes developed to recognise Muslim contributions to the UK, such as projects remembering the more than 400,000 Muslim soldiers who fought alongside British troops during World War I¹¹, or community-led initiatives to celebrate Muslim heritage in the UK, such as Everyday Muslim¹², should be encouraged and promoted.

Attitudes on Integration Amongst and Towards British Muslims

There is significant scepticism across British society about the integration and even allegiance of their British Muslim fellow citizens, while British Muslims have mixed views about the extent to which they hold equal status or have access to equal opportunities within British society. This dynamic creates the risk of a downward spiral of mutual suspicion. The Commission wishes to play a role, however small, in minimising this risk – first, by highlighting areas in which false (and potentially dangerous) assumptions have been made and, second, through the provision, in subsequent sections of this report, of what it hopes are practicable and actionable recommendations on how to enable British Muslims to take on a more active and visible role in public life.

Attitudinal surveys have captured fear and widespread ambivalence towards British Muslims. A 2013 Chatham House study, using YouGov data¹³, shows that 49% of Britons fear that ‘there will be a clash of civilisations between British Muslims and native white Britons’ while only 24% believe there would not be. Fears of such a clash with Hindus (12%), Sikhs (13%) or black Britons (20%) are held by a narrower group. Most of the British public agree that ‘the vast majority of Muslims are good British citizens’ by 63% to 12%; although this is apparently contradicted by only 24% agreeing with the proposition that ‘Muslims are compatible with the British way of life’, with 48% disagreeing with this statement. At the same time, there is widespread public acknowledgement that British Muslims face prejudice in British society: 82% believe there is prejudice against British Muslims and 54% believe there is ‘a lot’ of prejudice, which is a considerably higher proportion than for other ethnic and faith minorities¹⁴.

Yet, in many cases, assumptions over the extent to which British Muslims are ‘integrated’ are often inaccurate. For example, research undertaken by the University of Essex between 2009 and 2014 demonstrates that British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are just as politically engaged as is the ‘white’ community: 72% of British Pakistanis and 78% of British Bengalis voted in the 2010 election, compared

with 79% of white Britons. Through the course of the research, the percentage of British Pakistani and Bengalis expressing a sense of civic duty, as per the University’s system of measuring latent as well as expressed attitudes/behaviour, is higher than that of white Britons: 86% and 88%, respectively, versus 78%.

British Muslims feel they are increasingly on the receiving end of Islamophobic attitudes and behaviour. For example, the hate-crime monitoring project Tell Mama recorded over 2,300 incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime in 2015, compared with 599 in 2014¹⁵. The increase reflects a mixture of increased efforts to capture previously unreported incidents, as well as a spike in recorded hate crime in the wake of the 2016 referendum. Yet findings suggest that Muslims in the UK have relatively high trust in key British institutions. From the same body of research by the University of Essex, 67% of respondents from a Bangladeshi background and 61% from a Pakistani background expressed trust in British political institutions, higher than white British respondents (51%).

Unlocking the Future

The aims of this Commission, to unlock a fuller Muslim presence and contribution in British public life, are important for many reasons, including the straightforward, meritocratic rationale that equal opportunities to fulfil potential should be available to all citizens, regardless of ethnic and faith background. Just as importantly, actions that enable British Muslim citizens to develop deeper confidence in their equal standing in the UK should enable the wider society to develop greater confidence in the broader social contribution of their Muslim fellow citizens.



Identity & Belonging

Increased scrutiny in and coverage on ‘Muslim’ issues can result in an ‘us vs them’ dichotomy, which produces its own cycle of separateness, with young Muslims growing up in a climate of being ‘othered’. The events of 7/7 acted as a watershed moment for the development for British Muslim identity politics, and prompted a similarly seismic shift in attitudes from some towards British Muslims, as well as understandable fears around the threat of extremist Islamist ideology. A coherent, yet inclusive, British identity needs to be forged, particularly among young Britons, if all our citizens are to feel confident about their role within a cohesive and multicultural society, as opposed to being problematized and therefore restricted from actively participating in public life.

In the 2011 census, 73% of Muslims actively identified themselves as British, which correlates with other research and polling data, demonstrating that Muslims have a comparable or higher level of affinity with the UK than other comparable groups.

“As Britons we are afforded the best rights in the world to practise our faith without fear of persecution. We want to remain this way for many generations.”
(Young Male Respondent, London)

Many Muslims the Commission heard from share the belief that the UK is one of the best places to practise Islam freely; this is substantiated by the 2016 Policy Exchange Poll, which finds that 91% of respondents feel they are entirely free to practise their religion freely in the UK¹⁶.

The Impact of 9/11

While the ‘Rushdie affair’ in the 1980s is viewed by some social commentators as the start of anti-Muslim sentiment in the UK, 9/11 has proved to be an equally important benchmark, particularly for the younger generation. Throughout our inquiry we heard of the impact 9/11 and 7/7 has had on Muslim communities, with many noting it as a watershed moment for the development of British Muslim identity politics.

“Before 9/11, Muslims co-existed in Britain with no issues. Before 9/11, the growth of Islam wasn’t a problem. It has all changed now.”
(Adult Male Respondent, Sunderland)

Conversely, the Commission notes that the events of 7/7, and the shock of discovering that British-born young Muslims had carried out the attacks, prompted a similarly seismic shift in attitudes from some within the majority white community towards British Muslims, as well as understandable fears around the threat of extremist Islamist ideology.

One young person from Leeds shared the following with us:

“Dealing with suspicion and mistrust is a barrier pertinent to young Muslims participating in public life, as the concept of the ‘other’ has seen to have been reinforced after the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, and, in more recent news, Paris and the rise in ISIS, after which there has been a significant rise in Islamophobia. Young Muslims feel unfairly targeted for not integrating and question why society focuses on Islam with regards to integration rather than other minority groups.”
(Young Female Respondent, Leeds)

It is evident that many Muslims feel that they are not accepted due to their faith and associated references to Islam, which has a detrimental impact on their feelings of belonging. This has been worsened by the discussion around ‘British values’, with many of the Commission’s respondents perceiving this term as exclusive rather than focusing on the universal values that individuals of different cultures also hold.

"The more we are told what it means to be British, the less British we feel."

(Secondary School Student, West Midlands)

"You feel that you're British unless someone asks you to prove it."

(Adult Male Respondent, London)

"We dream and think in English, we know pop culture, yet I still do not belong. In Pakistan I am seen as British, but here I am questioned."

(Adult Female Respondent, West Midlands)

"They [the media] convey a narrative where Muslims feel like second-class citizens. In the archives, my great grandfather has his war medals, but even someone like me who is patriotic is made to feel like a foreigner."

(Adult Male Respondent, London)



Several of the individuals the Commission spoke to feel that Muslims are viewed through a prism of suspicion, and that when what would ordinarily be a normal accommodation for faith is made it quickly becomes problematized when framed through a Muslim lens. This is noticeably highlighted in, for example, media coverage of Pizza Express serving halal chicken in their branches¹⁷ – a business decision that quickly became sensationalised. There was a legitimate issue of choice, both for Muslims and for non-Muslims who might object to halal meat. But the coverage was largely in terms of a sinister Muslim takeover.

This increased scrutiny and coverage on 'Muslim' issues can result in an 'us vs them' dichotomy, which produces its own cycle of separateness, with young Muslims growing up in a climate of being 'othered'. We have heard this view expressed particularly strongly by young

people. For second generation Muslims, this lack of belonging can be exacerbated by not feeling fully accepted as British, but also by not being fully attached to their parents' cultural identity either.

"Young British Muslims face an identity crisis while growing up in Britain. They struggle to grapple with and make sense of competing and parallel identities, encompassing the national, ethnic and religious. Many are unable to navigate this complex minefield in order to cement a common yet distinct sensed [sic] of identity and belonging. As such they perceive that they are faced with an either/or choice. There is a severe aspirations and ambitions deficit amongst many young Muslims emanating from perceptions of Islamophobia, [a] dearth of role models/ mentors and some ethnic cultures framing success purely in monetary terms."

(Written Submission, Think Tank)

Integration

British Muslims, for the most part, live in concentrated urban areas, reflecting the initial settlement patterns for the migrant communities that arrived to the UK in the twentieth century. This has had some implications for the concept of integration as, particularly amongst British Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, children attend schools where most other children are of the same ethnic group. Yet integration is a two-way street, which, if it is to be achieved, requires both British Muslims and other ethnic groups in the UK, including the majority white British population, to find ways of engaging across ethnic lines. The Commission finds that a lack of integration is most apparent in areas of high deprivation, which points to the need to address structural barriers, including a lack of economic opportunities and discrimination. Contrary to the popular representation that there is a 'lack of integration' by Muslim communities, the Commission has encountered a wealth of positive community work by British Muslims (as well as other groups) at a local level across ethnic and religious lines. These initiatives should continue to be encouraged and supported.

"There are lots of positive signs that members of the Muslim community are advancing in public life but as with all immigrant communities it takes time. The way young people in areas of high diversity are integrating gives much hope but Islam in this country will need to do more to help young people reconcile staying true to their faith while living in a society where the culture, norms and values may conflict with its teachings."

(Written Submission, Former Chief Constable)

A general pattern amongst minority ethnic groups is concentrated settlement in industrial and urban areas. This often reflects the labour market gaps that migrant communities filled in the twentieth century. Compared to other minority faith groups, Muslims tend to live in higher residential concentrations at ward level¹⁸. There are about seventy wards with a Muslim population of 40% or more (out of 8,570 wards in England and Wales). Blackburn, Birmingham, Burnley and Bradford have wards with the highest Muslim populations, ranging from 70–85%¹⁹.

This concentration of British Muslims in specific geographic areas has, in some cases, led to a de-facto system of segregated schooling. A 2013 Demos study found that more than 50% of ethnic-minority students were in schools where

ethnic minorities were the majority, and that school segregation was highest among students from Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds relative to other ethnic groups²⁰.

There is some evidence to suggest a correlation between decreased integration and higher socio-economic deprivation. The Muslim population has some of the highest rates of deprivation amongst any community in the UK. Of the 3 million Muslims who live in the UK, 46% of them live in the most disadvantaged 10% of local authorities²¹; across the UK's 168 local authorities, youth services lost £60 million to funding cuts between 2012 and 2014²².

The white British population, on average, lives in districts where 85% of the population is white. This means significant numbers of white British have had little contact or engagement with British Muslims.

Integration is important, and the Commission supports this outcome. The Commission believes it takes effort from everyone, established and newer communities, if people are not to face hostility and racism. The possibility of growing up in an area without making meaningful contact with someone of a different faith or ethnic background is worrisome, for all communities.

“Many of our white British students have not met or have not conversed with members of the British Muslim community, as such; their only perception of the Muslim faith and of the British Muslim community is one that is portrayed within the media, through social media and through family connections. We find that this perception is overwhelmingly negative.”

(Adult Female Educator, Non-Muslim Respondent, East Midlands)

Increasing interaction fosters a sense of togetherness, enriches the lives of all and develops collective agency within communities. Contact and engagement with those who may hold different views are the basic building blocks through which a degree of consensus can be reached to create societies where, despite differences, it is possible to work together for the common good. Trust between citizens is essential for any flourishing society. Its presence helps foster democratic participation, economic advancement and a thriving civil society, whereas its absence can lead to civic hostilities, communal division and segregation. Deeper community relations are thus vital in developing a more united, cohesive and stronger nation.

“Integration works both ways and so the society we need to integrate into should want us to.”

(Female Student, Muslim Respondent, Greater Manchester)

The Role of Community Organisations in Promoting Engagement and Integration

Contrary to the popular representation that there is a ‘lack of integration’ by Muslim communities the Commission has heard evidence of a wealth of ongoing positive community work. In many cases this work is spearheaded by local networks of religious institutions.

Interfaith work can play an important role in being, for many, the first opportunity to engage with individuals from different backgrounds and belief systems. It has been reported that, particularly for young people, these engagements can be very powerful and “help build confidence in being proud of who they are and respect[ing] others for [what] they are and what they believe,

sharing commonalities and exploring differences.” (Mosque Chairman, Muslim Respondent, Leeds)

Educational establishments also report the importance of learning about faiths and culture in schools.

“Three year olds come into school and play together and partake in ‘dress up corner’. It’s so important to have the right resources; for example, having a salwar kameez alongside trousers. It helps celebrate differences.”

(Female Educator, Non-Muslim Respondent, Nottingham)

Institutions that are successfully engaging in interfaith or broader community work have described the solidarity experienced. This solidarity was particularly appreciated if organisations felt under threat following international events or terrorist attacks elsewhere.

“We visit them; they visit us. We have their backs; we know they have our backs. It’s a good relationship.”

(Female Rabbi, Non-Muslim Respondent, London)

From the evidence gathered, the Commissioners understand that these relationships are not simply tokenistic, but could be translated into both vocal and material support when an individual or group was experiencing challenging times. It is our hope that this type of engagement can be encouraged to strengthen local community ties. One such example is that of the Finchley Reform Synagogue, which hosted the local Bravanese community when their community centre was burned down in an arson attack in 2013. Rabbi Miriam Berger described it as “a demonstration of how easy it is to have harmony between different cultures and faiths. We are discovering that we have more in common than we think.”²³

It is clear that Muslim women play an important role in brokering relationships, whether it be at an interfaith level, at a social level (such as parent and toddler groups, coffee mornings, book clubs and the like) or with other community organisations, and they should be supported in the work they do and encouraged to aim for wider outreach.

Nisa-Nashim is a Jewish-Muslim women's network that seeks to bring the two faith communities in the UK closer together. Nisa-Nashim promotes ways in which Jewish and Muslim women can understand that their similarities are greater than their differences, through a range of shared initiatives that support their leadership journeys and encourage them to form meaningful personal relationships, while benefiting the wider society in which they live. It currently has twenty-two groups in different regions of the country, and has held over 100 events. Testimonials include one woman sharing, "I have lived in this community for many years; this is the first time I've invited [my neighbour of the other faith] into my house"

www.nisanashim.org

"The women are more organised and create more opportunities for other women. There is a lot more achieved. It is less about egos as women have a 'let's get on with it' attitude."

(Adult female, Muslim respondent, Portsmouth)

Community organising initiatives are recognised as providing a positive space for Muslims to engage in public life in solidarity with others. Citizens UK is an established model that already brings diverse communities together to work on issues for the common good.

During the Commission's hearings, it was suggested that establishing a mechanism by which civic bodies could engage with community institutions could be mutually beneficial, and help promote organic interaction and engagement of communities. Whilst the Commission did not make this one of its recommendations, it is worth considering the development of a benchmark for bodies such as the National Citizen Service and the Challenge on BAME engagement, and socio-economic factors.

It was also suggested by respondents that, for many individuals, there is a desire to contribute to society, but a lack of awareness of the opportunities available or where to go to for such information. School governorship aside, many are unaware of the plethora of positions available to them, and that a dedicated resource would be warmly welcomed.

We have heard that Muslim-faith-based organisations feel they are under increasing

scrutiny and suspicion. Some respondents suggest there is greater reluctance from non-Muslim parents with respect to letting their children visit mosques during educational trips, with many parents objecting due to fears their children may be made to pray or would be unsafe.

"After the murder of Lee Rigby, we had a school say parents were protesting and wanted to cancel the trip to the mosque. We were insistent they should come to engage and show that communities wouldn't be divided. Some parents pulled out but those who did attend told everyone else it was beneficial. We often say to mosques they should open their doors and engage with the wider world. It's about winning hearts and minds, and Muslim ambassadors need to step up to the plate."

(Hate Crime Panellist, East Midlands)

Visit My Mosque Day is a national initiative facilitated by the Muslim Council of Britain, where mosques around the country are encouraged to open their doors, and invite the local community and neighbours of all faiths and none. The 2017 Visit My Mosque Day on Sunday 5th February saw over 150 centres taking part across the country, with an estimated 10,000 visitors taking part, and benefiting from an opportunity to visit and ask questions about Muslims and Islam, and better understand the faith beyond the negative media headlines. One visitor commented, "Without going into the serious side of the visit, tour and explanation – which were accomplished and communicated extraordinarily well – the impression I left the Foundation with was one of love and friendship."

www.visitmymosque.org

There is also a very strong sentiment that Muslim communities face increasing discrimination, misrepresentation and distorted perceptions of Muslims within popular media narratives. This has a detrimental effect on their confidence to engage in and feel part of wider British society. Misperceptions and misinformation in the media lie at the heart of how diverse Muslim communities are received and often lack the nuances required to ground the debate in a balanced way. When parts of the media routinely single out the Muslim community for a lack of integration, without explaining the historical, economic and social contributing factors (page x) discusses media further in relation to political

representation), this contributes to a cycle of misunderstanding and makes it harder to build links across communities.

Enabling Dialogue on Contentious Issues

Another strong theme throughout is the need to protect the right to discuss contentious topics without fear of repercussion. Ideally, these should take place in a mixed environment where individuals can constructively debate and develop their thoughts on issues of mutual concern with others who may not necessarily hold the same views. Many of those who spoke to the Commission feel that opportunities to hold such discussions are shrinking.

“There is a real fear among young people and adults alike that discussion of prescient issues related to theology, politics, foreign policy and history may be misconstrued and be labelled as exporting the ‘wrong ideology’. This shuts down debate and forces questioning, particularly among young people, underground where they are more vulnerable to recruitment by groups such as Da’esh, who devote enormous time and resources to answering such questions.”

(Written Submission, National Charity)

A related issue is that local authority cuts to funding has meant that opportunities for young people to engage with other young people from different backgrounds are dwindling. Local authorities are responsible for parks, libraries and youth services, all of which are places that cut across community divides, but they have been vulnerable to local authorities’ economising. Many youth-service providers have had to downsize, or close completely, leaving significant numbers of young people with few avenues to address issues of integration and identity.

The Commission has heard general criticism of the approach of statutory agencies seeking to work with Muslim community groups. It has been suggested that these agencies tend to have discussions with community ‘gate-keepers’ or traditional leaders who are predominantly male, and that the patriarchal, or male-dominated, structures of such institutions often fail to support women. The women respondents the Commission has heard from were quick to make clear that this was cultural practice rather than religious, but feel that when women do get involved with statutory agencies it is often more productive. The chapter on Muslim Institutions and Muslim Leadership looks at this issue of women’s engagement in more detail.



CASE STUDY

Citizens UK

Citizens UK organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good.



Community Organising

Citizens UK organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good, and currently has eleven chapters across the country, including in Wales, Birmingham, and Tyne and Wear. The largest and most diverse alliance is in Greater London, with a rich mix of 228 members of synagogues, churches, mosques, union branches, students, refugee groups, primary schools, university and college departments, secondary schools, LGBT groups and voluntary associations.

When people work together they have the power to change their neighbourhoods, cities and, ultimately, the country for the better. Citizens UK's aim is to develop and sustain the people of the UK's capacity to participate in public life, and strengthen their groups and

institutions in the process. To do this, we listen to our members, asking them about their concerns and developing strategies to improve our communities. We ensure that civil society is at the negotiating table alongside the market and the State, so that our communities are included in the decisions that affect them. We challenge, support and thank those in elected office who work on issues that interest and affect our membership.

It has been through this disciplined process of organising that UK-wide campaigns such as the Living Wage Campaign and Refugees Welcome have come, as well as a myriad of regional and local campaigns and public actions.

“When people work together they have the power ...”

Notable Campaigns



Living Wage

The Living Wage is an example of how employers, campaigners and faith groups can work together to find practical ways to address working poverty and strengthen families today, without waiting for government to act.

Launched by Citizens UK in 2001, the Living Wage campaign has won over £210 million of additional wages, lifting over 100,000 families out of working poverty.



Housing

London Community Land Trust (CLT) project exists to deliver genuinely and permanently affordable homes that are priced according to local wages, meaning people are no longer priced out of the neighbourhoods they call home.

St Clements is the first East London and London CLT site, and provides 23 CLT homes. Since 2015, London CLT has been working with local groups in 5 boroughs to ensure St Clements is not just a one-off, but a catalytic first of many CLTs across the capital.



Refugees Welcome

People from across the country have organised like never before to create a welcoming country and welcoming communities, forming over 90 Refugees Welcome campaign groups around the UK.

Since then the campaign has worked tirelessly and has seen thousands of Syrian refugees resettled, the Dubs amendment won, and 3,000 more children brought to safety. Citizens UK has also been at the forefront of pushing for community sponsorship of refugees. There has been enthusiastic uptake on this recent opportunity for civil society groups to become community sponsors.



Recommendations

1. For local authorities, schools, colleges and youth clubs to champion and expand opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to meet and share experiences, by encouraging schools, colleges and youth clubs to put in place outreach programmes using activities attractive to young people. This may include:

- Activities between schools with a predominance (75%+) of one faith with other schools of a different faith to increase the understanding and respect of other faiths and cultures.
- Using existing youth groups such as the Army Cadets, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, and the National Citizen Service to consciously bring together young people of different cultures and faiths.
- The production of more detailed guidance and training by the Department for Education and the Equality and Human Rights Commission on how to facilitate discussions in the classroom around discrimination and difference.

2. For local authorities and civil organisations to work together to strengthen existing structures at local levels to develop cross-community relationships. Local authorities are required to promote such engagement, but, in practice, are often ill-equipped or under-resourced to fulfil this function. Where they do carry out such activity, they should actively reach out to interfaith groups, women's groups and other organisations active in the community, or consider contracting out responsibility for promoting engagement to such organisations through an open procurement process. Citizens UK is a good example of this model in action, where diverse communities of faith and no faith are working together on issues for the common good, and so this may see the expansion of Citizens UK chapters into new geographical areas where it is not currently present.

3. For local authorities to safeguard investment in shared common spaces that bring people together in a secular environment, and enable cross-community friendships to develop. These include, for example, community centres offering group exercise classes, parks and libraries. The Commission recognises that there also needs to be a willingness on the part of the local community to utilise such spaces, and that, in a time of constrained financial resources, protecting funding will be a challenge.

4. For the public appointments' unit within the Cabinet Office to develop a comprehensive online platform that explains the civic engagement opportunities available at a local level as well as nationally. This would ideally provide information on everything from standing as a school governor, to how to be part of a Safer Neighbourhood team, serving as a magistrate, being elected as a councillor (with a breakdown and explanation of the party system) and beyond.



Employment & Opportunity

Employment disadvantages, and discrimination, act as barriers to integration for British Muslims. Disadvantage in employment is particularly acute for Muslim women, and is compounded by cultural, rather than religious, pressures some feel from within their own communities. Employers are already making headway on addressing issues around unconscious bias – affecting both British Muslims and other groups – within their organisations. However, more needs to be done, not just to provide more equitable access to opportunities for British Muslims but to allow the British economy to harness the full potential of this significant section of the population.

Religion is not systematically captured in employment data, which means there is heavy reliance on ethnicity as a proxy indicator. It is possible to make some assumptions about British Muslim experiences based on data for the UK's black and minority ethnic (BME) population of 7.87 million. The 2011 census showed there were 2.49 million Muslims in this grouping; i.e. 31.6% or about one in three.²⁴ The independent McGregor-Smith Review (2017) shows that in 2015 one in eight of the working population was from a BME background, despite making up only 10% of the workforce and only 6% of BME individuals holding top management positions.²⁵

Other data shows that employment patterns amongst British Muslims compare unfavourably with the broader population²⁶: 19.8% of the Muslim population is in full-time employment, compared to 34.9% in the overall population, and 7.2% of Muslims are unemployed compared to 4.0% in the overall population. Muslim immigrants who came to the UK decades ago began at the bottom of the social ladder, but many remain there, belonging to the most deprived economic and social groups, as noted in the State of the Nation and Integration Chapters. While there are pockets of prosperity, more than a fifth (21.3%) of Muslims between the ages of sixteen and seventy-four have never worked (this excludes full-time students) as compared to 4% of the population overall. A study by the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol finds that Muslim men are up to 76% less likely to have a job of any kind compared to white, male British

Christians of the same age and with the same qualifications, and Muslim women are up to 65% less likely.²⁷

The higher levels of unemployment amongst Muslims as compared to the overall population are the outcome of numerous factors. Explicit discrimination is, on the whole, increasingly rare. However, it would appear that bias – some of it potentially unconscious – continues to play a commanding role. BBC research in 2017 shows that individuals with 'Muslim sounding' names (on average) apply for more jobs than their non-Muslim counterparts, and that a job-seeker with an English-sounding name is offered three times as many interviews as the Muslim-named applicant.²⁸

This bias has a negative impact on candidates' confidence and demeanour during the selection process. Furthermore, continuous rejections affect an applicant's self-perception, making them believe that discrimination is the most probable explanation for their situation.

“Those belonging to ethnic minorities, who happen to be Muslim, are significantly more likely to be from impoverished or low income backgrounds. This in turn limits access to quality primary and secondary education. Hence Muslims are underrepresented at universities and more so at the Russell Group and Oxbridge. Resultantly there is a detrimental effect on employment prospects and ability to secure top professional roles or influential/leading positions (e.g. in politics, law, media, academia, arts, etc.)” (Written Submission, Think Tank)

The business benefits of diversity are indisputable; consequently, those organisations that fail to recognise and address unconscious bias risk missing out on valuable experience, skills and talent. The potential benefit to the UK economy from full representation of BME individuals across the labour market through improved participation and progression is estimated to be £24 billion a year, which represents 1.3% of the gross domestic product (GDP).²⁹ Employers are already making headway on addressing issues around unconscious bias within their organisations. However, more needs to be done.

The wider introduction of name-blind applications would be welcomed, as traditional CV- or application-based shortlisting is one of the most common stages at which bias can have an adverse impact – not just in regards to religion, but also ethnicity, gender and socio-economic groups among other variables. The Commission acknowledges that this does not address the causes of bias. It is essential that employers invest in assessing their existing recruitment processes to identify where the barriers to diverse talent lies. There is also a general lack of understanding of Islam, and so there is a need for greater cultural and religious understanding amongst employers, and those responsible for hiring in organisations.

BME job applicants often lack access to the advice, guidance and contacts to help them get into certain professions. The Commission would encourage equipping individuals (especially young people) with the skills necessary to compete effectively in a skills-based economy and labour market. Workplace monitoring of ethnicity could usefully be expanded to include faith in the public sector, and will help public bodies to ensure workplaces are representative of society as a whole, and that larger employers understand the impact of faith and any potential barriers to progression at all levels of their organisations.

Employment Barriers Facing Muslim Women

Disadvantage in employment is particularly acute for Muslim women. The House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee 2016, reporting on employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK, notes that, despite being highly qualified, many British Muslim women are passed over for jobs and sidelined in the workplace.

*“We have huge social capital but many are unemployed.”
(Male Imam, Muslim Respondent, Leeds)*

The report notes that “[British Muslim women] are 71% more likely than white Christian women to be unemployed, even when they have the same educational level and language skills. As well as suffering the [same] disadvantages of Muslim men relating to employment opportunities, some women also face pressures from their communities around education and employment choices, and particular issues of discrimination within the workplace around dress.”³⁰ The report provides several practical recommendations supported by the Commission.

*“It’s not the clothing that performs the job, it’s me as a person. Before you even know me you’ve branded me.”
(Adult female, Muslim Respondent, Leicester)*

Muslim women can often face a compounded element of discrimination, owing to their religion, gender and ostensible markers such as the headscarf (hijab) and face-veil (niqab) – as well as a lack of support from within their own communities. Scarves and veils make Muslim women visibly recognisable, and thus faith identity becomes a very public one and is not easily disconnected from general misconceptions on Muslim identity.

Some women, after suffering a lack of success based on religion, viewed the prospective discrimination as insurmountable, resulting in them removing their hijab to find work.³¹ During its inquiry, the Commission heard similar evidence of women seemingly being judged due to their appearance.

QED Foundation has previously run a campaign in association with the Cabinet Office featuring community roadshows attended by permanent secretaries to encourage high-flyers from South Asian communities to apply for fast-track civil service jobs. This has contributed significantly to the current ethnic composition at senior levels. A total of 800 senior managers from the private, public and third sectors were trained to recruit, retain and reward BME staff.

The charity also delivered a series of one-day cultural awareness training sessions for 800 directors and senior managers of public and private sector companies. Dr Mohammed Ali OBE and Adeeba Malik CBE helped participants prepare personal and departmental action plans for recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce, and engaging with ethnic-minority customers.

Courses were delivered in London, Leicester, Bradford and Bolton from 1999–2006, and organisations taking part included the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, the Environment Agency, British Waterways, Halifax, Barclays, Bradford and Bingley, and Business Link. A Jobcentre Plus participant described the training as providing “invaluable information and knowledge to shape policy development and implementation of the diversity strategy”.

QED Foundation has also helped 350 small and medium-sized businesses in England and Wales to audit the ethnic profiles of their workforces, and develop action plans and practical solutions to increase numbers of staff from underrepresented groups at all levels of seniority.
www.qed-uk.org

“Having passed the phone interview, I arrived for the in-person interview. The first comment from the interviewer was ‘Oh... you don’t look how you sound.’ What he meant was you sound British, but don’t look British.” (Young Female, Muslim Respondent, London)

“We have cases where women are asked are you married, when are you planning on having kids – there are clear assumptions of what women can and cannot do.” (Muslim Women’s Organisation)

The disadvantaged Muslim women’s experience can be exacerbated by the pressures some women feel from parts of their community to fulfil a more conventional role.

*“Our research showed us that aspirations amongst young Muslim girls were quite high, but we have had teachers tell them what was suitable for Muslim women to do. These are clear barriers to inclusivity and opportunity.”
(National Muslim Women’s Organisation)*

“I went to a Christian school and really enjoyed it. I learnt how to respect other religions and was happy to participate in it. Being young and Asian, I had to go down a very academic route of medicine or law. My teachers told me I was unlikely to go to university and so I was determined to prove them wrong. I never had a female Muslim role model to look up to. My mum was born in Pakistan and therefore I could never rely on my parents’ support when it came to things like homework. After joining [the] sixth form I volunteered with a primary school to help with their homework. I also acted as an interpreter at parents’ evenings. I often tell this to other children to encourage students to achieve. There are so many people who do not leave their local area and so university is an alien concept to them.” (Female Educator, Muslim Respondent, Nottingham)



The Role of Mentoring in Encouraging Aspiration

The Commission heard from several respondents on the ‘aspiration ambition deficit’ notable amongst some young Muslims. This comes from low expectations within schools and communities, as well as there being a lack of role models and effective mentorship schemes. It is also clear that familial expectations for young people need to be addressed as this, too, has a significant impact on aspirations.

“Paths to university and then into public life need to be made more transparent. Mentorship can help in these areas and should begin early; instead, it often begins at university, which is too late. Outreach programmes should target Muslims across the country, not only in London.” (Young Male, Muslim Respondent, London)

Nearly every young British Muslim the Commission spoke to during this inquiry raised the issue of the need for greater mentoring. This is unsurprising given that mentoring programmes have been shown to have a demonstrable impact on the employment prospects of a broader range of young people.

“Mentorship programmes are available at Russell Group universities, but they need to catch people before GCSEs as that is when their prospects are shaped. The programme should be national and match mentees with mentors they can relate to: early on this will be a university student, whereas later on it could be somebody working in the employment sector they are interested in. Having a mentor that looks like you is useful in the beginning, given that many young people will have the preconception that only people similar to them will be able to understand them.”

(Young Male, Muslim Respondent, London)

A peer-to-peer approach can be a powerful tool in empowering individuals of all ages, and may include training, support and advice from individuals who have ‘done it before’. A formal mechanism would promote individuals ‘holding the door open for others’, and supporting the growth of the collective rather than focusing on the individual.

The Good Jobs Campaign, a Citizens UK initiative, tackles the decline in the number of employers willing to hire and train young people, and the impact this has had on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It works with schools and colleges in disadvantaged communities and employers in high-skill sectors to create new high-quality training pathways for young people. The Good Jobs Campaign has created four high-quality training programmes for young people with companies such as Atkins, OMD International, Wieden+Kennedy, JP Morgan, University College London Hospital NHS Trust and Barts NHS Health Trust. Around 340 young people have been trained in the first and second years of these programmes. To date, seventy-three young people have secured work experience, paid internships and apprenticeship opportunities with partner employers. Recruitment for apprenticeships with partner employers is still underway for the second cohort.

www.citizensuk.org/good_jobs

Muslim Women Connect, a new mentoring network for professionals set up by two women in their 20s, established the network to tackle the ‘triple penalty’ Muslim women face in the workplace. The network has a three-pronged approach. It aims to inspire women by giving them access to a network of women in various industries, it wants to provide a safe space for Muslim women to talk about issues such as anti-Muslim prejudice in communities and the workplace, and, thirdly, it’s looking to take its message to young women by introducing a school speaker programme. One member said, “As Muslim women we have to fight so much harder in any professional industry we are in. Because not only are we chasing our dreams and goals in life but we are also breaking stereotypes along the way. So it’s very important for us to be strong, ambitious, unapologetic women.”³²

www.muslimwomenconnect.com



Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince's Trust, founded by HRH the Prince of Wales in 2007) runs mentoring programmes that create opportunities for young people growing up in the most deprived communities, with a particular focus on Muslim communities. Mosaic's vision is for all young people to be supported to realise their potential. With the help of volunteer mentors acting as role models through their structured mentoring programmes, they aim to bridge the aspirations-attainment gap. By linking young people with inspirational role models in this way, Mosaic strives to boost their confidence, self-efficacy and long-term employability.

Mosaic currently operates in six regions of the UK - London, the South East, the West Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire and Scotland. In the academic year 2015/16, Mosaic directly supported 8,246 young people in 263 schools and prisons, supported by 1,466 volunteer mentors. A total of 82% of their UK beneficiaries were drawn from the 20% most deprived areas of the country. www.mosaicnetwork.co.uk

The Commission recognises the number of initiatives already underway to promote inclusion and social mobility, which includes the Parker Review and the McGregor-Smith Review. It is our hope that Citizens UK will engage with these national bodies to ensure that the specific issues relating to Muslim communities are integrated into their local work.



Recommendations

1. For existing mentoring schemes, such as those offered by Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince's Trust), to adapt elements of their service offering to address the specific needs of Muslim individuals. Alongside developing aspirations so that individuals want to move up the career ladder, there needs to be a mechanism in place where individuals can support each other and 'open the doors' for those at different levels. This could entail the following:

- Employers providing mentoring of young people from Muslim backgrounds in their local communities. There are several organisations that have successful models that can be learnt from, including Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince's Trust) and Step up to Serve.
- The development of a national role model awards or some form of public recognition, with Muslim professionals actively giving a helping hand to those starting off.

2. For Business in the Community to establish local compacts, to which employers are asked to sign up. The content of these should be determined locally, but could include commitments on the following:

- Name- and address-blind applications
- Unconscious bias training
- Religious and cultural literacy training
- Supporting mentoring initiatives

3. For employers to deepen their engagement with earlier stages of the education cycle and with non-Russell Group universities. Expanding outreach to schools will help promote the earlier development of soft skills while engagement with a broader set of universities on, for example, offering internships that will help promote opportunities amongst a wider talent pool, particularly in secondary schools – to support the development of soft skills. The responsibility would ultimately lie with employers, and organisations such as Business in the Community could lead such an initiative.

Muslim Leadership & Muslim Institutions

The Commission has heard a great deal about the need for better leadership within the UK's Muslim communities. The management committees of the UK's mosques need to better understand, and respond to, modern British life. It is of great importance that British-born Imams, who have a good understanding of British culture and who fluently speak English, are encouraged and appointed in preference to overseas alternatives. The appointment of Imams and other assistants who engage in the teaching of youngsters needs to comply with legal requirements, and be a transparent process undertaken in conjunction with the community. There is also more work to be done on building partnerships with non-British Muslims on local issues of concern, and standing together with others to combat hate crime directed against those of other ethnicities and faiths. The practical challenges that must be overcome for Muslim women in the UK to participate fully in public life vary based on ethnic origin, which demonstrates that resistance to greater female participation is cultural, not religious. What is clear is that there is no shortage of talented women who could make a significant contribution both to the UK and to their own community, if some of the barriers standing in their way could be removed.



The Role of Mosques

“When looking at leadership, Muslims didn't come to the UK as a united community, but as different ethnic groups. They were separated by religious backgrounds, class and nationality so it is very difficult to ask them to come together to provide holistic representation.”

(Male Academic, Muslim Respondent, West Midlands)

A connecting thread to places of birth for Muslim immigrants to the UK in the twentieth century was the establishment of mosques, which helped preserve religious and cultural traditions, and provided a means of social support within the community. The leadership of such places of worship comprised volunteers who, in the main, lacked any training on how to 'professionally' run and manage such an organisation.

There is no definitive figure for how many mosques there are in the UK today, although the best estimate is in the region of 1,500. Of these, approximately 200 are purpose-built, the rest being either converted houses or other non-residential conversions.³³ For observant Muslims, the mosque remains a key hub for community life.

“It is important to remember that a mosque is not limited to being a place of worship but is actually the foundation of a strong community.”

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, Portsmouth)

Throughout this inquiry, the Commission has heard time and again of positive local work initiated and conducted by Muslim organisations across the country, including running food banks and helping the homeless.

CASE STUDY

Muslim Organisations Inspired by Faith

There are several examples where Muslim institutions and charities, inspired by their faith, have organised to give back to their local communities (both non-Muslim and Muslim) in various ways. This includes the following:



A. The British Islamic Medical Association that, as part of the Lifesavers project, annually organises hundreds of Muslim healthcare professionals who volunteer to transform thirty-five mosques into public centres teaching cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and basic life support skills to over 2,000 people.

www.britishima.org



B. Who is Hussain is an international, volunteer-run social justice organisation. Each week it organises a food drive for the homeless in London, manned completely by young volunteers and feeding around 200 individuals each week. Its additional activities range from offering free haircuts³⁴ and dental checks, to careers and CV advice, to support independence and end the cycle of homelessness. It also offers services in Birmingham.

www.whoishussain.org



C. The Ramadan Tent Project is an award-winning, community-led initiative aiming to participate in social change by creating bridges between individuals, bringing together communities and fostering interfaith dialogue. Through its flagship project Open Iftar, the Ramadan Tent Project invites the homeless and the public at large, Muslims and non-Muslims, to break the fast together at dusk during the month of Ramadan each year.

www.ramadantentproject.com

At the same time, there is a need for reform. It is clear from the evidence the Commission has heard that, while there has been considerable evolution, many mosques remain wanting in respect to standards of governance and many are not welcoming to women's participation at any serious level. Mosque management committees, which carry out a mosque's affairs such as building maintenance, financial management, media relations, education and other public services, are not yet doing enough to meet accountability standards and better meet the need of all mosque attendees, including women and young people.

"Internal to Muslim communities there is a need 'not to give in to the victim mentality' and to 'actually talk about what is going on' and the fact that 'we do not have resilient communities and we do have ghettos.' Muslim communities should 'start peer reviewing ourselves' and 'self-police' by 'calling out things in our own communities' and acting to address these. An example was given of unregulated madrassas with 'no DBS [Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)] or health and safety checks' where community concern over the issue, but inaction, proceeds alongside resistance to statutory regulation."

(Written Submission, National Charity)

There is a need for mosques to implement modern methods in terms of internal governance, service provision and regulatory adherence, as well as conformance to legal requirements (accounting/finance; health and safety; provision of adequate facilities for females, the disabled and for young attendees; etc.). Many of the mosques and Islamic centres that the Commission visited have begun to address such concerns, but there is still some way to go, as is also accepted by these organisations themselves. On several occasions the Commission has heard evidence of practices by mosques that serve as poor models for the kind of civic participation that is required.

"The key concern here was that mosques have a misallocation of resources. They fundraise but fail to utilise the funds to empower the community".

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, Portsmouth)

Recruiting young Muslim professionals to mosque management committees should, in the Commission's opinion, help address such needs, as many of these individuals possess a great deal of expertise in these fields and are already employed for such roles in their everyday jobs. One mosque the Commission heard from shared their success at establishing a 'trainee management' scheme, which allowed young professionals to be paired with a community elder, allowing the centre to benefit from their professional qualifications whilst also benefiting from the experience of those who had been managing the centre for years. This then paved the way for the second generation to serve as trustees and developed a cycle designed to ensure that there was a constant development of new leadership.

"To some extent the Muslim community have become conditioned since 9/11 to be reactionary in all aspects of life. We have stopped planning and laying foundations with the future in focus. We react to the sensational headlines that often are fuelled by what is headlining in politics. We have lost our own focus, whilst 76% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi children live below the poverty line, 1 in 5 young offenders are Muslims, whilst we have a change in British Muslim demographics with people coming from war and conflict[,] and services and provisions are not in place[,] and the Muslim Leadership focus is not on these issues."

(Written Submission, Birmingham-based Charity)

Intra- and Inter-Faith Relations

Another key issue that was raised during the Commission's inquiry is the splintering of what has been perceived as a single Muslim community within the UK. There is evidence of tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and of aggression being shown on occasion towards the Ahmadiyya communities.

"We [the Ahmadiyya community] face intra-Muslim tensions more than with British society. For example, in regards to the plans of building a mosque in Scunthorpe, other Muslims had a demonstration joint with other members of the British public against it! How can Muslims complain about being abused when they are doing the same?"

(Adult Male, Muslim Respondent, Nottingham)

Intra-faith work is viewed as essential to maintaining cordial relations and developing greater understanding between the different schools of thought, to avoid tensions being inflamed.

“There should be greater focus on intra-faith relations, otherwise this can lead to breakdown of collaboration. Nationally, the Muslim community seems to be very fragmented and influenced by international affairs.”
(Adult Male, Muslim Respondent, Leicester)

Similarly, the Commission has heard instances of when Muslims did not speak out in response to instances when people of other faiths were attacked. The pernicious issue of anti-Semitism,³⁵ which remains alive and well amongst elements of the UK’s Muslim communities,³⁶ must also be addressed.

“It is also very difficult to get people interested in other people’s issues; for example, the bombing of Christians in Pakistan resulted in very little response from the community. Need greater reciprocity.”
(Adult Male, Non-Muslim Respondent, Leicester)

The Role of Imams

Mosque Imams have an important role to play in society. Many mosque Imams, however, are born and educated overseas. Whilst this was necessary to cater for the needs of first-generation immigrant Muslims, it is also true to say that second and third generation Muslims benefit less from a non-native speaker who may not appreciate the subtlety of the English language and sometimes cultural sensitivities, too. It is of great importance, therefore, that British-born Imams, who have a good understanding of British culture and who fluently speak English, are encouraged and appointed in preference to overseas alternatives.

“Islamic seminaries provide Islamic studies but not with the additional services to meet the expectations of the community. I have been through a number of leadership courses, and have found that we are expected to be educational theorists, explore ethics, provide counselling – the expectations are endless. How are the communities supporting the mosque or developing Imams?” (Young Trainee Male Imam, Muslim Respondent, East Midlands)

Furthermore, it is also incumbent on the mosque committees or appointed managers that mosque Imams are paid adequately and in line with other equivalent positions in the UK so that high calibre individuals are attracted to the profession. Mosque officials/managers need to invest in providing training programmes in pastoral skills for Imams to ensure that they can adequately deal with social issues.

The Commission recognises, however, that most of these ‘officers’, if not all, apart from mosque Imams, are unpaid volunteers with no professional training for performing such roles. The appointment of Imams and other assistants who engage in the teaching of youngsters needs to both be in compliance with the legal requirements and to be a transparent process conducted in conjunction with the community. These Imams would benefit from continuous professional development (CPD) training, and being equipped with pastoral skills.

Expanding Opportunities for Women

“The question of diversity and leadership is not just about mosques of Muslim men holding back women – the patriarchy is across all levels.”
(Female Former Councillor, Muslim Respondent, West Midlands)

The Commission has heard from women across the country over the course of this inquiry who want to give their time and expertise to mosque committees, from those who have set up other community organisations within the UK’s Muslim communities, and from those who have given their time to cross-community activities. These women have given us an insight into their experiences across the UK’s Muslim communities. It is striking how different that experience can be, and yet it is rarely reflected in the discourse on British Muslim women in mainstream media.

At two of the Commission’s most interesting women-only sessions, witnesses were clear with us, and with each other, about the degree to which their experiences as Muslim women are framed not only through their shared faith but to a much greater extent through behaviours or

attitudes that are entirely cultural, stemming from countries of origin but still reinforced in everyday life in the UK. This is the case even for those who are second or third generation British.

“There is an overwhelming sense of inequality in mosques, where the elders who are men are in charge of the management and day to day running of the mosque. These men tend to be very inward looking. As a result of this the patriarchal structure fails to support the women”.
(Female Former Councillor, Muslim Respondent, West Midlands)

For example, during a discussion on women’s participation in mosques, the women were clear that barriers to this exist more in South Asian communities than elsewhere, and are cultural, not religious. They note that there are significant differences between the ‘Khoja’ East African Muslim communities and others in their attitudes to women (with the former being more ‘progressive’), and they also raise issues of class, which impact on the ways in which women are treated within communities, with some singling out British Pakistani communities as having more restrictive attitudes.

Some women told the Commission that the barriers to change in mosques are not the Imams, but the management committees who are often first-generation men, who are fiercely protective of a traditional culture. They note that when the younger generation are involved and able to play a part in leading, mosques and other institutions are often more open and more inclusive, and benefit from a wider range of professional skills to help solve problems.

This is important because it tells us that the practical challenges that must be overcome if Muslim women in the UK are to be able to participate fully in public life will differ in different communities. What is clear is that there is no shortage of talented women who could make a significant contribution both to the UK and to their own local community, if some of the barriers currently standing in their way can be removed.

“There is a clear need for space in mosques for women to achieve a sense of empowerment, as well as the need for access to management roles”.

(Female Academic, Non-Muslim Respondent, East Midlands)

Replacing male, self-appointed ‘spokespersons’ for British Muslim women with a handful of equally self-appointed female spokespersons will not lead to greater representation. The respondents note that there is a need for a diverse array of British Muslim women to be promoted into, and feel comfortable assuming, leadership positions.

“Whilst we have a handful of the usual suspects who are the ‘voice’ and representatives of Muslim women these self[-]titled voice of Muslim women are completely detached from the majority of Muslim women and their issues. Often women are not consulted by these ‘representatives’ on the issues that affect them. This is [sic] my opinion is a real problem”.

(Written Submission, Birmingham-based Charity)

There is no reason why, in future, the Commission would not expect to see as many women as men playing an active part in mosque governance. Similarly, there need to be greater opportunities for young people.



Recommendations

1. For Muslim umbrella bodies to introduce voluntary standards for mosques and Islamic centres. This would explore issues of governance – particularly reforms to mosque committees – along with strategy and access for women. The Commission would envisage this should be managed primarily by Muslim umbrella bodies such as the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB). These standards could include commitments to (and regular assessments of progress against) the following:

- Undergoing, and providing, training to produce fit-for-purpose leaders, and organisations that produce a cohesive vision and strategy so as to move away from being reactive and become more outward facing.
- Taking a stronger stance against the persecution of others; e.g. anti-Semitism, Christian persecution and other branches of Islam.
- Contributing to the development of a broader range of voices. This could be achieved through mosque committees supporting the development of a spokesperson network, which would include youth and women.
- Youth and women are to have equal access to leadership opportunities across Muslim organisations.

2. For mosques to explore partnerships both within and outside the Muslim communities to develop capacity. This could include training, twinning with another local faith-based institution, and some pro-bono assistance from local employers who have relevant expertise in governance issues such as accounting and constitutional matters. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), for example, could provide support on the coaching and training of mosque trustees.

3. For mosques to invest in British-born Imams who are to be paid a decent living wage, funded by Muslim institutions in the UK, and equipped with pastoral skills so they are able to deal with the challenges facing British

Muslims. To achieve this, the Commission would recommend that universities consider pairing with seminaries so that educational schemes for Imams become accredited, meaning that Imams would receive an educational qualification as well as a religious qualification.

4. For Muslim professionals to invest in helping strengthen their own communities by, for example, lobbying for the establishment of the voluntary standards noted above, establishing a brokerage body to connect mosques with external capacity-building support or directly funding schemes to help modernise mosque committees.



Political Engagement

Discrimination, and fears of being discriminated against, are actively discouraging participation and contributing to disillusionment amongst young British Muslims with the political process. The Commission is a strong proponent of the belief that government should cast a wider net when talking to the British Muslim communities, and be prepared to engage with views with which it disagrees and challenge these in discussion. Bridging the gulf by increasing the space for open and frank political dialogue is of critical importance, and the onus is on both British Muslims and the Government to find ways of doing so. In tandem, biraderi (kinship) and clan politics within some of the UK's Muslim communities stifles progress, and are keenly felt by women and young people as a barrier to participation. Whilst this is a challenge that can only be met by action from the UK's Muslims, those seeking elected office from outside Muslim communities and statutory agencies that engage with mosques can help.

British Muslim Involvement in National and Local Politics

A principle reason for the creation of the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation & Public Life has been the concern that the integration of Muslims into the civic and political process of our country has not been developing as well as it should. This sense of exclusion leads to alienation, which in turn reinforces separation. It needs to be emphasised at the outset, however, that any suggestion that Islam as a faith encourages exclusion from the political process is not supported by the evidence that the Commission saw during this inquiry. On the contrary, as noted in earlier chapters, research shows that British Muslims vote at a similar or higher rate than other British voters, with many believing it to be their civic duty to exercise their right to vote.³⁷ The recent Policy Exchange polling of British Muslim opinion shows that, over the previous twelve months, 72% of the Muslims polled had voted in an election, compared to 54% of the general population (per the control group).³⁸

Muslims have been quietly participating in local politics since the 1970s,³⁹ and, compared to many other European countries, have been relatively successful at achieving some political representation.⁴⁰ They do not feel a need for special representation from either political parties or from groups that purport to represent specific

'Muslim' interests.⁴¹ Muslims have represented all major political parties, including the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru. Over 200 Muslims are represented in British local government⁴², and there are currently fifteen Members of Parliament from a British Muslim background (2% of Parliament).

Unfortunately, this sense of civic duty and enthusiasm does not always translate itself into participation in the leadership of cross-community organisations, nor in action taken in partnership with other community organisations, which, in many cases, will constitute the bedrock of civic participation in the UK.

In May 2016, London elected a British Muslim as its mayor. Sadiq Khan's successful campaign demonstrated to many the potential Muslims hold, and he serves as a role model to many – not just Muslims – demonstrating that individuals from all backgrounds can succeed and aspire to the highest offices in the land. The campaign run by his opponent and some of the more lurid headlines⁴³ claiming Sadiq Khan had links with extremist groups⁴⁴ were viewed as proof by many Muslims that they will always be viewed with suspicion and treated unfairly. There is a clear problem that not enough Muslims are coming forward in political life, but, when they do, they are subjected to intense scrutiny – more, perhaps, than other candidates might be.

“Take Sadiq Khan and look at the headlines linking him to extremism. This shows how absurd media can be and their spin.”

(Adult male, Muslim respondent, London)



“Muslims are scared of showing their face and being part of public life”.

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, Durham)

During hearings, the Commission heard that the combination of media portrayal and political rhetoric from some leading political figures, including Conservatives, during the London mayoral election and the ‘dog-whistle’ insinuations about race⁴⁵ have had a significant impact on the aspirations of young Muslims.

“Many of us have high aspirations of engaging in politics, but are put off by the vilification of those who do, as we may not have the same emotional resilience, and so have to consider the fall out rather than the contributions they want to make.”

(Adult male, Muslim Respondent, Greater Manchester)

There is recognisable concern about Islamist influence in public bodies and schools. However, the sentiment was expressed during hearings that every Muslim seeking to become involved in public life risks becoming branded an ‘entryist’. This in turn dissuades Muslims from engaging in public life from the fear of ‘raising their head above the parapet’.

“If the mere presence of Muslims as school governors is seen as suspect, with words like ‘entryism’ being raised, this discourages others. You then have the concept of self-censorship where Muslims should shut up and put up, with the idea that they have been accommodated too much and so should simply be grateful.”

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, Birmingham)

The Government’s Relationship with British Muslims

“There is much more confidence and faith with the local authorities than the national authority.”

(Muslim Charity, East Midlands)

Many expressed a stronger connection to local politics than that of central government. The lack of interest/engagement in national-level political debates amongst British Muslims appears to be linked, in part, to the lack of elected representatives who are willing to engage in constructive dialogue on challenging issues, including British foreign policy. It has been suggested to the Commission that there is a growing gulf between the British establishment and the UK’s diverse Muslim communities.

Many Muslim women also report that they feel they are only spoken to by politicians around the ‘national debate’ about wearing a niqab, and are not consulted on other matters that impact them, including the provision of local services in a time of reduced local government spending.

“The Government also needs to consult with Muslim women organisations for opinions not provided by typical women’s groups or mainstream groups. They need to not see Muslims in isolation but promote shared values across all faiths and none.”

(Female Academic, Non-Muslim Respondent, East Midlands)

The issue of how central government does and should engage with Muslim communities arose frequently. Governments should consult widely, including from amongst organisations with which they do not agree, and they should use that opportunity to challenge organisations as much as to listen. The respondents feel this principle is being increasingly neglected when it comes to engagement with British Muslims.

First, there is believed to be a general lack of willingness to engage more broadly with Muslim communities, particularly with those outside London. Given the diversity of British Muslims, no truly 'representative' bodies exist that cover more than a small percentage of the country's Muslim communities and so casting the net wider to engage with a number of groups across geographic, ethnic and theological spectra is vital.

Second, there is a perception of deliberately selective communication and that this is being conducted as a one-way street rather than a genuine exchange.

"There is the feeling that the same conversations have taken place for the last 10 years. There is, therefore, a heightened sense that the Government and its agencies are 'there to lead' and 'communities [are] there to follow', decreasing a sense of ownership within British society."

(Written Submission, National Charity)

Some community figures expressed criticism of the work carried out at a national level by well-known think tanks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that do not necessarily carry the confidence of the Muslim population, yet have become increasingly influential in shaping government policy. Whilst there is a clear need for debate within Muslim communities about what are, and are not, acceptable views for the Muslim 'mainstream', attempts to define this through it being imposed from the outside are unlikely to be helpful and are more likely to be counter-productive. The current policy of non-engagement with entities such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) was also deemed to be counter-productive by some respondents.

"The Government, if it is sincere in wanting to prevent extremist ideologies from taking root and growing, must listen to and work with mainstream Muslim organisations, not those on the fringes who have neither credibility nor ability. This does not prevent constructive criticism where views differ."

(Written Submission, Mosque, London)

It has been suggested that local authorities, and devolved parliaments and assemblies are more attuned to the need for a different engagement style, and therefore are more successful in promoting integration and community cohesion. For example, the Commission has found that the open and transparent communication channels that have been established between the Welsh Assembly and Muslim Council of Wales have led to the development of a productive working relationship where both parties feel understood and respected, even if agreement is not always reached on all issues.

"Whilst in other places in the UK it often feels there is an 'us vs them' mentality, here it is felt that we are a 'we' – working together."

(Muslim Council of Wales)

Kinship and Clan Politics, and the Impact on Women

The Commission has heard evidence over the course of the Commission's work about the influence and extent of the biraderi (kinship) system. A biraderi consists of related family groupings linked by ancestral ties. They are patriarchal, led by male community elders, and provide social, cultural and support functions. They provided support during early migration waves, and gave migrants a sense of identity and a predetermined social network in the UK, but they can also be exclusionary, and even discriminatory, for those who do not conform to expected norms. This concept is not new and there have been examples of kinship politics within various communities over the years, including the Hindu and Irish communities.

Biraderi networks continue to play a fundamental role in many British Pakistani communities. Similar networks exist in British Bangladeshi communities, although they may be

based more on regional ties, and the ‘brotherly’ relationships developed through shared experiences of migration and employment. A related issue is that of clan politics. Clan politics can be described as a close community with strong patriarchal structures that allows for non-political party ties and networks to be exploited by politicians of all backgrounds.

“It was generally the white, male leadership of all parties who exploited it as a quick shortcut to obtain votes. Standing as an independent challenging the biraderi system, people said I wouldn’t get anywhere. It was white, working-class women and young people who said no one had ever canvassed us. The political mainstream needs to address this.”

(Former Female Councillor, Muslim Respondent, West Midlands)

Whatever benefits the biraderi system may have had (and for some still does have), it stifles challenges and innovation from within some of the UK’s Muslim communities, and is particularly felt by women and young people as a barrier to participation, whether they seek elected office or seek to be more involved in their mosque’s governing body. During the course of the inquiry, the Commission heard that some women from the UK’s Muslim communities have found it hard to be selected for elected office⁴⁶, and have found that pressure has been brought to bear on their families from within biraderi networks to encourage them to stand aside. On at least one

occasion, the Commission was told by the leader of a local political group that the local branches and the local community choose the candidates, and that people will vote for the person they know and trust. This is undoubtedly true for any political party. But the clear implication of the answer in the context it was given was that wider networks, including the biraderi system, will play a part in choosing candidates.

The Commission has heard that local politicians will seek out and gain the support of ‘gatekeepers’ within the biraderi system; a form of patronage that often excludes young people and women.

“If you are in a constituency where there is a biraderi candidate, who is able to mobilise individuals, it is not just the Pakistani women and young people who are marginalised, but anybody who is not part of that biraderi system... Their voice is taken away from them and they feel alienated.”

(Female Academic, Muslim Respondent, Yorkshire)

The reputational risk involved in seeking office can often be higher for women. One female respondent who has been elected as a local councillor (and who is not married) said that if she had had a husband or family in this country, they would have been targeted by Asian men in her local area, and rumours would have developed about her behaviour.



"I received a few threats from Asian males and had to launch a police inquiry, as it was believed that being a single mother was casting aspersions on my character... As women, we encounter such issues, where people assume if you work with men... people question what you are doing. If there is a husband, he is targeted otherwise the family is."

(Female Councillor, Muslim Respondent, London)

This presents a great disincentive for women to seek elected office, particularly as a local councillor where neighbourhoods are small and candidates may live right at the heart of a community where, because of the biraderi system, 'everyone knows everyone else'.

During this inquiry, the Commission met and talked to some inspirational women and young people, who have much to offer the UK. Those women who have succeeded against the odds were recognised as role models for many.

"Her [Baroness Sayeeda Warsi] wearing a salwar kameez outside of Number 10 was an iconic image that many connected with, and was at odds with the traditional perception of politics being patriarchal and hierarchical."

(Female Academic, Muslim Respondent, Bradford)

If the talents of Muslim women and youth are to be used to the full, it is essential that they can participate within their communities if they so choose, as well as in wider British society. This can only be achieved if the influence of the biraderi system diminishes. Whilst this is a challenge that can only be met by action within some of the UK's Muslim communities, those seeking elected office from outside Muslim communities, and those public-sector bodies that consult and engage with local mosques, where the biraderi system can be acutely felt, can help. Political parties need to do more to encourage Muslims to participate in civic society and to break electoral abuse. They can ensure they speak to women and young people directly, not only those whom parties choose to treat as 'representing' the views of the community; they can ensure that public meetings are held in venues that are open to all, and they can ensure that events are not gender segregated.

Recommendations

1. For a cross-party committee to develop a charter for a voluntary code of conduct for political parties to sign up to. This should be established on a cross-party basis, where parties give a public commitment that they will uphold the highest standards when campaigning and selecting candidates, and put in place some mechanisms to enforce these. This would include the following:

- An oversight mechanism within political parties with the ability to make recommendations.
- A renewed commitment from MPs and councillors to not shy away from difficult conversations with local groups, including faith institutions – particularly on contentious issues and foreign policy.
- A requirement that MPs and councillors, and those seeking election, refuse to attend male-only events / those where women do not have equal access.
- Ensuring female potential candidates are not unfairly excluded.
- Making it clear that reliance on kinship networks, and the use of pressure through these networks for candidate selection or election to office is unacceptable in the modern UK and may also be unlawful.

2. For the Government to develop an integration strategy. This should include work at a local level to ensure progress towards a shared goal of a cohesive British society built on common principles. The Commission has heard much evidence from the UK's Muslim communities, which would also support this activity. One pillar of such a strategy could, therefore, take the form of local engagement boards that can engage with national and regional devolved institutions, across age groups and ethnicities.

3. For the Government to reassess the way in which it engages with the UK's Muslim communities, and both the Government and Muslim communities to play their role in ending the current stalemate. There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this. The Commission suggests that wider engagement, including the robust challenging of views with which it disagrees, rather than the apparent boycott of certain organisations, could best enable the Government to hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK's Muslim communities, including young people and women. Muslim communities will also need to devise ways of allowing for engagement that better reflect their pluralistic nature. The Commission may be able to identify those who can support and facilitate these discussions, and create a forum with which the Government can engage.

Security, Policing & Hate

Anti-Muslim prejudice, and a lack of action against those perpetrating or condoning hatred, is a notable obstacle to integration and participation. The Commission is also concerned about the impact of some recent media reporting and how this may deter talented individuals – particularly youth – from playing a full part in British society. The impact of the Government’s Prevent Strategy on Muslim communities came up in most of the hearings across the country. The Commission’s overriding concern is that the country needs an effective way of tackling extremism and radicalisation. The Commission considers that this would be better achieved with a programme that has greater trust, particularly from the UK’s Muslim communities. This trust, in turn, would lead to better understanding and participation, and enable more collaborative efforts to better tackle a very real problem. There is a need for debate within Muslim communities about what are, and are not, acceptable views for the Muslim ‘mainstream’. However, attempts to define this through it being imposed from the outside are unlikely to be helpful and are more likely to be counter-productive. There is a strong sentiment that Muslims, as a community, and Islam, as religion, are unfairly targeted. This, too, creates a sense of alienation that undermines a common aim of creating a united and strong society.

Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Prejudice

‘Islamophobia’ is used to denote, as per the Runnymede Trust’s definition, “unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims.”⁴⁷ ‘Anti-Muslim prejudice’ includes discrimination and attacks against those seen to be Muslim. We believe all faiths should be open to the concept of challenge or indeed criticism. We are careful to distinguish between statements, actions or sentiments that imply hatred of people because of their faith, which we believe has no place in civilised society, and the right to question elements of Islamic (or indeed other religions’) theology and practice.

There are worrying trends in the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice; the statistics cited below are compounded by the stories of harassment and intimidation the Commission has heard during its inquiry. The Guardian polling by Opinion Research in 2015 shows that 65% agree that Islamophobia is common in the UK today – above class prejudice (57%), racism (56%), sexism (43%) and homophobia (40%)⁴⁸. The 2015 ComRes poll declares that 46% feel being a Muslim in the UK

is difficult due to prejudice against Islam⁴⁹. A total of 37% of adult Britons would support policies to reduce the number of Muslims in the UK,⁵⁰ and more than half of Britons (56%) now regard Islam – the religion generally, as distinct from Islamic extremists – as a threat to the UK.⁵¹ These views are also prevalent amongst younger generations: 31% of young children believe that Muslims are taking over England, on average they believe that Muslims make up 36% of the population (not 5%) and 26% believe that Islam encourages terrorism/extremism.⁵² Anti-Muslim prejudice is a particular issue in schools, according to the charity Childline, with young Muslims reporting that classmates are calling them ‘terrorists’ and ‘bombers’.⁵³

As the attitudes towards Muslims have become more negative, the Commission has also seen an increase in attacks against Muslims, with Metropolitan Police figures showing a 70% year-on-year increase.⁵⁴ This, in part, perhaps, reflects more proactive reporting, and is also reflective of an overall increase in hate crimes against minority groups/migrants in general. The most recent data

on religious hate crime across England and Wales (2015–16)⁵⁵ highlights the fact that the volume of hate crime against British Muslims surpasses that of all other religious groups.

Muslim women are more likely than men to feel unsafe. Many women from within the UK's Muslim communities choose to express their faith through covering their head. There are different practices and traditions including wearing the hijab, niqab, khimar, jilbab or, in a very small minority of cases in the UK, the burka. A consistent theme in the Commission's hearings has been that women who choose to cover their heads are extremely visible, and subject to verbal and, in some cases, physical abuse since it is immediately obvious that they are Muslim.

Women who shared their experiences with us believe that they were targeted for such abuse primarily because of their faith, but some also made clear their belief that people were less likely to want to take a chance by abusing a man in case it led to physical violence. Many women have told us they would not be confident enough to report this, in some cases because of their language skills, and in other cases because they know of other women who have and who received a disappointing response.

"I no longer report every time I am abused or attacked as I would spend too much time in the police station. I have to constantly change my route to work and expect to be attacked at any time. Many do not recognise the term Islamophobia and refute its existence."

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, Wales)

Verbal and, particularly, physical assaults contribute to making public space unsafe for women, and this in turn cannot help women participate in the life of their community or wider British society. No woman should be subject to harassment because of her clothes. The Commission has not seen very much solidarity or support from mainstream feminist organisations in addressing this as part of their work in tackling sexism in wider society during the inquiry, but did welcome the Fawcett Society's inclusion of zero-

tolerance on hate crime, including that which sees Muslim women particularly targeted in their Manifesto for Women 2017.⁵⁶

The Role of Politicians and the Media

As previously discussed in Political Engagement Chapter, respondents to the Commission's hearings were clear that both politicians and the media play a key role in setting the tone of the debate on British Muslims. When politicians have spoken out in support of issues directly impacting Muslim communities it has been warmly welcomed. This was particularly notable when Prime Minister Theresa May, in Parliament, supported the right for women to choose to wear the hijab.⁵⁷ Conversely, inflammatory rhetoric from politicians on issues connected to Muslims, namely terrorism and security issues, is seen to act as an enabler for intolerant attitudes and even threatening behaviour towards British Muslims.

The Commission has heard evidence that, whilst the Government has launched – very welcome – initiatives such as 'Challenge it, Report it, Stop it: The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime', the impact has been limited due to a lack of funding, possible under reporting by those affected by hate crimes and due to some of the broader challenges around the engagement of the Government with Muslim communities discussed in the previous chapter.

The Commission notes that the Government established a working group on anti-Muslim hatred in 2012, which saw Dr Chris Allen⁵⁸ and Professor Matthew Goodwin resign within a few years, with Goodwin claiming, "The work was painfully slow and lacked support from central government."⁵⁹

The 2016 hate-crime action plan⁶⁰, launched in the wake of the spike in hate crime following the Brexit referendum, was a welcome initiative, but, again, many communities feel that by accepting funding or assistance they would be taking 'tainted' money. Despite the action taken so far, more is needed from the Government to initiate a strategy that addresses anti-Muslim prejudice and ensures that it is dealt with in the same way

as other forms of prejudice (such as anti-Semitism) by taking a zero-tolerance approach.

In tandem, Muslim organisations and grassroots communities have a responsibility to encourage the reporting of incidents to the authorities to ensure that the statistics reflect the depth of the challenge.

“The way that some sections of the media and some politicians have focused on certain extreme individuals and institutions has resulted in considerable resentment and a sense of unfairness. There are many examples of this such as what is seen as unbalanced reporting on grooming cases involving Asian men which has suggested that such activity is typical of the whole rather than the acts of criminal individuals. When attacks have occurred involving so called Islamic extremists then all those of the Muslim faith have felt tarnished and under pressure and in effect feel that it is their religion that is being blamed.”

(Written Submission, Former Chief Constable)

Respondents often reported that they have seen a negative impact from media reporting; for example, with the often-interchangeable use of the term Islam versus Islamic/Islamist terrorism. This was repeatedly raised as a key factor discouraging and disempowering many Muslims from wider participation in public life. This is backed up by recent research (2016) by the University of Cambridge, which concludes that mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility toward Muslims in the UK⁶¹.

The IPSO’s decision in favour of The Sun’s columnist Kelvin MacKenzie, following his criticism of Channel 4 News in allowing Fatima Manji to report on the Nice attacks, was cited on several occasions. The Commission wants to be clear that it supports the principle of freedom of speech (including the right to offend). The Commission believes more could be done to improve understanding in this area. Muslim communities could benefit from initiatives that raise awareness of free speech and its importance in the UK, as well as of the ways in which they can complain and raise their voices against falsehoods through raising concerns with IPSO rather than seeking legal redress in the first instance. Ultimately, this will help them become better engaged citizens. IPSO guidance on reporting on Muslim faith issues would also be welcome. This could follow the process used by IPSO for guidance on transgender issues or mental health.⁶⁵

As well as academic research and reports by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the United Nations (UN), there is now evidence of inaccurate stories by national media outlets following a campaign for responsible reporting by Miqdaad Versi, Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

This campaign has led to over thirty corrections in national media, either via the press regulator Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) or from constructive dialogue with the newspapers directly. The stories corrected range from falsely attributing terror attacks to Muslims⁶² and mosques fundraising for terror⁶³ to inaccurately claiming Ramadan was the cause of a train crash⁶⁴.

Whilst there has been a broader recognition about the issue of misreporting about Islam and Muslims following the number of corrections made, there is a long way to go – the campaign continues to identify regular factual inaccuracies about Islam and Muslims within UK media.

Versi told the Commission, “Some of the more pernicious and pejorative hate appears to come from columnists and those who wish to scaremonger about Muslims in [a] way that would not be possible about other minority communities. Such action is outside the remit of the regulator today. The ultimate goal is responsible reporting about Islam and Muslims – surely not too much to ask from our nation’s editors.”



The Impact of Prevent

“The concern is that so called Islamic extremism has generated [sic] has resulted in the stigmatisation of the Muslim faith and a disproportionate focus on a small number of extreme unrepresentative individuals.”

(Written Submission, Former Chief Constable)

In every location the Commission visited, the issue of Prevent was raised, even though this topic was not included within the original remit. The Commission’s overriding concern is that the country needs an effective way of tackling extremism and radicalisation. The Commission considers that this would be better achieved with a programme that has greater trust, particularly from the UK’s Muslim communities. This trust, in turn, would lead to better understanding and participation, and enable more collaborative efforts to better tackle a very real problem.

Many the Commission spoke to during the inquiry note that the Prevent programme has good intentions, which seeks to place safeguarding at its core, in relation to both Islamist and right-wing extremism.

“It is very similar to the programmes used to identify children subjects of sexual abuse and potential sex offenders. It is also similar to programmes used to deal with street gangs and gun crime in our big cities where agencies work together to identify young people at risk of being drawn into such activity and where for instance care proceedings have been used where it is believed that young children are particularly vulnerable and their parents are not taking proper care.”

(Written Submission, Former Chief Constable)

There is clearly a need for such a programme, and the Commission has not encountered anyone credible suggesting otherwise. Rather, the Commission has heard shared concerns from parents who want to ensure their children, and all children, are kept safe.

“We all want to feel safe; that includes Muslims. We want our children to succeed in education and employment, to be safe and make the right choices.”

(Adult Female, Muslim Respondent, London)

However, there was a significant amount of evidence presented to the Commission focusing on the impact of Prevent and the general belief by many Muslims, and others, that this was targeting Muslims overall, rather than a handful of high-risk individuals within Muslim communities.

“The Government has a double policy where Muslim organisations are treated differently. There may be similar issues in other communities but it is not scrutinised. [...] Then many Muslims have a defeatist attitude, ‘What is the point?’ and ‘They’re going to come after us anyway.’ [...] If you have a doubt about a group, go and vet them rather than excluding.”

(Muslim Charity, East Midlands)

The Commission has heard several concerns expressed on Prevent, which may be summarised as follows:

- The way the programme is generally understood to unfairly target Muslims, leading to a ‘police state’ atmosphere’.
- The security lens through which this issue is now being examined, which is taken to be different to safeguarding in others areas; e.g. sexual exploitation, gangs, etc.
- The poor definition of ‘non-violent extremism’ and what is meant by ‘British values’.
- The conflation of religion and culture with extremism.
- Whilst the widening of the statutory duty to include public sector was welcomed, so that the programme is no longer seen as ‘police led’, it has created a culture of mistrust in many institutions.
- The lack of rigorous training in institutions, particularly within schools, and the pressure placed on teachers who seldom understand their role.

“Sadly, Prevent has become a toxic brand and most Muslims are suspicious of what Prevent is doing.”

(Former Metropolitan Police Chief Superintendent Dal Babu OBE⁶⁶)

"If you look at it as safeguarding it makes sense. It's when the common sense or knowledge isn't there – i.e. when members of the [sic] staff do not know what certain things mean you may have overreaction."

(Adult Male Educator, Muslim Respondent, Wycombe)

"Mosques want nothing to do with Prevent as we are not terrorists, but are proud British Muslims." *(Adult Male, Muslim Respondent, Leeds)*

"[Prevent is] widely considered to be a monitoring and spying exercise, which targets the Muslim community." *(Adult Male, Muslim Respondent, Newcastle)*

This identifies certain issues around how Prevent has been communicated. However, these also point to potential issues with how some Prevent policies have been conceived and/or with how some of these policies have been implemented. There is no doubt that extremist groups and organisations exist – including within British

to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. However, the way in which the duty is being interpreted, together with the lack of in-depth training, has meant that the Prevent guidance is not achieving what it was intended to do.

As a second example, the Government has understandable anxieties concerning tackling non-violent extremism and this issue has been acknowledged by most Commission respondents as a legitimate concern. However, concerns were expressed around the conflation of religious conservative values and practices with non-violent extremism. A clearer definition on non-violent extremism, and potentially a review of the boundaries of what is included/excluded in this definition, plus the benefits/drawbacks of non-engagement with those labelled as non-violent extremists could be helpful.⁶⁷

The issue of extremism is unlikely to be resolved unless there is greater trust and collaboration between Muslim communities and



government agencies. The need for an approach based on two-way communication and trust is further strengthened when one considers the examples of where Prevent is working successfully. One such example is in Leicester, where an independent multi-faith organisation rooted in the local community holds responsibility for bringing together community members and statutory bodies to discuss cases of concern. It is not a perfect system, but it works, even if tensions remain locally with some groups and individuals. This has enabled

Muslim communities – that wish to see Prevent fail for their own ideological reasons. However, the Commission respondents raised a concern that the Government has tended to view any criticism of Prevent as made in bad faith, rather than as attempts to provide constructive input.

For example, the statutory duty in principle, is sensible; namely, the duty to pay regard to the need

the community in question to take responsibility for tackling potential cases of extremism/violent extremism, in a manner that is in line with the legal framework, but is also understood and trusted by the local community itself.

Another is that of the Prevent experience of Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Royal



Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which produces an anonymous monthly report that updates key stakeholders on the latest outputs and outreach work taking place in the boroughs. There is a Prevent Advisory Group meeting once a month, during which all key stakeholders from the community are invited to attend, and share best practices and concerns, as part of their continued efforts for community engagement. These positive experiences are further supported by international best practice on tackling extremism and violent extremism, where the evidence shows that community-based approaches in which two-way communication and trust are built tend to be more effective than purely security-led approaches.⁶⁸

The Commission was concerned to hear that one of the very serious consequences is how anxiety about Prevent is causing Muslims to 'shut down' from expressing what are considered to be reasonable views in public arenas, be it schools, universities or work places, for fear of being labelled extreme.

"There are young people genuinely scared to talk about their concerns for the fear of being referred... But if young people are restricted from speaking in their schools and restricted from speaking in the mosque,

where do they go to express themselves? Platforms that are not policed, such as online or the underground where it is not safe, not monitored and influences could be extreme."

(Youth Worker, Muslim Respondent, Newcastle)

The Commissioners conclude that Prevent would benefit from an independent review. This could comprise an independent panel of experts with the relevant range of expertise (including individuals who are at the front end of service delivery, e.g. in schools, prisons, the NHS, etc.), along with representatives from the local community (including faith organisations and civic bodies). Such a review could also consider the growing body of policy and practice from overseas initiatives to counter violent extremism, and provide constructive suggestions on how Prevent could be refined to better achieve its goals. David Anderson QC (the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation), from whom the Commission has heard, has also recommended a more limited review; namely, for example, into the most sensitive and high-profile aspects of the subject: the operation of the Prevent duty in schools. Another form of review could be that each local authority could have its own review board, made up of local stakeholders, including teachers, faith leaders and community representatives.

Recommendations

1. **For the Government to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice, and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to set up administrative systems to look at Anti-Muslim prejudice in the same way other hate crimes are considered.** This definition should have broad consensus on the boundaries of hatred and prejudice, and could be informed by the definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the Government in 2016.
 2. **For the IPSO to consider providing guidance on accurate reporting on Muslim issues, to ensure that faith is not being conflated with extremism.** This could cover points including the following:
 - **Relevance:** Would the story be newsworthy if it did not concern an individual of the Muslim faith? Is the individual's faith relevant?
 - **Statistics:** Polling results need to be treated with care, and with appropriate context.
 - **Terminology:** Use of Arabic terms needs to be in line with their actual meaning, e.g. Sharia, etc.
 3. **For the Government to convene an Independent Review of Prevent** via an independent panel comprised of individuals with relevant expertise and representatives of, for example, schools, NHS, prisons, etc. This review could consider options such as the appointment of a Prevent Ombudsman, definitions of non-violent extremism and how to incorporate emerging evidence / best practice from overseas programmes that tackle extremism.
 4. **For local authorities to develop a Prevent Advisory Group made up of local stakeholders to share best practice and raise concerns.** This could be integrated within existing safeguarding advisory groups.
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The Commission has sought, in this report, to provide ideas for action to address the challenges identified. But it also hopes that those who have read this report may be helped to develop ideas for action of their own. A successful society and nation is one that can harness the goodwill and enthusiasm of its people to work to help others, and if the report can contribute to achieving this, then its production will have been worthwhile.

The Commissioners and Citizens UK look forward to getting your views on how we can progress our work.



Appendix 1: Methodology

The Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation & Public Life was set up in September 2015 by Citizens UK. Its members are listed on page 4.

Between October 2015 and January 2017, a series of public hearings, roundtable discussions and closed sessions were held. During this time, the Commission also welcomed written submissions from individuals and organisations across the UK – many of whom could not be at any of the sessions. Several of these submissions were accompanied by lengthy reports and documents. Inevitably, the Commission has been unable to include all the points made and all the concerns raised. The Commission's final report does draw extensively on the responses it has received and frequently quotes directly from both the written and oral submissions.

In addition to the tour led by the Commissioners, there was consultation with the Muslim Leadership and Youth Leadership Groups (whose members are listed on page 4), who acted as a sounding board for the issues the Commission heard and fed in their thoughts on the most practical ways to change the status quo.

Collectively, the Commissioners spent over 500 hours listening to a wide range of voices, including Muslim organisations, universities, schools, police forces, think tanks, local authorities and members of the public.

Over the course of the inquiry the Commission visited: Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, High Wycombe, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Portsmouth. The Commission wishes to thank all those who welcomed and assisted it, particularly the University of Birmingham, Cardiff University, Wycombe District Council, Leeds City Council, Queen Mary University of London, Clifford Chance, the University of Manchester and their Catholic chaplaincy, and Nottingham Trent University.

The Commission also thanks all those who responded and gave evidence; either at a public hearing, closed session, by submitting written evidence or through conversations with the Secretariat.

Throughout the report, the Commission uses the term 'Muslim' to refer to individuals who describe themselves as Muslim, or who were born to families where Islam is the household faith. This does not assume that all Muslims are observant in their religious practices to the same extent, and in the same ways. In fact, the Commission acknowledges that Muslims vary in the ways they interpret and practise their faith, and that Islam (as does all religions) has non-observant adherents.

Throughout the inquiry, many have been quick to point out that there does not exist one homogenous Muslim bloc, but many diverse Muslim communities – each with their own cultural practices and norms. It is the Commission's hope that it recognises the cultural impact on different community groups and that of lived experiences.

Whilst the Commission is cognizant of this fact and acknowledges that there can rarely be a 'one size fits all' solution, any recommendations the Commission proposes have, for this purpose, been generalised, and would need to be tailored during implementation to ensure they work effectively for the increasingly diverse and complex communities it hopes to serve.

The Commission's recommendations (see page 12) are primarily intended for civil society to take forward, which includes Muslim community institutions. Several of the recommendations may also refer to the State (both central government and local authorities) and will also require the goodwill of leading employers and the business community to truly realise the Commission's goal to unlock the full potential of Muslims in the UK.

Appendix 2:

Commissioner & Advisor Profiles

Commissioners

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP, QC has served as the Conservative MP for Beaconsfield since 1997. Dominic served as the Attorney General for England and Wales and Advocate General for Northern Ireland from May 2010 to July 2014. Dominic is currently the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Society of Conservative Lawyers, President of the Franco-British Society and Vice-Chairman of the Franco-British Council. He is Honorary Recorder of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. In September 2015, Dominic was elected Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Jenny Watson CBE served two terms as the Chair of the Electoral Commission, and stood down in December 2016. She is currently Vice Chair of the Money Advice Trust. She is a former Chair of both the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Fawcett Society where she led work on women's participation in the labour market and in public life. Although she has spent much of her working life in the voluntary sector, Jenny has twice run her own business. She sits on the Commission in a personal capacity.

Bishop Dr. Eric Brown has been ministering with the New Testament Church of God for over 40 years. He embraces corporate enterprise through extending his pastoral care and spiritual guidance to a variety of corporations including the Citizens Organising Foundation, the Haringey Peace Alliance and the Black Christian Leaders Forum among other worthy causes. Dr. Brown was elected as the first Pentecostal President of Churches Together in England in 2013. He is the presiding Bishop of the New Testament Church of God. He has been with Citizens UK as a Trustee for more than 15 years.

Fiona Cannon OBE has spent her working life in the diversity and inclusion field. She is a former deputy Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission and former Chair of the Women's Justice Taskforce. She sits on the Commission in a personal capacity.

Sir Trevor Chinn CVO is a Senior Advisor to CVC Capital partners. His background is in the automotive industry, running Lex Service PLC, later RAC PLC. He serves on the Executive Committee of the Jewish Leadership Council and on the Board of BICOM.

Professor Mohamed El-Gomati OBE is a professor of electronics at York University. He is an adviser to a number of UK universities and charities and speaks on the contribution of Muslims in science, technology and civilisation. Professor El-Gomati is chairman of The Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation. He was awarded the OBE for his services to science in 2012.

Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray is Professor of Religious Studies at Cardiff University, and the founding Director of the Islam-UK Centre, established in 2005. She has authored numerous books, journal articles and book chapters on Muslims in Britain, the most recent being *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy* (Ashgate 2013), *Muslim Childhood* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). Professor Gilliat-Ray is currently the Chair of the Muslims in Britain Research Network (MBRN).

Poppy Jaman is an internationally respected mental health advocate, national policy advisor and the CEO of successful social enterprise, Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA). Poppy currently holds a number of non-executive board positions for the following organisations; Director Armed Forces Community Directory - Veterans Council, Public Health England and NHS

Workforce Race Equality Standards Advisory Board. She is also a founding member of the City Mental Health Alliance (CMHA) Management Committee.

Hashi Mohamed is a first generation immigrant, born in Kenya to Somali parents and came to the UK as a nine year old. Hashi, a barrister and broadcaster, practises in public and administrative law, including though not exclusively in Judicial Review cases, planning and environmental law and general commercial litigation. He also works with the BBC on short documentaries and lectures, most recently on the experiences of child migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean into Italy. Hashi is also currently a non-Executive Director of Connect Justice.

Charlotte Milner, co-chair of the Youth Leadership Group, is currently in training to become a church leader in The Salvation Army. She studied English at Queen Mary, University of London. After graduating she worked for The Salvation Army in Stepney with youth and the community as a part of the Essential Programme, an initiative to train and equip young leaders. Charlotte has a strong passion for social justice and for building relationships in the community. She has been involved with Tower Hamlets Citizens for a number of years, and has helped to lead campaigns on multiple local issues.

Ifath Nawaz LLB is a consultant solicitor, and was a founding member and former President of the Association of Muslim Lawyers UK. She has been a council member and co-Vice Chair of the Faiths Forum 4 London, and director of Muslimah. Ifath has played a key role in leading on issues affecting Muslim communities at the national and international level through her work on engaging with governments, local government and police and crown prosecution services and communities. She has also delivered legal roadshows within the Muslim community on governance, hate speech, employment, human rights, and terrorism. Ifath has co-authored a number of reports including dealing with anti-terror raids, the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Body and increasing Muslim women participation in Mosques. Ifath also established a

social enterprise providing training programmes for women and young persons on leadership, civil engagement and responsibility.

Peter Osborne is the former chief political commentator of The Telegraph. He writes a weekly column for Middle East Eye and The Daily Mail, He has written a number of books identifying the power structures that lurk behind political discourse, including *The Triumph of the Political Class* and *The Rise of Political Lying*. He appears on BBC programmes Any Questions and Question Time and often presents *Week in Westminster*. He was voted Columnist of the Year at the Press Awards in 2013.

Sir Stephen O'Brien CBE is Chairman of London Works and a Trustee of the Mayors Fund for London, Barts Charity and Foundation for Future London. Previously Stephen was Chairman of Barts Health NHS Trust, NHS Tower Hamlets, the University of East London, International Health Partners, London First, Teach First and Charles Fulton and Co Ltd. He was the first Chief Executive of Business in the Community and supports several charities in their fundraising. His great passion is for building the communities of East London through the provision of good healthcare, housing, education and employment.

Kawsar Zaman, co-chair of the Youth Leadership Group, is a trainee solicitor at Clifford Chance LLP where he sits on the firms BME Steering Committee. He has volunteered for a number of charities and in 2015, awarded the Muslim News Malcolm X Young Person's Award for Excellence. As the first in his family to attend university, he graduated with a first in law from the LSE before reading for the BCL at Oxford University and the LLM at Harvard Law School as a Fulbright Scholar. In 2009, Kawsar was a Global Fellow of the Prime Minister and has worked at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, House of Commons and the Department for Education. He is currently a Governor at Morpeth Secondary School in Tower Hamlets and a Trustee of Toynbee Hall, an organisation working to address the causes of poverty and distress, with a special focus on the East End of London.

Dr Zuhair Zarifa was elected as the Chair of the newly established NHS commissioning body for Newham in 2012. Zuhair is an experienced GP and surgeon in Primary care, with over 22 years working in an inner-city GP practice. He has been a Partner at Custom House Teaching and Training practice since 1990. Zuhair has also served on the board of Newham PCT, and held the role of Clinical Director for Primary Care at Newham University Hospital from 2009-2011. He has worked as a Training and Educational Supervisor and Video and Audit Assessor to the London Deanery.

Advisors

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari MBE is a noted civic leader, educationalist, parenting consultant and author. His career began in Physics research in King's College London in the early 1980s; he then moved into secondary teaching in the 1990s. He is an Honorary Fellow of Queen Mary University of London and holds an Honorary Doctor of Education from the University of East London. He has been involved with several charities, and was a board member of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (London 2012). He took an early retirement in 2011 and now focuses on writing, working with civil society bodies and mentoring young people.

Hélène Balazard is a research fellow in France (CNRS – University of Lille) and an invited scholar at the Department of Geography at Queen Mary University of London. Her areas of interest are community organising, participatory democracy and anti-discrimination action and policies in the UK and France.

Christina Dykes is currently studying for a PhD. She was responsible for redesigning the Conservative Party's approach to candidate assessment and for introducing the Party's first out-reach programme, as part of efforts to further encourage greater diversity in the political system. Working in the local government sector she has encouraged the application of organizational development techniques in politics. After three decades of working directly with senior central and local elected politicians and policy makers, she has an

in-depth understanding of democratic networks and the processes which underpins them. Her knowledge and application have proved useful as a Trustee and a Governor of charities and she has lectured on the value of political leadership in management.

Sunder Katwala is the director of British Future, an independent and non-partisan think-tank which works for a confident, inclusive and welcoming Britain, by engaging with people's hopes and fears about integration and immigration, identity and opportunity, and promoting constructive common ground solutions. Sunder was previously General Secretary of the Fabian Society from 2003 to 2011 and a journalist with The Observer.

Saskia Marsh advises governments, companies, and international institutions on conflict transformation and socio-political risk management. She has lived and worked in Muslim-majority countries for much of her career. Saskia is a former advisor to the European Institute of Peace on Israeli-Palestinian issues, and natural resource companies on their government and community engagement strategies across the Middle East and Africa. She previously worked in Kosovo, Gaza, and Lebanon as the United Nations' youngest appointee, in a variety of strategic, political and operational roles.

Appendix 3:

Muslim Leadership Group Addendum

The Muslim Leadership Group consists of Muslims from a cross-section of different communities and geographies across the UK, many who have been in positions of leadership and all who are active in affairs affecting Muslim communities. Our contribution to the report involved taking part in providing evidence in our organisational capacity, in providing advice and context to the Commissioners and in reaching out to our networks to ensure the views of Muslim communities were fairly reflected in the report.

As referenced in the report, the “Rushdie affair” in the 1980s played a major role in galvanising an earlier generation. It appears that the impacts of the horrific events of 9/11 and 7/7 penetrate the next generation, framing their experiences in public life, with the state and public authorities, and with one another.

The findings from the hearings across the country resonate strongly with many of our own experiences. Most importantly, unlike other reports that have been commissioned about Muslims, the Commissioners recognise and celebrate the huge contributions of Muslims whilst also assessing and evaluating challenges. The report appreciates the nuances of hugely diverse Muslim communities, avoiding the trap of conflating religion and ethnicity.

The ‘Missing Muslims’ report therefore is a unique and hugely valuable addition to the literature about Muslims, with recommendations that are both welcome and timely. With work, we are optimistic that this report and its recommendations can begin to pave the way for increased participation through which we can all benefit.

With this background, we would like to supplement additional perspectives from the group, which we hope will add value for the report’s readers.

1. State resources vs. resources of Muslim communities

There is an asymmetry of power between the State and Muslim communities, and so it is important that expectations are appropriately managed as to how much can be achieved by the grassroots when resources are sparse. Much of what needs to be done, by community and State, can only be achieved if there is a spirit of togetherness invoked. It requires a deep and trusting partnership between community, statutory and voluntary institutions, and this must be embarked upon with an understanding of what is at stake if we all fail.

2. Islamophobia

Muslim communities have rightly been concerned about the rise in hate crime, in large part driven by imbalanced and inaccurate media coverage of Muslims and refugees. The report could have been strengthened by examining the woeful lack of action on this area by both the current and previous Government. After the latest terror attack outside the Muslim Welfare House in June 2017, it is understandable why the commentator Mehdi Hasan responded to the new measures by our Prime Minister as “too little, too late”.⁶⁹ Accusations of “a simmering underbelly of Islamophobia within the Conservative party” made by Baroness Sayeeda Warsi must be acknowledged through an inquiry for trust to be regained;⁷⁰ and much more thought must be given on how to challenge the ubiquitous anti-Muslim rhetoric certain “journalists” are able to spout on mainstream platforms.

3. Prevent

It is not surprising that Prevent was brought up consistently across the Commission’s hearings given its pervasive impact and how strongly many Muslims, regardless of background, feel about this government tool. Many Muslims across the country, in line with rights organisations, international bodies and even the professional

unions, have serious concerns about the statutory duty itself. The fact it is not applicable in Northern Ireland demonstrates how its potential negative impact is understood, and is not limited to a lack of guidance. Prevent is seen to be problematic for numerous reasons, from how conservative attitudes are often conflated with non-violent extremism, to the perception that Muslims appear to be specifically targeted and viewed through the prism of security. We welcome the call for a truly independent review that engages with these difficult questions and with all communities – including Muslims, whilst retaining the overall goal of keeping us safe and secure.

4. Engagement with Muslim communities

The government has failed to engage with a broad cross-section of Muslims yet has often spoken about and at Muslim communities. David Anderson QC called the lack of engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain “extraordinary”. The report’s comment on the “Islamist influence in public bodies and schools” is disappointing, especially given the lack of “evidence of a sustained plot” or of “extremism or radicalisation”⁷¹ and how the banning of five senior teachers for apparently being involved in this plot was only this year found to be an “abuse of justice”.⁷² A sense of proportion when discussing problems or difficulties issues must be retained if the partnership for the future is to be sustained.

5. Health outcomes and inequality

The impact of health and social care, and the related outcomes on public participation, has not been covered within this report. Muslims disproportionately come from deprived communities and have some of the worst health outcomes, including mental and latent illnesses. The extra resources required to tackle these inequalities are an important part of any health and local service provision, and could have a direct impact on the ability to participate. We would welcome the development of projects that looks at this area in detail.

6. Integration

A complex set of challenges faces all of us when tackling the issues related to segregation; whether it is the range of ethnic groups, the different migration waves or the intergenerational challenges. In this light, we welcome the report’s recognition of integration being a “two-way street” and its recommendation for an integration strategy in partnership with communities, including but not exclusively with Muslim communities. Given Muslim communities are less concentrated in 2011 compared with 2001 we are going in the right direction and look forward to future proposals to strengthen our society.⁷³

We often see speeches directed at Muslims from our government and our Prime Minister. Some of these have been troubling, but some have contained ideas that are very welcome, especially since the attack outside Muslim Welfare House. We hope that trust can be re-built, and a new positive and collaborative engagement with Muslim communities can be forged, that will transform the positive rhetoric into meaningful action. So much is at stake for our shared communities, our country and our collective future. After such an extended period of neglect, we cannot and must not wait any longer.

Appendix 4:

Muslim Leadership Group Profiles

Akeela Ahmed is an equalities campaigner specialising in youth and gender issues. She has over ten years of experience supporting vulnerable individuals with complex social and mental health difficulties. Akeela is a property development entrepreneur, and recently set up 'Seaside CIC' a social enterprise for homeless people with mental health difficulties. She holds an MSc in Mental Health Studies from the Institute of Psychiatry at Kings College London. In 2014 Akeela founded 'She Speaks We Hear' an online platform bringing together women's voices, unaltered and unadulterated.

Sahar Al-Faifi is the regional manager of Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) in South Wales and West England, assistant general secretary of the Muslim Council of Wales and former Chair of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) Wales. She was elected as a youth leader for Citizens UK Wales, which seeks to unlock the power of civil society, widen Muslim participation and engagement and build a broad-base alliance for different campaigns that include anti-racism and anti-Islamophobia. Sahar is a graduate from Cardiff University in Genetics; holds a MSc in Biomedical science and currently is a Molecular geneticist working at the NHS.

Usman Ali is a broadcast journalist for a global news channel, and an active grassroots campaigner. He previously worked in the charity sector, developing a local community centre and spearheading homelessness projects and climate change campaigns. Usman studied at the University of Salford, and was formerly Vice President (Higher Education) of the National Union of Students. He consults on youth and BME engagement to local and international organisations.

Qari Muhammad Asim MBE is the senior Imam at Makkah Masjid (mosque), which has been recognised as UK's model mosque. He is also

a senior lawyer in a global law firm, DLA Piper, specialising in Real Estate. He is a visiting fellow at Leeds Beckett University. Alongside this, Qari Asim is a member of the Government's Anti-Muslim Hatred working group, focusing on tackling Islamophobia and senior editor of www.Imamsonline.com.

Dalwardin Babu OBE is a former Chief Superintendent in the Metropolitan Police Service. Having completed 30 years of police service, he is a non-executive Director in the NHS, and works with children in Tottenham and organisations on Equality issues. Dalwardin has a history of standing up to injustice and set up the National Association of Muslim Police to enhance the Muslim voice in policing and community issues. In recent years Dalwardin has challenged the Government's "Prevent Strategy" putting forward a more comprehensive safeguarding model that does not focus on the Muslim community; but looks at anti radicalisation as part of main stream safeguarding.

Shenaz Bunglawala is the former head of research at Mend, where she led research into Islamophobia, racial and religious equality and the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on British Muslim communities. Before that she served as head of research at Engage, an initiative designed to improve British Muslim representation and participation in media and politics. Shenaz taught undergraduate courses in political science at the LSE and King's College, London while studying for her doctoral degree. She sat on the Research Excellence Framework 2014 expert sub-panel for Theology and Religious Studies and has advised on various AHRC/ESRC research projects. She is a director of the Byline Festival Foundation for independent journalism and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala is the Head of Chaplaincy and Bereavement Services at Barts Health NHS Trust. He works across different sectors of community development, community cohesion, halal food, and bereavement. He lectures regularly in mosques and community centres in London and UK.

Dr Musharraf Hussain OBE is the director of the Karimia Institute, where he works on a number of projects ranging from community development to raising educational achievements of Pakistani children to adult classes and interfaith work. He helped establish the 'Al Karam' Muslim boarding school for boys in Retford, where he was the head teacher for 3 years. In 2005, Dr Musharraf was awarded an honorary doctorate by Staffordshire University, for his services to the British Muslim community, and in 2009 he was awarded an OBE for his services to community relations in Britain. He is the chair of the Christian Muslim Forum, a senior trustee of Muslim Hands, and trustee of National Centre for Citizenship and Law.

Jehangir Malik OBE is the CEO of Muslim Aid a leading faith based INGO in UK spearheading strategic and governance changes since 2016. Prior to this, he was UK Director at Islamic Relief UK, one of the largest faith based international relief agencies in the country, where, in 2010 he was awarded an OBE for his services to humanity. He has worked with government departments and policy think tanks on various issues relating to community engagement, humanitarian relief and International development. A Board of Trustee at ACEVO and The Runnymede Trust and a graduate from University of Wolverhampton with an LLB (Hons) in Law.

Sajid Mohammed is the co-founder and CEO of Himmah, a social justice charity tackling poverty, race & educational inequalities through direct services, research and campaigning. Sajid also serves on various boards & advisory groups including One Nottingham, Vernon Community College and Nottingham City of Football.

Syed Musa Naqvi is the lead Urgent and Emergency Care Commissioner for NHS Stockport CCG. He holds a degree in Economics and Management from the University of Oxford, and a Masters in Economics

from the University of Manchester. Musa also serves as the current secretary general for the Manchester Council of Mosques, an umbrella body representing 70 mosques and 80,000 Muslims in Manchester.

Kamran Rashid is a social entrepreneur with a specialism in young people and faith based engagement. He holds a Masters in International Politics from Bradford University, Peace Studies Department and is a nationally qualified Youth worker. Kamran has worked on many innovative programmes including launching a Muslim Youth Forum in Leeds post 7/7 which received national acclaim and established a national youth advisory group for Government Ministers. Most recently, through his social enterprise The Socially Conscious Company, Kamran has supported international charities to better engage young Muslims, supported national faith organisations to engage with national campaigns and launched a multi-faith schools programme to manage difficult conversations.

Miqdaad Versi is an independent management consultant focussed on strategy and analysis, having studied Mathematics at the University of Oxford. He currently serves as the Assistant Secretary General for the Muslim Council of Britain, leading on Islamophobia and counter-extremism. He regularly writes for the Guardian and Independent, and is a trustee of Rights Watch UK.

Appendix 5:

Youth Leadership Group Addendum

The Youth Leadership Group is made up of young people of faith – Muslim, Christian, Jewish – and those of none. We represent a wide cross-section of the different communities and geo-locations across the UK, with differing lived experiences. We hold a wide range of occupations including; students, young professionals, budding artists, and young Imams.

What brings us together are a set of shared concerns and hopes. We have grown up in a world where minority groups have historically been ‘othered’, and this is what we see happening to Muslim communities today. We believe that if we want to see everyone thrive in today’s Britain, we must work together to dissolve the many different barriers we face – whether that is discrimination, hate and prejudice, misogyny, inequality and disadvantage or complacency.

Our role throughout the Commission has been to ensure that it formulates recommendations which work well for young people too. We attended public hearings, asked questions, and reached out, through our own networks, to young people to capture their voices. Throughout this process we have been inspired by the great work already happening around the country, and have been encouraged by the conversations that we have had.

We want to build a society where everyone feels they have a stake in its future, and where everyone has access to the same resources and opportunities to fully participate in it. Our overriding hope is that Government, business, and civil society all recognise that each has a role to play in building a progressive society that is pluralistic, but cohesive and fair; and where difference is navigated in a principled, and confident way where it can be recognised as a strength.

It is in this spirit that we welcome the recommendations of the Missing Muslims report, and reaffirm specific recommendations that we feel could benefit young Muslims the most, as

well as indicate areas which could be developed further as we move forward.

1. **Mentoring is vital if we are serious about raising the aspirations and social capital of young Muslims.** As such, we welcome the call on employers, higher education institutions and Muslim professionals themselves to expand existing mentoring schemes and tailor them to the needs of young Muslims. The youngest members of our society will play a vital role in how we as a nation move forward; they possess the greatest energy and are key stakeholders for our shared future. Those who wish to drive social change, whether it be at local, regional or national level, need to harness the power of young people.

2. **Aspiration is an important factor when considering social mobility, particularly among young Muslims.** With many young Muslims living in some of the poorest communities in the UK, awareness of existing opportunities such as outreach programmes can be limited. Existing initiatives need to be encouraged and much more must be done to reach those affected most adversely by disadvantage, by working in partnership with schools and youth services.

3. **In order to both build resilience to prejudice and discrimination in young Muslims, and help those who are struggling with a lack of belonging due to identity issues, it is important to strengthen the work being done at the grassroots level to provide safe spaces for youth, where they can unpick challenges and build their confidence.**

4. **A platform of young person development projects, toolkits and initiatives would be welcomed.** Such programmes should also focus on building capacity and leadership development. We would like to see programmes that aim to teach holistic leadership skills; from how to be

comfortable and confident in their own identity, to how to navigate the political landscape to drive forward their vision. By actively developing tailored and subsidised courses, and removing barriers to uptake, we believe that we will be able to take marginalised community sub-sets and within 10 years get them ready to move into high level leadership positions.

5. We believe strongly in the need for local initiatives and the support of government and business in promoting spaces that enable cross cultural engagement. Muslim communities commonly reside in highly concentrated urban areas, and so it is not uncommon for Muslim youth to build friendships with people of a similar ethnic background; the spaces they occupy such as schools, youth centres, and sports clubs can be shared predominantly by youth of a similar ethnic background to their own. This phenomenon is not anomalous to minority ethnic communities; it can also be viewed in majority ethnic cities, and more so in county areas. A number of youth groups have been cited in the report and some of them may be primed to undertake a twinning initiative, like the twinning programme model in schools. We hope that this work can be also be extended by youth groups to older demographics living in majority minority ethnic or majority ethnic areas.

6. Diversity in the media is an important priority, not only for Muslims, but many minority groups. For Muslims, this lack of diversity is often felt acutely as they are then only seen during discussions on faith – often around extremism or Islamic dress. The development of a Muslim spokesperson network (similar to that managed by the New Economy Organisers Network) to boost the number of diverse and progressive voices in the mainstream media on a range of topics would be welcomed. It would serve to ‘normalise’ Muslims and challenge the one-dimensional perception which associates Muslim only with their faith and could demonstrate that

Muslims can be experts in the top of their field within business, secular sciences and arts.

We believe that change is possible, and sincerely believe that if all parties deliver on the recommendations outlined in the report, then the impact on our generation and the generations to come will be profound. We are committed to cultivating partnerships and being ambassadors of the very change we hope to see, translating these recommendations into action in our collective spheres of influence.

Appendix 6:

Youth Leadership Group Profiles

Usman Ali has been working within the voluntary sector over the last 6 years with organisations in Wakefield. He previously was part of the Wakefield Youth Parliament, and currently sits on the West Yorkshire Police Wakefield Division Independent Advisory Group & Hate Group. Usman established the Wakefield City Youth & Community Project in 2013, and founded the Wakefield BME hub and Faiths Forum.

Mehdi Al-Katib is a grass-roots British-Iraqi activist based in London. Mehdi is pursuing an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, University of London. He previously worked as a Public Relations Officer for the Muslim Student Council. Mehdi has also interned with Chatham House's MENA Programme, and is currently interning at UNICEF in Jordan.

Alaa' Al-Samarrai is a monitoring consultant for a political monitoring firm in central London. Previously she worked for the international humanitarian relief agency Islamic Relief Worldwide. She has also served as Vice President of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) in 2010-2012 during which she campaigned on Islamophobia, civil liberties and student welfare issues. Raised in Leeds, she completed her BA in International Relations at the University of Leeds, and MA in International Conflict Studies at King's College London.

Jessica Baker became involved with Citizens UK Birmingham through her synagogue, where she teaches every Saturday. She is also a leader with LJY-Netzer, the Liberal Jewish youth movement and was selected as one of 18 under 18 Jews in the country by Jewish News for her work in the community. She has just finished her A levels and is hoping to study Philosophy and Politics at university.

Louiza Chekhar graduated from Oxford University in 2011, and has since built her

career within the international humanitarian and development sector. Currently working for a major British humanitarian organisation on anti-trafficking work with refugees in Europe, she spent four years prior to this working at Islamic Relief UK. Louiza has been involved in several Muslim community and civil society initiatives, including the Oxford University Islamic Society, where she was General Secretary, and as a volunteer for MADE in Europe. Louiza also participated in the Young Muslim Leadership Programme at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in 2013.

Ian Cole is an architecture graduate who is currently employed at SOAS Students Union working to facilitate student groups, providing support and aiding their growth and development. With experience working in Students' Unions the Former Vice President: Activities & Employability at London South Bank Students' Union, Ian has a history of representing students, generating exciting opportunities, and working to create a community for students. He believes in inclusivity and participation to allow people to develop as individuals and benefit the community.

Sahabi Choudhury is studying International Political Economy as an undergraduate at City University of London. Born and raised in Tower Hamlets, he has been frequently involved in social justice actions with Citizens UK volunteering on behalf of his youth group at Darul Ummah. Having represented his youth group at various levels; Sahabi has since volunteered in many charity projects; and is currently serving as head teacher at Unwind Summer School (one of the many charity projects at Darul Ummah). After completing his degree, Sahabi aims to pursue a career in Economic Regeneration and continue working on campaigns aiding in community-led development.

Mohammed Adel Chowdhury is graduate of International Relations from Loughborough University with a passion for grass-roots community development. Growing up in Bristol, Mohammed became the first chair of a user-led BAME-focused youth organisation addressing issues such as antisocial behaviour and educational attainment. Since leaving university, Mohammed joined a large IT firm and continues his third sector involvement with international relief charities, community projects and faith-based education in London.

Daphne Giachero is a graduate in anthropology and human rights currently completing an internship in campaigning. She is a proud European national and has lived in London for six years, where she has been involved in many volunteering and community-based activities. She is passionate about promoting social cohesion, civic engagement, equality and pluralism.

Josie Hicklin is currently working for an international development charity whilst also doing the legal practice course with the intention to qualify as an immigration solicitor. She lives in Tower Hamlets, goes to St Paul's Church in Shadwell, and is particularly interested in understanding how immigration, multiculturalism and interfaith relationships can benefit society.

Sukbir Kaur is a socialist, feminist, and grassroots activist. Since the age of 14, Sukbir has been involved with community organisations through volunteering, campaigning and raising awareness on pertinent issues. She likes to express herself creatively through spoken word poetry and was poet in residence for the West Yorkshire Police. Sukbir was born and brought up in Leeds and has a keen interest in ethnography.

Hamzah Lambat graduated as an Imam in 2013, and then began to supplement his academic background with further studies. His journey began in Cambridge where he undertook an 18-month modular intensive programme at an independent college. In addition to this, Hamzah has also become an alumnus of several leadership development programmes which include the U.S.

State Departments Young Muslim Exchange Leadership Programme, and the Young Muslim Leadership Programme at the Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Oxford. Hamzah now divides his time between his work as an Imam, and a Leicester City steward.

Anneessa Mahmood is a development consultant and supports organisations who represent groups of young people with governance, strategy and democracy. She was the Community and Welfare Officer at LSE Students' Union after graduating with a degree in Management. She is developing specialisms in participation and systems change from an organisational development perspective, and is interested in collaborative approaches to creating solutions and having conversations that matter.

Mohamed Mohamed is a poet, community activist and football coach from South London. He founded the (un)Heard Words project, which focuses on using poetry as a tool for interfaith engagement. Beyond exploring the topic of faith, politics and masculinity in his poems, Mohamed has never been afraid to explore local community and global challenges too. His poem "I remember" was shortlisted for the Free Word's National "The Time is Now" 2015 Climate Change Poetry Prize. A 2014 'Student Leader of the Year' from the University of Exeter, Mohamed is an alumnus of the Young Muslim Leadership Programme (2013) at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and an alumnus of the Young Muslim Leaders Exchange Programme (2015) with the US Embassy of London.

Dr. Mohammed Mozaffari is a graduate of Leeds University, 2013, is a GDP Dentist working for {my}dentist Leeds. Co-Founder and Trustee of 'Leeds Muslim Youth Group', a dedicated Muslim youth group, created to support and educate the 12-17 age-range; specialising in youth trips, community projects and Muslim Youth education.

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