

Voices from the Minarets

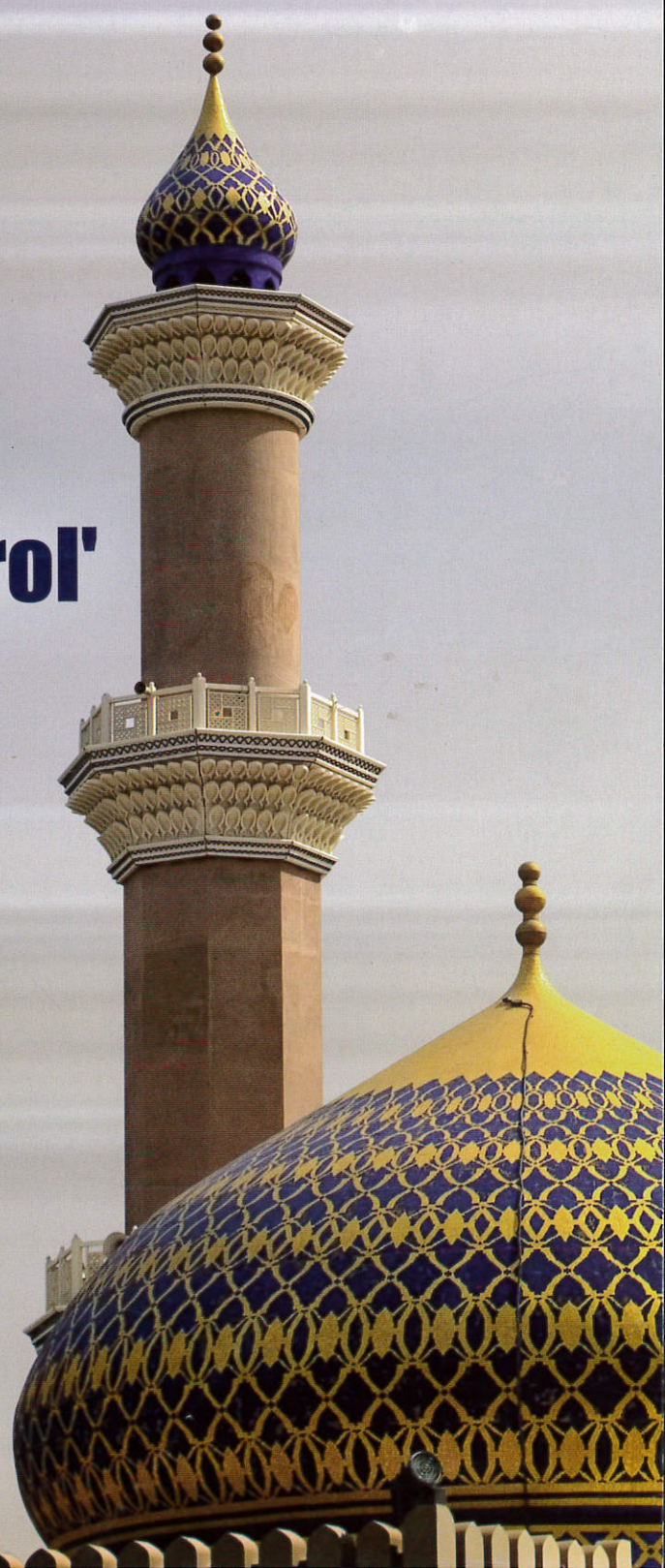
MCB Study of UK Imams and Mosques

'Empower not Control'



The Muslim Council of Britain

May 2006



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Foreword

Foreword

The meaning of the notion of 'worship' and 'place of worship' in the Muslim tradition requires clarification. Islam is a way of life for its adherents and a Muslim's most routine acts, including earning a livelihood through legitimate means, or acting as a responsible family member, are acts of worship for him or her. The mosque as a place of worship is multi-faceted too, serving as a sacred and clean space for prayer, but also providing counselling, education and other services associated with the life of a community. The role of mosques is without doubt central and crucial to the well being of the Muslim community.

The strength of the representative character of the MCB is underpinned by its affiliates, a large number of whom are Mosques. The affiliated mosques are well spread out geographically, ethnically as well as in the Islamic schools of thought. As the umbrella body of Muslims in the United Kingdom the MCB has a particular responsibility to serve its affiliates and to reflect their needs and concerns. The MCB has been aware of the need for better understanding of the role and work of Mosques in the United Kingdom. It has been conscious of the requirement for the provision of better support for the imams. The training of imams, qualifications for appointment and their on-going training have been live issues in the community as has better governance of Mosques. As a progressive and forward thinking community and given the pivotal role that the Mosques play in our daily lives, the Muslims have a duty to enhance and harmonise standards of governance in our Mosques and to consider ways and means to improve the employment terms and training requirements for imams.

The Work Plan for 2005 as recommended by the MCB AGM in May 2005 included the carrying out of a project to evaluate and better understand the issues surrounding Mosques and imams. The Masjid (Mosques) and Community Affairs Committee of the MCB commissioned an independent research consultancy to carry out the work on behalf of the MCB. This report is the result of that work. I offer my personal thanks to Brother Shafiur Rahman and his team at C3ube, Training and Consultancy for the excellent work. I believe that the findings of this report give the Muslim community as well as the policy makers in the Government a rich set of data from which a meaningful and mutually beneficial approach can be charted.

I hope that the recommendations made in the report will facilitate a programme of work which is initiated and led by the Muslim community.

Sir Iqbal AKM Sacranie OBE
Secretary General MCB.

Executive summary

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 There are now over a 1000 Mosques dotted across the UK that have become a part of the British urban architectural andscape. However, the role of Imams and Mosques in Britain has been an under-researched topic.
- 1.2 The Muslim Council of Britain (the "MCB"), through its Masjid (Mosques) and Community Affairs Committee, has commissioned this report with a view to gain a better understanding of this area which is of pivotal importance to the future development of Britain's Muslim community.
- 1.3 Voices from the Minarets is an independent project - research undertaken by the community for the community.
- 1.4 The role of a Mosque can be broadly classified into two parts: firstly to meet the spiritual needs of the community signified by its role as a place of worship; and secondly to meet the practical educational and social needs of the community.
- 1.5 Mosques are normally managed by a local, independent Mosque committee that takes responsibility for appointment of the Imam and other paid and volunteer staff. Mosques are generally funded through the donations of the worshippers and philanthropists to cover their core cost centres.
- 1.6 The role of the Imam in British Mosques has undergone sweeping changes in the past thirty years in response to the evolving socio-economic needs of the Muslim community. They are a varied group struggling to meet the demands of their ever changing roles which they are expected to discharge with limited resources and often insufficient training.
- 1.7 There has been a growing political urgency in several Western European countries to institutionalise and create facilities for Imam training. There is a feeling that not enough Imams are being developed from Britain and the existing training is inadequate or has serious shortcomings.
- 1.8 For the purposes of this report, 90 Imams and members of the Management Committee (MC) of Mosques from across the country participated in surveys and focus groups. A mixed design approach was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data

1.9 summary of findings:

- (a) The provision of Quranic classes for children is one of the most prominent secondary roles of Mosques in the UK.
- (b) Mosques were more like community centres, acting as essential focal hubs for a wide range of community needs.
- (c) There is continuing evidence that sections of the Muslim community, particularly the first generation, find it difficult to access mainstream services that are culturally incompetent or insensitive. Around two thirds of Mosques held open days and also arranged visits to the Mosque for local schools.
- (d) Contrary to reports from existing literature and public perception, both women and young people are involved in Mosques although the extent of such involvement varies.
- (e) There is a desire from young people to be involved in having a greater contribution to the way Mosques are run.
- (f) The role of most imams goes beyond leading the daily prayer congregation- they are perceived as being leaders, guides and scholars and informal reference points for community members for a wide range of personal and social problems.
- (g) The issue of poor pay levels of imams was highlighted by respondents.
- (h) There was a general agreement that the affairs of imams in the UK needs to be better organised and coordinated. However, there was scepticism about the intentions of the Government which was perceived to have an agenda of control and centralised for the training and accreditation of imams.
- (i) Respondents felt that any accreditation of imams would have to be carried out by a Muslim organisation, existing or new, independent of Government control or influence.
- (j) Respondents highlighted the limited resources, both human and financial, as on-going issues.
- (k) The majority of imams and Management Committee members expressed a desire for professional training in a number of areas including the improvement in English language skills.

Summary of recommendations:

- (l) MCB's role as a representative umbrella body for British Muslims was positively acknowledged by most respondents and focus group attendees. The BBC Panorama programme A question of Leadership actually galvanised support for the MCB from previously critical sections within the Muslim community
- (m) Imams and management committee members view the media as extremely negative when it comes to broad and balanced reporting regarding imams, Mosques and the Muslim community. Respondents were alarmed at the language used by sections of media which was increasingly divisive portraying an 'us and them' scenario.
- (n) All of the Mosques who took part in this study reported suffering Islamophobic calls, threats, or vandalism before and after 7/7

1.10 Summary of recommendations:

- (a) Policymakers and relevant central and local Government departments need to monitor the uptake of mainstream services by the Muslim community.
- (b) Evening and weekend Quranic classes should be standardised through the development of a national curriculum, providing training to teachers and producing basic related guidelines.
- (c) Open days and basic Islam awareness training should be promoted on a wider scale through community networks and the media to encourage greater participation and to combat negative stereotypes of Mosques and Imams being closed to the rest of society.
- (d) Mosques should do more to combat the negative stereotypes of management committees and encourage young people to bring their skills and capabilities to contribute and capacity build management committees.
- (e) Education and awareness needs to increase amongst Mosque committees and Imams on the necessity of providing space and facilities for women. Women's requirements need to be planned into design of future newly built Mosques and extension plans as well as increasing ways for women to participate in decision making committees.
- (f) Funding agencies should work closer with bodies such as the MCB and networks of councils of Mosques to create adequate communications strategy in order to raise awareness and knowledge on how to access funds and resources.
- (g) The curriculum of existing traditional British seminaries / Darul Ulum where imams are trained need to include basic information and training to equip Imams to be able to effectively deal with the wide range of demands e.g Chaplaincy work.
- (h) Any proposed council of imams should be developed from grassroots by the imams and existing network of Mosques such as councils of Mosques. The body should be independent of the government with clear roles and remit. In addition as with other professional bodies, a Council of Imam and Mosques should also be democratic, Self-regulated and self-financed. Its membership should be governed by its own voluntary code of conduct and best practice guide. There was support for the MCB to initiate and lead on the development of this body.
- (i) A community engagement strategy needs to be developed for the MCB in order to address and tackle the reappearing argument of grassroots support and representation.
- (j) The MCB should create an 'Affiliates Pack' which should be sent to all known Muslim bodies who are not affiliated.
- (k) The MCB through its affiliates should hold more yearly seminars/programmes on key issue faced by British Muslims targeted at the Muslim community in general.
- (l) Mosque imams and Management Committee (MC) members should be provided with media awareness training. Media resource packs should be created for Mosques to use and refer to for guidance. The positive role and contribution of Imams and Mosques in Britain should be documented.
- (m) Imams and MC members should be given training on existing and proposed laws and their impact and the process of Government law making.

Introduction

2 Introduction

- 2.1** The first purpose built Mosque in the UK is the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, of 1889. Since then nearly every immigrant Muslim community of various ethnicities have built hundreds of Mosques wherever they settled as fledgling communities. There are now over an estimated 1600 Mosques dotted across the UK that have become a part of the British urban architectural landscape as well as physical affirmation to the significance of Mosques to the Muslim community.
- 2.2** The role of Imams and Mosques in Britain has been an under-researched topic. The Muslim Council of Britain (the "MCB"), through its Mosques and Community Affairs Committee, has commissioned this report with a view to gain a better understanding of this area which is of pivotal importance to the future development of Britain's Muslim community. The report will further inform the future priority areas of MCB's Mosques and Community Affairs Committee work plans and also inform related national policy.
- 2.3** The MCB encourages and values research and investigations that provide insights into community needs and help in preparing for the future. The MCB itself only came into being after one such study, conducted by the Muslim Interim Committee on Muslim Unity (NICMU) which during 1995-96 conducted an extensive consultation process and survey of the views of community activists on the need for greater coordination and the scope, role and structure of an umbrella body.
- 2.4** Voices from the Minaret is an independent research undertaken by the community for the community. Through the MCB and its affiliates the research has been able to draw on extensive networks and contacts with Imams and ulema (religious scholars) for this work based on questionnaires and focus groups. Since 9/11 and 7/7 the Muslim community has been the subject of innumerable studies, where unfortunately too often the agenda has been to confirm a preconceived negative idea or stereotype. In Voices from the Minaret, the aim has been to seek out the facts with the positive belief that Mosques and Imams and associated institutions such as Madrasas and secondary schools are tremendous assets, and form the corner stone of community development.
- 2.5** The role of Imams and the way Mosques are run will undoubtedly be a significant factor in the future of multi-faith Britain. However if policy makers, communities and ultimately the wider society are to harness the positive aspects of this vast religious network of institutions, a much greater understanding needs to be arrived at in terms of both the role and nature of Imams and Mosques and their position in British society.
- 2.6** Subsequent sections of this report are structured in six parts:
- (a)** a review of the literature (historical and contemporary) on the role and position of Mosques in the Muslim way of life (Section 3);
 - (b)** a brief description of the study methodology (Section 4);
 - (c)** findings from questionnaires (Section 5);
 - (d)** findings from focus groups (Section 6);
 - (e)** analysis (Section 7); and
 - (f)** conclusions and recommendations (Section 8).

3 Literature review

3.1 Islamic sources

3.1.1 A Mosque is a sacred place of worship for Muslims. The word Mosque is a translation of the Arabic word masjid (pl. masajid). Arab grammarians classify the word masjid as 'ism makan' or a noun of place which indicates the place where a verb/action occurs. The word masjid is derived from the Arabic root sajada which means to prostrate. Since prostration is the most honourable act in prayer and because of the nearness of the worshiper to his Lord, it has been chosen to signify the act of prayer itself.

3.1.2 Therefore the masjid is literally the location of sujud / prostration (Al Zarkashi d.794/1392).

3.1.3 The Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, is recorded in a hadith (a statement or action of the Prophet, or his approval of a deed) to have stated that "The whole earth is made as a place of worship and a means of cleansing for me." (Imam Bukhari) So within the Islamic legal framework, a Muslim can pray almost anywhere. However, a Mosque is purposefully constructed or converted building which facilitates collective ritual worship in the form of the daily congregational prayers.

3.1.4 One of the first acts of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, after migrating to Medina (C.E. 622) was to establish a Mosque known as Masjid al Quba (Ibn Hisham). This tradition of the Prophet Muhammad is still practiced by migrating Muslim communities across the world. Soon after a much larger Mosque was built in Medina known as Masjid al Nabawi, translated to mean the Prophet's Mosque, which subsequently became the model for later Mosques.

3.1.5 A communal life with collective responsibility is encouraged by Islam. This can be seen from the objective of the five daily prayers, which Muslims are required to perform preferably in a Jam'ah (congregation) at a Mosque. As a result of the frequent gathering of the community in the Mosque, it became the focal centre of Muslim community life.

3.1.6 The role of a Mosque can be broadly classified into two parts: firstly to meet the spiritual needs of the community signified by its role as a place of worship; and secondly to meet the practical educational and social needs of the community.

3.1.7 Alavi (1990) highlights that historically the Mosque as an institution had four major roles: a place of worship; a centre of education; a judicial court; and a centre for political and administrative decision making.

3.1.8 Reference to the collections of hadith indicate the following roles fulfilled by Mosques:

(a) A place for worship. For men and women, young and old. Muslims deeply respect the sanctity of Mosques - it is not a place for lewd behaviour, profanity and aggression. It is a place for meditation and reflection. Muslims take their cue of a Mosque from the sacred Mosque in Makkah - where visitors are not even allowed to kill a fly

(b) A place for learning. All early Mosques had educational institutes attached to them. The Mosque played a great part in the spread of education for all. For Tibawi (1972), the association of the Mosque with education remains one of its main characteristics throughout history.

(c) A place for social interaction. The daily gathering of the community in the Mosques allowed for individual members to interact with each other and develop close bonds.

(d) A place for inviting people to Islam. There are many examples that demonstrate that people of other faiths would come to the mosque of the Prophet, peace be on him, to ask questions and seek clarification about the teaching of Islam.

(e) A place for festivity. Mosques provided an avenue for the announcement of important community news and for the holding of events such as marriages.

(f) A place for consultation. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to gather his companions in the Mosque to discuss matters of importance (like treaties and famines, etc) and for collective decisions.

(g) A place for medical and social care. Mosques are a place for the care of the ill and wounded. Eventually Muslims developed some of the first formal organised hospitals adjacent to Mosques.

3.1.9 Even the first state bank and finance ministry of the Islamic world was established in the Prophets Mosque, with a charity department to help the poor. (Ahmed 2003.)

3.1.10 Traditionally the management and maintenance of Mosques were the responsibility of the state. Later on, in the absence of governmental involvement, Mosques were set up by wealthy individuals as endowments for public uses. In the absence of governmental maintenance, local communities formed committees to run the Mosques. (Alavi 1990)

3.2 Significance and Perceptions of Mosques in Europe

3.2.1 Attitudes and responses to Mosques have ranged from the patronising to the hostile, the positive to the suspicious.

3.2.2 In France, for example, during the colonial period some Mosques were built by the state as acts of patronage to towards Muslim 'subjects'. These institutions were not seen as threatening but rather an extension of France's empire and a tribute to the colonial soldiers who died during the First World War (Maussen 2005).

3.2.3 In the 60's and 70's as Muslim immigrant labourers started to settle in Europe, Mosques were seen as safe Islamic spaces: "havens in an environment that some Muslims imagine to be bounded in opposition to Islam" (Werbner, 1996). Mosques were seen to provide secure religious/cultural continuity for those who have faced dislocating experiences of migration and the social exclusion of racism and unemployment.

3.2.4 Others see the Mosque as having an important role in social control through the Friday congregational prayers and children's religious instruction (Wardak 2002). The Mosque has also been said to be the nucleus of community life representing social, cultural and aesthetic needs of the Muslim community (Lotfi 2001). Purpose built Mosques with clear Islamic architecture project the desire of Muslims to participate in the social and physical space of urban Europe (Maussen 2005). Some commentators note that for Muslims, Mosques everywhere remain important symbols of the world of Islam (Joly, 1995; Metcalf, 1996).

3.2.5 However, more recently Mosques have been viewed in highly critical terms. Commenting after the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, the populist Dutch MP Geert Wilders claimed that Mosques were 'palaces of hatred' (Maussen 2005). Policy makers in Rotterdam, Strasbourg and Marseilles encouraged Mosque committee members to develop 'cultural centres' to accommodate non-Muslims to avoid creating a parallel society with different values. In 2004 a municipal policy was created that pushed for bans on large Islamic centres in Rotterdam. This was followed by comments from the right wing politician Michiel Smit that Muslims should not be allowed to establish their own 'little Turkey or Morocco' in the Netherlands.

3.2.6 In Britain, Mosques have often been seen in the context of urban planning and renewal. For example, in Birmingham the Council adopted a more positive attitude to purpose built Mosques in keeping with the needs of a bustling, multi-cultural city.

3.2.7 In the post 7 July climate, the Government proposed a new regime of control on Mosques. Entitled Preventing Extremism Together - Places of Worship, a Home Office consultation paper suggested the need for a "legal process whereby those controlling a place of worship can be required by an order of the court to take steps to stop certain extremist behaviour occurring in a place of worship (a requirement order)". An extensive consultation conducted by the MCB established that such proposals were considered wholly unnecessary. In response to similar objections from other faith communities, the government dropped these proposals. Nevertheless, the emergence of such proposals is indicative of the stereotyping of Mosques on the basis of an isolated incident and the inclination to regard this important community institution as "part of the problem" rather than a partner in the commonly-shared desire to safeguard society.

3.2.8 The Home Office initiative Working Together to Prevent Extremism (2005) and its task group recommendations, whilst highlighting several areas of concern, have to some extent recognised the tremendous potential of Mosques as agents for community and social development.

3.3 Historical development of Mosques in Britain

3.3.1 The first purpose built Mosque in Northern Europe, the Shah Jahan Mosque, was built in 1889 in Woking. Since then Mosques

have developed in various locations across the UK, some purpose built but the majority being centres re-developed for use as a Mosque.

- 3.3.2** The East London Mosque dates back to 1910 when a number of distinguished Muslims decided to establish London's first mosque. Early contributors included the famous historian Syed Amir Ali and two of the most famous translators of the Holy Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall. Other early mosques were based in Liverpool and Cardiff. Wherever there was a Muslim community, a place of worship was established, some catering for small congregations while others for several thousand worshippers. Most Mosques were founded by dedicated pioneers who wanted to bring about comfort, stability, structure and development to their communities.
- 3.3.3** The services offered were primarily a communal prayer facility, but many developed further to incorporate social and community development features and facilities.
- 3.3.4** In England and Wales the Registrar General listed 584 Mosques for 1999 which were certified as places of worship. As at August 2005, the salaam.co.uk portal lists 1615 Mosques in their database of Mosques and faith centres in the UK.

3.4 The role of Mosques in Britain

- 3.4.1** Apart from the sociological interpretations on the meanings of the presence and spread of Mosques, literature on their practical role and the services is scant.
- 3.4.2** The typical services offered by Mosques, apart from prayer spaces, that contribute to the social needs of local communities include:
- Counselling and family support
 - Supplementary education
 - Youth diversionary projects / Holiday programmes.
- 3.4.3** Purpose built Mosques and those with community facilities are able to offer a greater range of services which in addition to the above include:
- Training and development
 - Adult language classes i.e. ESOL
 - Job, career and business development support

- Health projects
- Islam awareness events
- Community cohesion / Heritage projects (MERG 2003)

- 3.4.4** There is evidence to suggest that Muslims would prefer certain welfare services, such as family related matters, to be delivered in a familiar Mosque context rather than in an 'unfriendly government building' (Joly 1995; Lindo 1999 in Maussen 2005).
- 3.4.5** Mosques are thus indispensable service providers to a community battling with problems of poverty and inner city deprivation. They often double up as community cultural centres, hosting weddings, cultural events and even offering a forum for local communities to meet their local politicians - Councillors, MPs and MEPs (MCB 2005, Response to places of Worship Consultation 'Preventing Extremism together')

3.5 Access and involvement

- 3.5.1** Mosques are open to the public and non-Muslims are increasingly welcome on open days and events such as 'Islam Awareness Week'. There are several features that perhaps distinguish it from places of worship of other faiths: there are no reserved pews - any member of the congregation can pray standing in any row, irrespective of his or her socio-economic standing. There are no roll-calls or membership cards. Perhaps most uniquely, during the month of Ramadan, there is the practice of persons living in Mosques, spending their time in seclusion and prayer vigil for up to 10 days (MCB, 2005, Response to places of Worship Consultation 'Preventing Extremism together').
- 3.5.2** The following key themes emerge from the literature in relation to current Mosque access and involvement by young people and women:
- (a) "The devotional role of women in the Mosques, however, remains generally limited with some Mosques still not providing any prayer space or other dedicated facilities for women. The role of women participating in the running of or the decision-making process in Mosque committees is still also extremely limited at this time, or is ghettoised in the sole discussion of what are called 'women's issues' (FAIR 2002)

- (b) The MCB *Muslim Voices Project Report* (2005) recommended making Mosques and Islamic cultural centres more accessible and attractive to both young people and women. "...as well as to empower the youth by implementing youth committees within Mosques..." (MCB 2005)
- (c) "Some Mosques do not fulfil an adequate community role; they are seen to be prayer clubs for menVery few Mosques have arrangements or programmes for converts, particularly women". (Maqsood 2005)
- (d) The Mosque can be seen "to be an ideal place to meet other women and receive practical support or simply sound out their issues". (Women's Relief 2000).

3.5.3 As with other features of Mosques there seems to be variances in the levels of access by young people and women. Maussen (2005) recognises that some of the issues surrounding women's access to Mosques were to do with lack of space in small converted shops and other makeshift premises that were used as Mosques.

3.6 Finance and resource needs

- 3.6.1** Mosques are normally managed by a local, independent Mosque committee that takes responsibility for appointment of the Imam (see below) and other paid and volunteer staff. Mosque committees themselves are volunteers giving their time out of a sense of civic responsibility. Almost all Mosques are registered with the Charity Commission and are regulated accordingly under both charity and other national laws (MCB, 2005, *Response to places of Worship Consultation 'Preventing Extremism together'*).
- 3.6.2** Werbner (1991) shows that this self-sufficiency means that Mosques have usually been run fairly free from state intervention. Mosques are generally funded through the donations of the worshippers and philanthropists to cover their core cost centres. Many are attempting to diversify their funding through initiating projects that meet local priorities thus attracting funding from the public and charitable sectors. Some Mosques are going a step further by engaging in economic activity to generate income i.e. renting community space, investing in assets etc. (CEMVO 2002).
- 3.6.3** CEMVO (2002) indicated that Mosques often find it hard to draw down funds through

new and innovative means for fundraising, and these may be attributed to the systems, structures, people and processes involved. An important concern is that Mosques are not being recognised by the wider sector for their ability to deliver key services.

3.7 Role of the Imam

- 3.7.1** The title of 'Imam' has historically been attributed to men who led the prayer on a voluntary basis, to scholars of jurisprudence, and to appointed prayer leaders in Mosques. The use of the word in Britain usually refers to the appointed person in charge of leading the prayer in a Mosque. In Islam there are no fixed qualifications that an Imam must possess apart from knowing the obligatory legal rules of performing prayer and the correct recitation of the Quran. It is well known that when selecting an Imam, Muslims are obliged to select the most learned in the legal rules of worship amongst them. There is a considerable variance in the range of qualifications and experience to be found amongst Imams.
- 3.7.2** The role of the Imam in British Mosques has undergone sweeping changes in the past thirty years in response to the evolving socio-economic needs of the Muslim community: from their humble beginnings as volunteer Imams who simply lead the prayers for migrant labourers to the current day role of teacher, guide, scholar, social worker, counsellor, family mediator, chaplain and community leader amongst other things (FAIR 2002; Maussen 2005; Home Office 2005).

3.8 Position of Imams in UK

- 3.8.1** The following key points have been highlighted in the limited reports and articles regarding the current role and perception of Imams
 - (a) Imams are the religious leaders of the Muslim Community (Home office 2005).
 - (b) "Community leader, teacher, advisor to people of all ages, spiritual guide, counsellor, social worker, mediator in disputes - there is no end to the definition of tasks that fall under the role of the Imam. In addition to this they have to deal with the social consequences of the economic conditions of their communities;" (FAIR 2002)
 - (c) In need of coordination and unity (Home Office 2005).

- (d) Uneducated and alien to the western culture around them. Perceived lower social status compared to other professions such doctors, lawyers etc (Maqsood 2005).
 - (e) No longer main sole reference points for growing European young Muslims (Allevi and Brunessen 2004).
 - (f) Unable to adequately meet the needs of the growing demands with respect to a range of skills and knowledge of British society.
 - (g) Mainly 'imported' with a conservative understanding of their role with main focus on leading prayer and Friday sermons. Need further training and upskilling.
 - (h) Potential for motivating, guiding, educating and involving Muslim communities (Home Office 2005).
- 3.8.2 A further development in the role of Imams relate to unmet needs of Muslims in criminal justice, education and health care settings (July 1995).
- 3.8.3 With a disproportionately large number of Muslim inmates in HM Prisons, it is recognised by the Government that targeted help, support and re-integration is required and as such the Home Office appointed a Muslim Advisor to the Prisons Service, (The Common Good, Dec 1999). Imams from various Mosques had previously undertaken the duty upon themselves to visit and help rehabilitate Muslim prisoners; very few Imams were actually paid to perform this function. Several Muslim charities operate a prisoner support service providing religious counselling and Imams. There are also now an increasing number of paid Muslim chaplains being recruited and employed by Prison Service.
- 3.8.4 MCB has been involved in a consultation established by the Department of Trade & Industry to standardise terms of employment of Imams.
- 3.8.5 Another related development is the spiritual care needs within the National Health Service. Hospital patients and staff of non-Christian religions have limited access to religious and spiritual care. A study by Professor Aziz Sheikh, Professor of Primary Care Research and Development at the University of Edinburgh "*show comparative disadvantage to non-Christians in relation to access to space for worship, chaplaincy*

staff and quality of chaplaincy care."

(British Medical Journal 2004). The NHS has now commissioned a post to the Muslim Council of Britain to further develop this area of need.

- 3.8.6 In summary the emerging picture of Imams is one of a varied group of personnel who are struggling to meet the demands of their ever changing roles which they are expected to discharge within limited resources and often insufficient training. It is obviously a challenging order to meet these multifaceted demands and hence the suitability and credentials of current Imams have been brought to into question. Post 7/7, Imams are further under pressure due to the potential influence they could have in relation to young British Muslims.

3.9 Council of Imams / training and education for Imams

- 3.9.1 Currently a proportion of Imams are recruited from overseas with religious qualifications from their country of ethnic origin or other Muslim countries. As far back as the early 1990s policy makers in France and the Netherlands supported the creation of domestic training centres to address perceived cultural and linguistic shortcomings of existing Imams as well as to combat potential radical clerics (Maussen 2005).
- 3.9.2 There has been a growing political urgency in several Western European countries to institutionalise and create facilities for Imam training.
- 3.9.3 With the formation of the Conseil Francais du Culte Musulman (CFCM) earlier this year the French government aims to create a uniform training system for Imams. This state-sponsored institutionalisation of Islam offers more traditional organisations the opportunity to appropriate French Islam, possibly at the expense of alternative structures that have emerged in the French Muslim community over the last few decades.(Peter 2003)
- 3.9.4 There is also a growing assumption here in Britain that 'home grown' British Imams would do a better job of responding to the modern demands of the position of Imam whilst being at ease with the cultural context of Britain. However in the context of the war on terror climate, others are sceptical of such apparent well to do intentions.
- 3.9.5 There is a feeling that not enough Imams are being developed from Britain and the

existing training is inadequate or has serious shortcomings. The *Home Office Preventing Extremism Together Working Group* report (2005) proposed a number of recommendations. The ones relevant for Imams were as follows:

- (a) "A new national advisory body/council of Mosques and Imams. This Body would be inclusive and representative of the many traditions practiced in the UK, independent and lead by the institutions it serves."
- (b) "The establishment of a continuous professional development programmes for the upskilling of current Imams and Mosque officials in the UK. Theological training to be provided only by specialist Muslim seminaries, Islamic scholars skilled in training Imams in the UK and elsewhere for those seeking to pursue further development."

- 3.9.6** In terms of existing training, most potential British Imams are likely to come from one of the *Darul Ulooms* (Muslim seminaries). However the employment prospects for these graduates needs consideration:

"It is worth noting that a generation of Imams is beginning to emerge who are born and bred and receive their training within the UK. There are currently 22 educational institutes in the UK which provide training in Arabic and Islamic sciences to between 3,000-3,500 students, a significant minority of whom are women. There are an estimated 225 graduates who are produced each year that are qualified to take up Imamate positions (some of whom, being foreign students, will choose to return home to serve their communities there). However, many are not able to take up Imamate positions in Mosques because they are usually already filled by older members of the community or by Imams from abroad. Many go on to take up positions as chaplains in hospitals, prisons or other public institutions instead or seek employment elsewhere" (FAIR 2002)

- 3.9.7** There is some criticism of the existing traditional *Darul Ulooms* related to their inability to provide a comprehensive curriculum that prepares Imams for British society. A further development is the emerging number of Islamic colleges in the UK that provide training for potential Imams. Chaplaincy courses are increasing as the demand for Muslim chaplains increase in hospitals, prisons and to some extent the Army. There are currently two institutes formally providing chaplaincy

courses, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester and the Muslim College in London.

3.10 The Muslim Council of Britain

- 3.10.1** The MCB currently represents over 400 national and regional bodies, local Mosques, community and voluntary organisations and is the largest representative body for Muslims in Britain. Many of the national bodies such as the UK Islamic Mission and the Jamiat Ulema are themselves parent bodies with membership comprising dozens of local Mosques and Islamic centres.

- 3.10.2** The MCB's Masjid and Community Affairs committee provides the forum through which Mosque-related policies and issues are raised and discussed.

3.11 Mosques and anti- terrorism legislation

- 3.11.1** Mosques are being misidentified and stereotyped as incubators of violent extremism, while the social reality is that they serve as centres of moderation; the 7/7 bombers were indoctrinated by a sub-culture outside the Mosque. The notion of influential 'back-door' Mosques is a figment of the imagination (MCB, 2005, Response to places of Worship Consultation 'Preventing Extremism Together').

- 3.11.2** The oft-cited case of the Finsbury Park Mosque in Finsbury Park is very much an exception. As has emerged in the recent trial of Abu Hamza, the Mosque's trustees had pressed the Charity Commissioners and the Police to intervene but action became protracted over several years - not for want of trying on the part of the community.

- 3.11.3** In summary, whilst there is a growing body of research and investigation regarding the role of Mosques and imams, the material relating to Britain is limited. The literature that has been developed over the years has been, according to Maussen (2005), influenced by the socio-economic conditions and international relations prevalent at the time and the biases of the researchers themselves who were mainly outsiders looking in. The need remains for empirical studies that reach out to the grass roots and seek out data from which to crystallise theories and policies.

Methodology

- 4.1 A mixed design approach was used in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 90 Imams and Management Committee members participated in the study. A total of 28 individual questionnaires were completed by respondents (see Table 1 on page 21 for details)
- 4.2 A total of 62 Imams and Mosque Management Committee members participated in three focus groups. These were held in London, Leicester and Blackburn. Imams and Management Committee members were invited through national and regional networks such as council of Mosques as well as individual contacts. Aims and objectives of the research were distributed to participants beforehand. Focus groups were semi structured. An outline of questions was used to explore issues.

5 Respondent findings

Of the 28 individual interviews carried out, 14 were with Imams and 14 were with trustees or Management Committee members.

5.1 Ethnicity

The majority of the respondents (46%) were of Pakistani origin. This constituted 50% of Imams and 43% of Management Committee members (MC). Indians were the second largest ethnic group which was 21% of Imams and 36% of MC. 14% of those interviewed (21% of Imams and 7% MC) said that their ethnic origin was Bangladeshi. Arabs constituted 4% of the Imams. See Table 2 on page 21.

5.2 Current Nationality

The current nationality of the overwhelming majority (64%) of Imams and MC was British. 18% were Pakistani. See Table 3 on page 21.

5.3 Languages spoken

All of the Imams and 93 % of MC members stated that they spoke English. Urdu was the next highest spoken by a combined percentage of 71%. Arabic was spoken by 93% of the Imams and 7% of MC members. See Table 4 on page 22.

5.4 Age

Half of the Imams were aged between 18 to 40 years of age with 14% being under 30 years of age. The age of those running

Mosques in various capacities as MC members are generally higher than those of Imams. By far the largest number (43%) of Mosques MCs were aged 61 years and over. 14% were 40 and below. Only 7% of MC's were under the age of 30. See Table 5 on page 22.

5.5 Length of time since arrival in the UK

Just over half (58%) of Imams had been in the UK between 1 - 10 years with 14% having been in the UK for 26 years or more. 86% of Imams were born outside the UK. 14% of Imams and 14% of MC members were born in the UK. One major difference between Imams and the MC members is that the overwhelming majority (71%) of MC members have been in the UK for 26 years or more. 86% of MC members were born outside the UK. See Table 6 on page 22.

5.6 Imams Qualification

29% of Imams held a Degree, 36% held a UK Masters Degree and 14 % held a PhD. 14% of MC members had obtained UK based qualifications. See Table 7 on page 22.

5.7 Imams training and accreditation

64% of Imams and 50% of MC members said that all Imams should be trained in the UK. The majority of Imams (86%) and MC members (79%) said that all Imams should speak English. 79% of all respondents stated a need for an accreditation body for Imams. However, on the question of who the accreditation body should consist of, there were differences. 57% of Imams felt that a new body should be created to undertake this accreditation where as 57% of MC members stated that an existing body should undertake the accreditation. A combined 43% preferred this to be undertaken by an existing Muslim organisation. Only 7% of respondents questioned stated that the Government should be the accreditation body See Table 8 on page 23.

5.8 Legal Status of Mosques

The majority (78%) of the Mosques were registered charities. See Table 9 on page 23.

5.9 Type of Mosque

96% of Mosques provided daily prayers and Jumua with only 4% providing daily prayers only. See Table 10 on page 23.

5.10 Mosque services and facilities

Prayer facilities for women were available in over half of the Mosques questioned (57%). Most Mosques provided more than just facilities for prayers. 54% of Mosques stated that they had some kind of youth facility, whilst an equal number said they had a community hall. Libraries were available in 54% Mosques, whilst 32% claimed they had general space for women. 43% of the Mosques reported to have IT facilities. See Table 11 on page 24.

5.11 Finance

All of the Mosques stated that their core finance was derived from public donations with 18% also stating that they had other income generation schemes. 11% of core funds of those questioned came from local government. See Table 12 on page 24. Means of financing projects and other services was again primarily from public donations (61%), followed by fees and subscriptions (14%) with 11% receiving local authority grants for such services. In London GLA/LDA funding was accessed by 7% of Mosques whilst 4% had accessed European Funding. See Table 13 on page 24.

5.12 Mosque services

Besides daily, Friday and Eid prayers which was provided by all of those interviewed, most Mosques also provided other services to adults in the community. Among them, Islamic Education was provided by 89%. Advice and counselling by Imams/Professionals was available in 79% of the Mosques as was Marriage-Nikah ceremonies (75%). Services for women were made available by 43% of Mosques. See Table 14 page 25.

As regards service for Children, 93% of Mosques provided Evening/Weekend Quranic Reading classes. Evening/Weekend Hifz (Memorisation) classes were available in 75% of Mosques. Full-time Madrasa / Islamic School (without National Curriculum) and Full-time Madrasa / Islamic School (including National Curriculum) were provided by 25% and 21% of Mosques respectively. 32% of Mosques provided youth activities.

Mosques open days was provided by 68% with 64% also providing school visits. Chaplaincy services to other institutes were made available by 39% with 36% also providing Islam Awareness Training. See Table 15 on page 26.

5.13 Friday Khutba (sermon) Language

61% of Mosques provided a pre Jumuah Khutba in English. However the actual Khutba was still predominantly only in Arabic with three quarters of the Mosques, whereas only 14% stated they delivered it in English. See Table 16 on page 26. Islamic Lectures on the other hand was provided in English by 75% of the Mosques.

5.14 Resource needs

All of the Imams and MC members stated Finance and Grants to be the main resource need to improve services and facilities. Nearly half of the MC members said that they required planning application support. Whilst half of the Imam said more staff was required. See Table 17 on page 27.

5.15 Personal training needs of Imams

Despite all of the Imams stating that they can speak English 36% stated that they wanted English language classes. This figure increased to 43% of the MC. 64% of Imams - the highest number- said they required Health & Safety Law training. A combined percentage of 43% said further Management training was required. See Table 18 on page 27.

Focus Group Findings / Analysis

6 Focus Group Findings

A summary of the findings from the focus groups can be found in Appendix 2 - to this report.

7 Analysis

7.1 Role of the Mosque

- 7.1.1 In line with the broader theoretical and historical role of Mosques as well as the limited existing literature, many British Mosques are clearly providing much more than prayer spaces. They provide a wide range of social welfare and educational services.
- 7.1.2 One of the most common services that almost all Mosques (93%) provide is evening and weekend Quranic reading classes. It has been the tradition of most Muslim families in the UK to send their children between the ages of 6 to 14 years to learn how to read the Quran in Arabic and to learn the basic tenets of Islam. These classes are usually run Monday to Friday every evening for 2 hours and are entirely self-financed from individual pupil subscription fees. Imams in most Mosques are usually expected to teach in these classes as part of their role as Imam. The provision of Quranic classes for children is one of the most prominent secondary roles of Mosques in the UK.
- 7.1.3 A number of respondents highlighted and reinforced the fact that Mosques were more like community centres, acting as essential focal hubs for a wide range of community needs. For example 75% of Mosques provided Islamic education, marriage services, and advice and counselling. Just under half of Mosques (43%) provided specific services for women and social activities. Others provided ESOL classes, mother tongue classes, IT training, health advice and sports / recreational activities. It is clear that many Mosques are also acting as community social / welfare centres as well as spaces for the normal ritual prayers. This concurs with existing literature (McLoughlin 2003; Joly 1995, Maussen 2005)
- 7.1.4 Whilst commendable, this may highlight wider underlying problems relating to Muslim access, engagement and take up of existing mainstream social welfare, health and education services. Many first generation Muslims were using converted

houses as Mosques as well as meeting places to discuss and solve social welfare problems in the absence of relevant support and alienation (McLoughlin 2003). There is continuing evidence that sections of the Muslim community, particularly the first generation, find it difficult to access mainstream services that are culturally incompetent or insensitive (Joly 1995). This may be because of inaccessible physical location, gender issues, language and dietary needs or trust, privacy and confidentiality issues.

- 7.1.5 Several Mosques have developed partnerships between local authorities to provide resources and support to tackle social, educational and health exclusion (East London Mosque / London Muslim Centre, Muslim Welfare House and Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre).
- 7.1.6 In terms of Mosques interaction with the wider society, there seems to be a wide range of activities being undertaken. Around two thirds of Mosques held open days and also arranged visits to the Mosque for local schools. Just over a third (36%) provided Islam awareness training. International events and subsequent media treatment of Muslims may have encouraged and accelerated the opening up of Mosques to such activities in order to redress the negative public image of Islam and Muslims. This is another important role that larger Mosques could potentially play in fostering mutual understanding and promoting community cohesion between people of different faiths as well as increasing understanding of Islam to the British public.

7.2 Access and improvement

- 7.2.1 Contrary to reports from existing literature and public perception, both women and young people are involved in Mosques. However the extent of such involvement varies. In general most respondents reported that young people are accessing Mosques more than women. More Mosques reported having specific youth facilities (54%) than general women's facilities (32%), although half (57%) reported having separate prayer facilities for women. Many cited that young people were only accessing the educational facilities such as the evening Quran classes' between the age of 11-15 and thereafter not really continuing their use or involvement in Mosques.

Role of Imams

7.2.2 There are four possible interwoven explanations for women using the Mosque less compared to young people or other groups of users. Firstly Islamic law does not stipulate attending congregational prayers as obligatory for women; however it is a communal obligation for men. Secondly, ethnic-cultural norms amongst different Muslim communities' further influence and in some cases distort the Islamic acceptability of women using Mosques. Thirdly many of these Mosques were built by the first generation of Muslim men who immigrated to the UK, mainly without their families. Therefore women's needs and their required spaces were not always designed into the architecture of Mosques. Fourthly many Mosques cite the genuine lack of finance and resources to create space to accommodate separate facilities for women.

7.2.3 Young people are accessing Mosques in terms of using services such as the evening or weekend Quranic reading schools as well as other activities including regular prayers. However it seems that young people are less involved in a management capacity, this was reflected in the small percentage of MC members below the age of 30 years (7%). A number of factors may explain this.

7.2.4 Management committees are often seen as elder men's clubs (Maqsood 2005) and therefore have an image problem with young people who in turn stay away from getting involved. On the other hand most Mosques are established by the elders of local communities and therefore are also maintained by them. Young people are not often seen as mature, responsible and trustworthy enough to become trustees or management committee members. There are also cultural norms that prioritise elders over youth when it comes to management.

7.2.5 There is an assumption that young people might want to be involved in the running of Mosques, however many young people may feel alienated from Mosque management committees due to a generation and culture gap.

7.2.6 Notwithstanding these issues it seems that there is a desire from young people to be involved in having a greater contribution to the way Mosques are run. The MCB Muslim Project Voices Report (2005) suggested that young people would like to form youth committees and be much more involved in management as well as to make Mosques much more appealing to youth.

7.2.7 For the reasons cited above, women were also not involved directly on any management committees; however focus group respondents reported instances of women acting in advisory capacities to the management committee with regards to women services and facilities. This concurs with earlier reports such as FAIR (2002).

"We have so many difficulties getting planning permission when we consider options for expansion that will allow the building to be used by everyone including women. Overall women should be encouraged and involved in the Mosque."
(Imam)

7.3 Role of Imams

7.3.1 Demographics

Most Imams were born outside the UK and two thirds had been in the UK for less than 10 years. Contrary to what Maqsood (2005) noted and common perception, Imams in this sample seemed to be very well educated in terms of British qualifications. Furthermore all Imams interviewed reported the ability to speak English. This may be more of a reflection of a slightly younger sample group of Imams. It should be noted that though Imams stated that they can speak English, many of them still specified a need to improve on this. Half the Imams were aged 40 or below.

7.3.2 Role

- (a) It is clear that the role of most Imams goes beyond leading the daily prayer congregation. They were perceived by respondents as being leaders, guides and scholars and informal reference points for community members for a wide range of personal and social problems. They are sought for advice, guidance and counselling on a wide range of issues ranging from parenting, substance misuse, marital relationships, birth and divorce. This agrees with existing literature (FAIR (2002)).
- (b) Just over half of respondents (57%) said all Imams should be educated and trained in Britain. Further analysis reveals a higher number of Imams agreed with this compared to MC members. Focus group respondents echoed similar views with the additional theme of the shortage of British Imams due to lack of young people choosing

Mosque resource needs

this as a career option. Apart from the historical necessity, one of the major reasons why Imams are usually imported is due to budget restrictions of Mosques. Imams from abroad are usually willing to accept a much lower salary compared to potential Imams who have been educated in the UK, and therefore are much more affordable. The issue of poor pay levels of Imams was highlighted by some respondents. This may explain why less MC members thought that Imams should be educated and trained here in the UK. This may be a significant factor affecting any plans or policies to encourage the increase of British born or educated Imams.

7.3.3 Training and accreditation / National Council

- (a) There was a general agreement that the affairs of Imams in the UK needs to be better organised and coordinated. However this is not equal to a consensus on the need for a national council of Imams.
- (b) The issue of a national council of Imams was seen as unclear with many questions yet to be answered. There was scepticism about the intentions of the Government who wished to see a national council for Imams that would influence, control and regulate the training and accreditation of Imams. Examples were cited where this was done in Muslim countries resulting in the total state control of Imams, Mosques and all public speeches. Fears were expressed about the dangers of a Government approved group of scholars and thinkers that would be presented to the Muslim community as leading religious authorities. These concerns are in agreement to questions raised regarding the situation in France where Imams are much more directly regulated by the government.
- (c) In general respondents, whilst agreeing on the need for better support and coordination of Imams and Mosques were cautious about rushed proposals for a national council of Imams. There were suggestions that perhaps the approach to creating a national body should take a bottom up approach using existing local and regional council of Mosques infrastructures.
- (d) According to respondents, further discussions and clarifications of purpose, funding, role and powers needed to take place. An overwhelming

majority felt that if a national council of Imams or accreditation body was to be set up it would have to be independent of Government control, influence and finance.

- (e) The concerns and issues raised probably reflect the historical scepticism, mistrust and the criticism of Government interference prevalent amongst religious authorities. Traditionally Imams or scholars who were courted by kings, rulers or government authorities were perceived as susceptible to corruption and manipulation. It also reflects the perception of the 'War on Terror' being a precept for a 'War on Islam' and therefore efforts to 'coordinate Mosques or Imams' are seen as attempts to control and influence rather than to support and develop.
- (f) There was some support for MCB as an independent body to be leading or facilitating the process of creating a national council of Imams.

7.4 Mosque resource needs

7.4.1 All Mosques were unsurprisingly funded by public donations. The bulk of this comes from weekly collections made at Friday prayers. Only 11% of Mosques said they accessed local authority funding for core and non-core services. This figure may be even less considering that local authorities do not actually fund Mosques for core activity. Therefore the fact that all Imams and MC members stated finance as their primary resource need is understandable. Whilst this is not entirely surprising it may be of concern that in spite of Mosques running many social welfare and educational services that are legitimately fundable by charities and public authorities the situation has changed very little since Werbner (1991) commented on the finance of Mosques in Britain.

7.4.2 There are a range of factors contributing to this. Many Mosques cannot afford to employ the services of a fundraiser. Existing staff may not have the knowledge and support to identify and submit quality funding applications. Some respondents felt that funding bodies had a blanket attitude of not funding religious institutes or activities. Others felt that authorities did not acknowledge or appreciate the free services that Mosques were offering. *"Tapping into funding is a huge problem because most funders say they don't fund religious centres such as Mosques"* (MC Member)

Achievements and performance

- 7.4.3 However, some larger well known London based Mosques such as the East London Mosque, Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre and Muslim Welfare House have managed to attract capital and revenue grants from regional and local authorities for a variety of services.
- 7.4.4 Difficulties around planning applications were another constant theme throughout the study. Nearly half of the MC members said that they required planning application support. This was reinforced in the focus groups. Many Mosques started out as converted commercial premise such as shops and warehouses or residential premises and therefore planning applications have been a necessary part of most Mosques developmental history. Others need planning applications for building extensions. In both cases many Mosques would lack the personnel and the finance to successfully deal with local authority planning application processes.
- 7.4.5 A lack of adequate numbers of staff was also highlighted as a resource need. 46% of questionnaire respondents said their Mosque needed extra staff. Group respondents highlighted the fact that Imams were poorly paid but serving the community almost on a twenty-four hour basis. The poor levels of pay are linked to both Mosque financial restrictions as well as the availability of foreign Imams who are willing to work for less remuneration. A religious and moral duty to serve the community for reward in the hereafter may also keep many Imams from claiming higher salaries.

7.5 Capacity building

64% of Imams and MC members wanted professional training. Focus group respondents talked of the need for capacity building and targeted professional consultancy to help build Mosque infrastructures that would support fundraising and organisational development. Some reported difficulty in accessing existing capacity development programmes, as they are unaware of the cultural competencies required to practically help and develop Mosques.

7.6 The Muslim Council of Britain

Half of the Mosques interviewed were affiliated to the MCB. However over quarter of the Mosques were non affiliates with the remaining not responding.

7.7 Achievements and performance

- 7.7.1 MCB's role as a representative umbrella body for British Muslims was positively acknowledged by most respondents and focus group attendees. In particular, the role MCB plays in representing the views of British Muslims with various governmental departments were thought to be well organised and much needed. Historically, Muslim participation in seeking to influence policy and effective engagement with wider society was negligible or lacked coordination at best. Respondents pointed out that since the arrival of the MCB, marked improvements have been made, the voice of the Muslim community, its needs and aspiration have found resonance with the government.
- 7.7.2 The BBC Panorama programme 'A question of Leadership' which alleged MCB had links with radical elements rather than distance Muslims has had the reverse affect. The programme actually galvanised support for the MCB from previously critical sections within the Muslim community.
- 7.7.3 There were a number of reasons which were attributed to the successes of the MCB to date. Firstly, the MCB despite its claim not to be the sole representative of the Muslims in the UK, in fact is the only broad based representative body as no other body of its kind exists. Secondly, the MCB through its national affiliates, many of whom were large Muslim organisations and institutions, carried with it a legitimate mandate from British Muslims. Finally, the MCB was cited as having recognition from the Government which was seen as a key factor to achieving the outcomes of the British Muslim community to date.
- 7.7.4 MCB website was thought to be very informative and well presented.
- "The MCB is doing an incredible job considering it is on a voluntary basis. It's great." (Imam)*
- 7.7.5 Recognising the positive impact thus far made by MCB in its dealing with the Government, respondents urged caution in that the MCB should be careful to maintain its independence. There existed real fears as regards the growing perception of the MCB being too close to the Government. Respondents also highlighted that MCB's achievements in the political arena should be equally matched in fields such as education and sharing of best practice among Muslim institutions.

The MCB's service provision gaps

7.8 The MCB's service provision gaps

- 7.8.1 Respondents whilst accepting the leadership provided by the MCB acknowledged that sections of the community remained disconnected from the work of the MCB. Sections at the grassroots seemed to lack ownership of the work carried out by the MCB or were unable to make a connection between themselves and the MCB. There was no evidence which could be pointed out to support this but a general perception held by respondents.
- 7.8.2 A major factor which may explain the disengagement of some sections of the Muslim community with the MCB is due to a blockage in communication, which was also highlighted by respondents.
- 7.8.3 The strength of the MCB, its channel of communication and the links to the wider Muslim community is via the groups, organisations and institutions affiliated to the MCB. Therefore, there is a two tier communication stage - MCB to its Affiliates, the Affiliates to the Community. The blockage was attributed to both tiers. Some affiliates suggested that the cycle of communication between them and the MCB was very slow, whilst others suggested that trickling down of information from the affiliates to the general public was ad-hoc at best.

7.9 Council of Imams

- 7.9.1 Overall 43% of respondents felt that, in the event of accreditation being provided for Imams, an existing Muslim organisation should be providing it. Some focus group respondents mentioned organisations such as the MCB should be leading the discussion and facilitating consultation on this issue.
- 7.9.2 This suggests that any accreditation of Imams would have to be carried out by an independent Muslim organisation either existing or new.

7.10 Media

- 7.10.1 Muslims are receiving unprecedented media coverage since 9/11 and more recently since 7/7 in the UK. However, this coverage on the whole was predominantly perceived to be negative. All of the respondents reported that sections within the media are pursuing an anti-Muslim and openly Islamophobic agenda focusing on and highlighting issues and individuals of a controversial nature whilst bypassing mainstream Muslims.

7.10.2 Media outlets have selected a number of 'attention seeking' Muslim individuals who are at odds with majority of British Muslims but nevertheless still receive overwhelmingly more coverage. The primary reason for highlighting these individuals the respondents believed was for the reinforcement of stereotypes which in the first place were concocted by the media.

7.10.3 Mainstream Imams, organisations and institutions receive very little media coverage. The coverage they do receive is often on the back of issues where they are on the defensive having to invalidate statements or actions of a few on the fringes.

7.10.4 The respondents were also alarmed at the language used by sections of media which was more and more divisive portraying an 'us and them' scenario which helps to perpetuate Muslims as the 'other within.'

7.10.5 Fears existed that such biased reporting by the media is alienating young British Muslims making them more susceptible to unscrupulous individuals on the fringes.

"The media creates terrorists by glamorising it, but when it comes to good things they don't want to air it." (Imam)
"The media ignores the real Imams and focuses on people who have no followings or credentials. i.e. Abu Hamza is not even educated to the level to become an Imam yet his outside prayers are aired all over the place." (Imam)

7.10.6 Overall the Imams and management committee members view the media as extremely negative when it comes to broad and balanced reporting regarding Imams, Mosques and the Muslim community. Whilst they acknowledge that one or two individuals have played into the hands of the media they nevertheless put the blame on media intentions. This may have serious consequences for a number of related issues. Mosques may be viewed as backward, closed and potential breeding grounds for terrorism by the public. Therefore any efforts to dispel this image will be ineffective without media support.

7.11 Anti- terror laws

7.11.1 Recently the government introduced a raft of Anti Terrorism legislation and after the 7 July bomb attacks in London it proposed to hold suspects up to 90 days without charge (since defeated in parliament and revised to 28 days) and a clause on Glorifying

Islamophobia

Terrorism which the House of Lords agreed to after initially rejecting.

7.11.2 Given the widespread discussion and debate, respondents overall had very little or no knowledge about existing or the new proposed laws.

7.11.3 Those who were aware cited these laws to be targeted at the Muslim community due to the un-Islamic activities of one of two individuals living in the UK. Whilst acknowledging the need to protect the country from a repeat of July 7 bombings, respondents feared that these laws and the disproportionate way in which they are applied would only further alienate young British Muslims.

7.11.4 There were real anxieties expressed in particularly by the Council of Mosques at the government's apparent lack of consultation on the new proposals, whilst others expressed a desire to understand better the process by which their views could be heard.

7.12 Islamophobia

7.12.1 All of the Mosques who took part in this study reported suffering Islamophobic calls, threats, or vandalism before 7/7. Despite being located in predominantly Muslim areas, and having increased police presence Mosques in London, Midlands and the North suffered firebombs, vandalism, and bomb threats directly following 7/7.

7.12.2 Many of the respondents reported that their congregation members had also suffered verbal abuse and threats on their way to and from Mosques following 7/7. The vast majority of these incidents went unreported.

7.12.3 It was also clear from the focus group discussions that larger and more organised Mosques did tend to report Islamophobic incidents whilst many of the smaller Mosques did not. The main reason cited for this was smaller Mosques had less resources and felt that it was inevitable as they had suffered such incidents prior to 7/7.

Conclusions and Recommendations

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Whilst there seems to be a growing body of literature in Europe regarding Mosques and Imams, there is generally a lack of published literature regarding Imams and Mosques in Britain.

8.1 Role of the Mosque

- 8.1.1 Mosques are clearly providing a diverse range of social welfare and educational services to the Muslim community. They are essential community focal points through which many excluded members of society access a range of services.
- 8.1.2 The emerging service provisions being developed around Mosques, whilst commendable, may highlight the shortcomings of existing mainstream services that may be failing to engage and reach sections of the Muslim community. Policymakers and relevant central and local Government departments need to monitor the uptake of mainstream services by the Muslim community.
- 8.1.3 Evening and weekend Quran classes are amongst the most common services provided to children. A huge opportunity exists to standardise this service through development of a national curriculum, providing training to teachers and producing basic related guidelines. It is also an opportunity to reinforce positive messages of community cohesion, respect for other faiths, health promotion and related aspects by inclusion in the curriculum.
- 8.1.4 An increasing number of Mosques hold open days and provide basic Islam awareness training. Open days and basic Islam awareness training should be promoted on a wider scale through community networks and the media to encourage greater participation and to combat negative stereo types of Mosques and Imams being closed to the rest of society.

8.2 Access and Involvement

- 8.2.1 Over half the Mosques provided specific youth facilities. It seems that young people are accessing Mosques up to the age of 15 or 16 for a range of educational and after school services. However after that age involvement seems to reduce.
- 8.2.2 Young people's involvement in the management structures of Mosques remains minimal. Mosques should do more

to combat some of the negative stereotypes of management committees and encourage young people to bring their skills and capabilities to contribute and capacity build management committees.

- 8.2.3 A third of Mosques provided specific facilities for women and over half had prayer facilities for women. There still remain a large number of Mosques who do not have facilities for women due to resource and space limitations, or cultural understanding of Islam and the role of women. Education and awareness needs to increase amongst Mosque committees and Imams on the necessity of providing space and facilities for women. Women's requirements needs to be planned into design of future newly built Mosques and extension plans as well as increasing ways for women to participate in decision making committees.

8.3 Mosques Resource Needs

A large number of Mosques are clearly providing community services and facilities that fall within the funding remit of central and local government as well as charitable and private trusts. At present, it seems that the majority of Mosques do not have the capacities to access these funds. Funding agencies and charitable trusts should work closer with bodies such as the MCB and networks of councils of Mosques to create adequate communications strategy in order to raise awareness and knowledge on how to access these funds and resources.

8.4 Role of Imams

- 8.4.1 Imams are in general struggling to meet a wide range of demands from their communities. Apart from leading the prayers they are dealing with complex issues including personal and family problems, addiction, domestic violence, marital issues, and community conflicts.
- 8.4.2 The curriculum of existing traditional British seminaries / Darul Uloom where Imams are trained need to include basic information and training to equip Imams to be able to effectively deal with the wide range of demands.
- 8.4.3 Resources such as basic local services directories need to be available to Imams who can then refer people to appropriate services. Mainstream services should also include Imams and Mosques in their communications and promotion plans in order to effectively promote their services to all sections of the community.

8.4.4 Just over half of respondents agreed that all Imams should be educated and trained in Britain. A complex set of factors such as poor salary levels, Mosques financial constraints, and attitudes of some management committees and limited career options hamper the recruitment of British trained Imams.

8.4.5 There is a general agreement that the affairs of Imams need to be better coordinated in the UK. However, there are suspicions and scepticism regarding the intentions of the government wanting to initiate this body. Fears were expressed about attempts to control the freedom of Imams and Mosques linked with the current political climate. Any proposed council of Imams should be developed from grassroots by the Imams and existing network of Mosques such as councils of Mosques. The body should be independent of the government with clear roles and remit. In addition as with other professional bodies, a Council of Imam and Mosques should also be democratic, self-regulated and self-financed. Its membership should be regulated only by its own voluntary code of conduct and best practice guide. There was some support for the MCB to initiate and lead on the development of this body.

8.5 The Muslim Council of Britain

8.5.1 Whilst recognising that the MCB cannot claim to represent all British Muslims, a community engagement strategy needs to be developed in order to address and tackle the reappearing argument of grassroots support and representation. This strategy should set clear SMART targets on ways to engage the Muslim community throughout the UK on key directions and work of the MCB. A communications strategy should be developed which will spell out internal and external communications targets. Particular attention should be placed on internal communication with affiliates. The MCB should create an 'Affiliates Pack' which should be sent to all known Muslim bodies who are not affiliated. The 'Affiliates Pack' should include literature on:

- (a) the work of the MCB
- (b) roles affiliates can play
- (c) FAQ; and
- (d) Membership Form

8.5.2 The MCB through its affiliates should hold more yearly seminars/programmes on key issue faced by British Muslims targeted at the Muslim community in general. The programmes should be organised nationwide and can form part of an annual 'MCB Community Engagement Week'.

8.5.3 Although 50% of those questioned for this report stated that they were not affiliated to the MCB, they did however share the same goals and recognised the MCB's umbrella status. A vigorous campaign could be initiated to encourage these and other institutions and Mosques to become affiliates.

8.6 Media

8.6.1 Mosque Imams and MC members should be provided with media awareness training to enable them to better understand the working of the media machine and ways to access the media for positive promotion of mainstream Islam and Muslims.

8.6.2 Media resource packs should be created for Mosques to use and refer to for guidance.

8.6.3 The positive role and contribution of Imams and Mosques in Britain should be documented and disseminated to a range of media stakeholders in order to educate and raise awareness.

8.7 Anti- terror

8.7.1 Imams and MCs should be given training on:

- (a) Existing and proposed laws and their impact
- (b) The process of Government legislation

8.7.2 MCB should issue briefing papers during the consultation period of any future government legislation proposals to its affiliates

8.7.3 The Government needs to do more to communicate / consult with the various sections of the Muslim community and in particular Mosques and Imams regarding relevant proposed legislation.

8.8 Further Research

It is clear that there is an absence of research literature on this area. This initial research has highlighted some aspects of the current situation of Imams and Mosques. Further research is needed to better document and understand the changing roles and needs of this dynamic and growing section of British society in order to inform both policymakers and the community.

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Appendix 1 Respondent findings

Appendix 1 - Respondent findings

Table 1 Number and type of respondents (Focus group and questionnaires)

| | Imams | MC Member | Total |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Focus Group 1 London | | | 28 |
| Focus Group 2 Leicester | | | 21 |
| Focus Group 3 Lancashire | | | 13 |
| Individual Questionnaires | 14 | 14 | 28 |
| Total | | | 90 |

Table 2 Ethnic origin

| Ethnic Origin | Imams | MC Member | Combined |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| Pakistani | 50% | 43% | 46% |
| Bangladeshi | 21% | 7% | 14% |
| Indian | 21% | 36% | 29% |
| Somali | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| White British | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| White European | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Turkish | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| Black – African | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Arab | 7% | 0% | 4% |
| Other | 0% | 0% | 0% |

Table 3 Current nationality

| Current Nationality | Imams | MC | Combined |
|---------------------|-------|-----|----------|
| Pakistani | 21% | 14% | 18% |
| Bangladeshi | 7% | 0% | 4% |
| Indian | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| Somali | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| British | 64% | 64% | 64% |
| Turkish | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| Egyptian | 7% | 0% | 4% |

Table 4 Language spoken

| Languages Spoken | Imams | MC | Combined |
|------------------|-------|-----|----------|
| Urdu | 86% | 57% | 71% |
| Bengali | 29% | 7% | 18% |
| Hindi | 29% | 7% | 18% |
| Gujarati | 14% | 29% | 21% |
| Arabic | 93% | 7% | 50% |
| English | 100% | 93% | 96% |
| Turkish | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| Somali | 0% | 7% | 4% |
| Other | 21% | 14% | 18% |

Table 5 Age

| Age | Imams | MC | Combined |
|-------------|-------|-----|----------|
| 18-30 Years | 14% | 7% | 11% |
| 31-40 Years | 36% | 14% | 25% |
| 41-50 Year | 14% | 21% | 18% |
| 51-60 Years | 29% | 14% | 21% |
| 61 Years + | 7% | 43% | 25% |

Table 6 Length of time since arrival in the UK

| Length of Time since Arrival in UK | Imams | MC | Combined |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----|----------|
| 1-4 Years | 29% | 0% | 14% |
| 5-10 Years | 29% | 0% | 14% |
| 11-15 Year | 7% | 7% | 7% |
| 16 – 25 Years | 7% | 7% | 7% |
| 26 Years + | 14% | 71% | 43% |
| Born Here | 14% | 14% | 14% |

Table 7 Imams Qualifications

| Formal British Qualifications | Imams | MC | All |
|-------------------------------|-------|----|-----|
| GCSE | 29% | 7% | 18% |
| A-level | 21% | | 11% |
| Degree | 29% | 7% | 18% |
| Post Grad | 14% | | 7% |
| Masters | 36% | | 18% |
| PhD | 14% | | 7% |
| Darul Uloom | 29% | | 14% |
| Other | 7% | | 4% |

Table 8 Imams training and accreditation

| Should all Imams be educated and trained in Britain? | Imams | MC | All |
|--|-------|-----|-----|
| Yes | 64% | 50% | 57% |
| No | 36% | 43% | 39% |
| Don't know | | 7% | 4% |
| Should all Imams speak English? | | | |
| Yes | 86% | 79% | 82% |
| No | 14% | 7% | 11% |
| Should Imams be accredited by a national body? | | | |
| Yes | 86% | 71% | 79% |
| No | 14% | 14% | 14% |
| Who should this accreditation body be run by? | | | |
| Government | 14% | | 7% |
| Existing Muslim organisation | 29% | 57% | 43% |
| New Independent body | 57% | 7% | 32% |

Table 9 Legal status of Mosques

| Legal Status of Mosque | % |
|------------------------|-----|
| Limited Company | 13% |
| Registered Charity | 78% |
| Association | 9% |
| Trust | 9% |

Table 10 Type of Mosque

| Type of Mosque | % |
|------------------------|-----|
| Daily prayers only | 4% |
| Jumuah only | 0% |
| Daily prayers & Jumuah | 96% |

Table 11 Mosque services and facilities

| Mosque Facilities | % |
|-------------------------|------|
| Prayer Hall | 100% |
| Wudu Facilities | 100% |
| Funeral Service | 71% |
| Community Hall | 54% |
| Women's Prayer Hall | 57% |
| I.T services | 43% |
| Youth Facilities | 54% |
| Library | 54% |
| Retail | 36% |
| Recreational Facilities | 18% |
| Women's general space | 32% |
| Canteen | 14% |
| Other | 18% |

Table 12 Core finance

| Core Mosque Finance Source | % |
|----------------------------|------|
| Public donations | 100% |
| Local Authority Grants | 11% |
| Businesses donation | 11% |
| Income generation | 18% |
| Overseas donations Other | 7% |

Table 13 Ancillary finance

| Other projects and Services Finance | % |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Public donations | 61% |
| Local Authority Grants | 11% |
| Central Government | 0% |
| GLA / LDA Grants | 7% |
| Businesses donation | 0% |
| European Funding | 4% |
| Fees and subscriptions | 14% |
| Overseas donations | 4% |

Table 14 Mosque Services

| Services Provided – (for Adults) | % |
|---|----------|
| Daily Congregational Prayers | 100% |
| Jumuah Khutba and Prayers | 100% |
| Eid Prayers | 100% |
| Marriage – Nikah ceremony | 75% |
| Wedding Functions | 36% |
| Advice and Counselling by Imams/ Professionals | 79% |
| Social Activities | 43% |
| Islamic Education | 89% |
| Arabic Language Classes [not Quran reading] | 50% |
| ESOL Classes | 18% |
| Mother Tongue Classes | 29% |
| IT Training | 46% |
| Hajj Training | 36% |
| Health Advice / Support | 36% |
| Sports / Recreational Activities | 29% |
| Mother & Toddler Groups | 18% |
| Women's Services | 43% |
| Azan / Mosque Radio | 7% |
| Other | 4% |
| Services Provided – (for Children) | |
| Evening / Weekend Madrassa – Quranic Reading | 93% |
| Evening / Weekend - Hifz (Memorisation) Classes | 75% |
| Full-time Madrassa/Islamic School – without National Curriculum | 25% |
| Full-time Madrassa/Islamic School – including National Curriculum | 21% |
| Weekend Islamic School – Islamic studies | 43% |
| Summer Schools | 25% |
| Arabic Language Classes (Not Quranic reading) | 32% |
| Mother Tongue Classes | 21% |
| Youth Activities | 32% |
| Summer Playscheme | 14% |
| Nursery – pre school services | 14% |
| Other | 21% |

Table 15 Services to the wider community

| Services to the wider community | % |
|--|-----|
| Mosque open days | 68% |
| School Visits to Mosques | 64% |
| Chaplaincy Service to other institutes | 39% |
| Premise Hire | 25% |
| Islam Awareness Training | 36% |
| Other | 29% |

Table 16 Friday Sermon Language

| Jumuah Pre - Khutba Talk is delivered in | % |
|--|-----|
| Arabic | 39% |
| Urdu | 54% |
| Hindi | 25% |
| Bengali | 7% |
| Somali | 4% |
| English | 61% |
| Turkish | 4% |
| Gujerati | 0% |
| Other | 0% |
| Jumuah Khutba is delivered in | |
| Arabic | 75% |
| Urdu | 29% |
| Hindi | 0% |
| Bengali | 4% |
| Somali | 4% |
| English | 14% |
| Turkish | 4% |
| Gujerati | 0% |
| Other | 0% |
| Islamic Lectures are delivered in | |
| Arabic | 36% |
| Urdu | 57% |
| Hindi | 7% |
| Bengali | 4% |
| Somali | 4% |
| English | 75% |
| Turkish | 4% |
| Gujerati | 0% |
| Other | 0% |

Table 17 Resource needs

| Support needed to improve the Mosque facilities and services | Imams | MC | Combined |
|--|-------|------|----------|
| Finance / Grants | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Professional Training | 64% | 64% | 64% |
| Extra Staff | 50% | 43% | 46% |
| Legal Support | 36% | 43% | 39% |
| Accounting Support | 21% | 21% | 21% |
| Capital Equipment | 14% | 43% | 29% |
| Refurbishment / Repair Work. | 29% | 50% | 39% |
| Planning Application Support | 29% | 43% | 36% |
| Other | 7% | 7% | 7% |

Table 18 Personal training needs of Imams and MC members

| What kind of personal training needs do you have? | Imams | MC | Combined |
|---|-------|-----|----------|
| English Language Classes | 36% | 43% | 39% |
| Further Islamic Studies | 50% | 50% | 50% |
| IT training Grant | 50% | 21% | 36% |
| Application Support | 50% | 29% | 39% |
| Management Training | 50% | 36% | 43% |
| Legal Training | 29% | 14% | 21% |
| Health & Safety Law | 64% | 29% | 46% |
| Employment Law | 50% | 29% | 39% |
| Charity Law Finance Training | 14% | 7% | 11% |
| Finance training | 29% | 29% | 29% |

Appendix 2 - Focus group findings

Appendix 2 - Focus group

1. The Role of the Mosque

■ **Imam London**

- The Mosque is a centre for community life. The life of the Muslim circumvents around the Mosque. For example the Prophet's first action in Medina was the establishment of a Mosque.

- The Mosque not only has the role of preserving our own identity but also has the role of representing Islam to other communities. It has a role in bringing harmony amongst different communities. The Mosques in the UK are fulfilling this role to the best of their ability given their resource constraints.

- In terms of problems and obstacles, Mosques are suffering from a lack of human and financial resources. However, Mosques are part of the solution not part of the problem.

■ **MC Member Lancashire**

- They are not just a place of worship, but also a community centre where people come to learn about the views of elderly and customs and traditions so they can shape their own views.
- It's also a centre which encourages interfaith discussions and interaction.
- A Mosque is where members of the community come to seek religious as well as general guidance from Imams, children come to learn their religion, and women also should come to be educated. Unfortunately, only a few Mosques have the facility for all of these activities especially women due to space and understanding.
- It is a place for women as well

■ **MC Member Lancashire**

- The Mosque finds it hard to attract young, and so new ideas are being used to attract youth (e.g. gymnasium). The women are being catered for but not to the extent we would like.

■ **Imam Lancashire**

- We are doing the work well, in line with prophetic traditions to provide more than just prayers. In some Mosques Imams are held back from providing the whole range of services due to
(a) the community and
(b) the Mosques committees.

Imam Lancashire

- More Mosques need to realise that Mosques cannot be run today as they were before. The services in Mosques must be reflective of the society. Most Mosques in the UK fail in this regards.

2. Do Mosques in the UK generally fulfil their role and what problems are there in fulfilling this role?

■ **Imam London**

- Mosques are fulfilling their role to their individual best.
- They are however limited in resources - quite often relying on social capital to satisfy their objectives.

■ **Imam London**

- New ideas need to come in via youth. Many of our Mosques are run by the older generation. Mosques need to take young people who can organise the Mosques and its activities 'professionally' with updated information, resources.
- The older generation still fear young people being on the committees because they fear them taking it over etc. This needs to change new blood need to be added to the Mosques. This is a big problem.

■ **Imam Leicester**

- Youth think Mosques are boring and don't want to listen to Imams. If we offer language specific learning they will appreciate and be engaged. Mosques don't have enough programmes in English language. The young would listen to those who speak good English, they can then engage.

■ **MC Member Leicester**

- We need to gain respect. Mosques need to realise Youth matter about 45% of Muslims in 2001 census was young people this rate is higher now- so Mosques need to understand this.
- Funding is an issue.
- Local authorities and other bodies are not engaging with Mosques (as an avenue to provide community based service). They do not consult Mosques when commissioning service nor do they inform Mosques of ways to engage.

- MC are always battling to cover just the basic bills. Funding not large enough. Some offer maximum of £5000 but this is not enough, and many find it hard to access this funding.

3. Access and Involvement

Imam London

- Young people use Mosques more than women generally. Women use the Mosques less due to some elderly views which originate from the sub-continent. The cultural baggage includes this notion that the Mosque is only for the elderly. For women there are in general a lack of facilities which originates in cultural and fiqh perspectives.

Imam Leicester

- The Mosque finds it hard to attract young and so new ideas are being used to attract youth (e.g. gymnasium). The women are being catered for but not to the extent we would like.

MC member Leicester

- There is a generation gap between young and old. This may be partly due to cultural issues. Besides this, most Mosques lack physical space that will allow for young peoples activities.

Imam Lancashire

- There is an issue with a women Imam in Scotland, which has caused great deal of controversy.
- We have many Alima, who should perhaps lead on education and women issues. Women should be able to feed back to the committees. So that the relationship with MC and users are closer and relevant.
- Because most Mosques don't have proper facilities for women, the danger is that they may resort to false understanding of Islam which led to issue like the woman Imam...

Imam Lancashire

- We have our Alima to lead all women projects and education. The powers are delegated to the women to run, and they have run it very successfully over the years

MC member Lancashire

- We have 4 girls' classes with women teachers and women's prayer facilities. In the long run those young people born and raised here will change this slowly.

Imam London

- We must bear in mind that often Mosques are not purpose built, unlike the East London Mosque most places are houses or converted shops, and therefore there is a physical restriction. It is hard to provide for men and women without compromising Shari'ah

MC Member Lancashire

- Some women and youth don't feel that they need to use the Mosque. Children attend for classes till the age of 10, sometimes till 14, but thereafter nothing for them until they are aged 18-22 when they are thinking politically. Whilst boys have more access.

- They get pushed out of Mosques when they ask questions. We are not ready for them. We lose them from 10-20, and while they develop outside.

- Brooke project - free contraception / pill - they are educating our children.

- Young people - most Mosques have no facilities for the youth.

Imam London

- We should be attempting to encourage greater use by youth and women, particularly on Fridays. That is a very important way to help the community learn common things together. The key issue is the language that the Friday khutba is delivered. Many Mosques deliver it in Bengali and Arabic, but most youth find it hard to understand - we must press for an English version / translation of the khutba - that is the language for the youth. There must be increased Human / Capital / Financial resources to increase involvement of women and young people. As a community it is important that we understand the age we are living in.

Imam London

- The adhan is a call to prayer, not just for elderly men, but the whole community, men and women, young and old.
- However, we have so many difficulties getting planning permission when we consider options for expansion that will allow the building to be used by everyone including women. Overall women should be encouraged and involved in the Mosque.

MC Member London

- We are still thinking as though we are back home, running Mosques the way they are run in the villages where it is not normal for women to attend. We have to change this. Language is also a barrier; we need to speak more English for young people.

MC Member London

- Since the Prophet, peace be upon him, allowed women we also should allow women to use the Mosque. Half of our community are women. We also need to talk care of our youth by improving access for them. However one of the problems is that Mosques are not always purpose built and do not have the resources for separate facilities for women and other social activities.

Imam London

- The first priority is to get all the community including women and children involved and accessed at user group level. The second priority is to get involvement at management level. There needs to be a balance with young and old. Young to bring in ideas and skills and elderly to ensure continuity.

MC Member London

- We definitely need to open the Mosques and make it easier to educate our women.

4. Role of Imams

Imam London

- The Imam is one of the pillars of the Mosque; they lead in learning, prayer, representation and spiritual leadership of the community. However many great Scholars have problems with communicating with the youth. Yes, Imams should have some basic English, they are the leaders in knowledge but they are sometimes restricted by their employer, resulting in a conflict between leadership and employment.
- In terms of training and accreditation, we cannot continue to import Imams from abroad. However, young people here are not willing to take up jobs as Imams. There is also another question of who will train them. There is no set up for proper Islamic education here. We need training and accreditation of Imams to be independently run and owned by the community.

Imam Lancashire

- Small Mosques cannot afford multi-lingual well educated Imams, so

they revert to importing an Imam from Pakistan (cheaply) but cannot speak properly and so those links with youth and others are severed.

- It's a Catch 22 situation. They want Imam's from here but cannot afford so they look abroad. Funding is a big issue for Mosques which need to be properly looked at.

Imam London

Mosques cannot afford not to bring in Imams from abroad, young people are not willing to become Imams, there is little attraction and there are no further qualifications in this country. We need home grown institutions from primary level to post-graduate

MC Member Lancashire

- Being trained in Britain doesn't mean Imams will be better. People in third world have less opportunity and so their studies are more fruitful although language may be a barrier. Those studying here will understand community issues better, but the qualities of religious issues are lower. What we need is a balance of the two.

MC Member Lancashire

- Being able to speak English is not enough to be able to speak to a congregation. I have English degree but can't speak at public forums.
- English is not enough, need to know the language of youth (e.g. Bilingual) we need Imams who can build a relationship with the youth, be able to connect and understand.

5. Training and accreditation of Imams

Imam London

- For accreditation we have to rely on bodies abroad, but in the long run the best solution is for a body controlled here in the UK. There must be a Board which can act as a regulatory body. In summary we need: Education facilities for Imams, Council of Imams and Council of Mosques nationwide.

Imam Leicester

- The views of Imams are very disparate, so can this forum accommodate for the differences.

Imam Leicester

- A national council of Imams is one way, this has been discussed for a long time, and it should be independent and nothing to do with Government.

Imam Leicester

- Two years ago a national council of Imams was on the agenda, the Guardian had leaked 100 pages of a larger report conducted by the Government regarding concern of Islamic activity, the strength of Islam etc, how does the Government combat it, studying models of government and Muslim relations in middle east such as Egypt.
- The government wants to set up a national body of scholars [like the national council of Imams] they want to control, speeches, sermons, Masjid, infiltrate the Muslim community. Egypt is considered a good model - it took over al Azhar University and every Mosque is registered and Imams are appointed centrally, khutbas written centrally. Unregistered Mosques are illegal.
- In this country we want to set up national council of Imams so that sermons, preaching, activities can be controlled. Selected individuals have been picked [as ulema] they [the Government] will cultivate them and present them as ideal scholars and theologians. They will be the leaders, thinkers for the Muslims- is this what we want?

Imam Lancashire

- Council of Mosques have different background and opinions but the function serves well. We need to understand the pros and con's of this. What will the role be and remit be? Will people accept this we need to look into all this?

Imam Lancashire

- There are issue and difficulties on this issue.
- Once you touch fiqhi (Islamic jurisprudential issues) then there will be problems, if non-fiqhi i.e. Council of Mosques then no problem.

Imam Leicester

- Zaki Badawi speaks as 'Chairman of Imams and Mosques' but we have not signed up to him. He has two or three groups behind him and the media take his self-proclaimed title as the be-all of leaders.
- Instead of reaction to change, why aren't we preparing for the change? Why don't we prepare for a body rather than wait and fight later on how it should be.

- There is a need for this but we need to explore further about its set up remit etc. And organisations like the MCB should begin this discussion.

Imam Lancashire

- Why not an Imam of districts / regionally. It has to be natural progression instead of jumping to national body first.
- There are Council of Mosques throughout the UK -perhaps a national set up with these COM can work by having the regional send representatives to the national body.
- MCB can facilitate this.

6. Resources

Imam London

- Most Mosques suffer from the lack of space.
- In some cases where the buildings of Mosques are being planned there is Islamophobic hostility by local community which create tensions in the community.
- **Imam London**
- We need support and expertise for planning permission applications etc. Tapping into funding is a huge problem because most funders say that they don't fund religious centres such as Mosques.
- Imams are remunerated poorly, and to attract young people pay must be much better.
- The struggle to gain land is enormous.
- Expectation on the Mosque constitution by different stakeholders is so varied that it becomes hard to participate, i.e. there is one expectation by charity commission and another by funders! We are overburdened.

- Capacity building for the Mosques for fundraising and organisational development is essential. There is a need for targeted consultancy services for building Mosque infrastructure.

MC Member London

- Recently we participated in a capacity building programme, but the consultants were inexperienced when dealing with Mosques - they were unaware of the organisational impacts of their recommendations.

- We need help and mentoring from larger established institutions or consultants who know what they are talking about.

MC Member London

- Mosques already play a huge role in sorting out social problems such as anti social behaviour, Domestic Violence, marriage problems; these can all be funded if they are presented properly. A good example is the East London Mosque / London Muslim Centre.

Various contributors

- People access the Mosque and the Imams to deal with the following types of issues:

1. Drug abuse
2. Youth Problems
3. Black Magic
4. Family Breakdown
5. Mental Health
6. Bereavement
7. Anti Social Behaviour
8. Birth Rites

- All the above are at no appointed time, people want help at all hours! We are on call 24 hours a day, seven days per week. The government should recognise the services. The MCB should co-ordinate resources from the government to fund the social work that Mosques carry out.

MC Member London

- The mainstream does not appreciate the services of the Mosques that are offered for free.

7. The Muslim Council of Britain

Imam London

- The MCB is doing an incredible job considering it is on a voluntary basis. It's great. However it suffers from an image problem from the grassroots. People feel that the MCB is only in touch with the Government. The Panorama programme improved MCB's image with the grassroots. MCB is a unique model for Europe and America in terms of Muslim representation.
- MCB should not be used by the Government; it should be for the use of the community. MCB needs to know the needs of the community. It needs to play a better role in Education. Its good to see MCB's new political power, but MCB needs to be seen as politically neutral.

Imam London

- Many of us appreciate their representative role, there is so much work done as volunteers.
- MCB is our representative at this moment, they are large enough and diverse enough with the Government's recognition. Any body must be independent

MC Member Lancashire

- Media representation - MCB has done a great deal of work and they are in the forefront.
- So far they have managed to represent the Muslim community well in the media overall.
- Website is very good and informative.

Imam Lancashire

- MCB needs to highlight is achievements, we don't know enough about what they are doing and how well they are progressing on issues. So we feel they are doing something for you.

MC Member Leicester

- MCB should use diverse methods to communicate with members.
- Share best practice of some regions with others, i.e. good work of Leicester and London to be shared with

Lancashire MC Member London

- The MCB need to consider more in terms of education and resources and perhaps a little less on politics.

MC Member Leicester

- MCB is doing good work however it is too London based, dominated by one particularly ethnicity and seems like a closed shop.

MC Member Leicester

- MCB Masjid and Ulema committee is not easy to access. However it is a young organisation we should support it and strengthen it.

MC Member Leicester

- MCB needs to strengthen its communications; a lot of letters are sent but end up in the bin instead of to the Imams and management.

8. Media

Imam London

- One or two controversial Imams have damaged the reputation of all the other Imams i.e. Omar Bakri. Abu Hamza.

Imam London

- The media are prejudicial, malicious and are ignorant
- The media ignores the real Imams and focuses on people who have no followings or credentials. For example, Abu Hamza is not even educated to the level to become an Imam yet his outside prayers are aired all over the place.
- The media promotes division and fights. Islam's teachings are very clear but the media doesn't portray this. The MCB has a very important role to play with the media.

Imam Lancashire

- On all major issues, the media portrays the good Muslim as no beard and well spoken. And bad Muslim as beard and bad English.

MC Member Leicester

- We need to be more proactive in dealing with the media when they misrepresent us. We are very slow in reacting. And when we do not enough people respond.
- The local authority and government put up only people they like in the media- some of these people have no connection to the community. The media are happy to chase after them.

Imam London

- The media creates terrorists by glamorising it, but when it comes to good things they don't want to air it example is Panorama cutting Sir Iqbal Sacranie when he started to make sense.

9. Anti- terror

MC Member Lancashire

- Some groups like HT are not an extremist group, but political non-violent idealists.

MC Member Lancashire

- We don't know much information about these laws; we receive second hand and late information from London.

- Government is giving mixed messages. PM says Islam has nothing to do with terrorists then they bring in laws that discriminate against us.

- Over all on these issue Mosques and the community need much more education and awareness as most are not aware.

- The Government did not consult us or our Council of Mosques on these issues they should.

MC Member Leicester

- The anti terror laws are too vague they cannot work

MC Member London

- At the point of deciding legislation they (Government) do not consult but when it fails they want our view.

MC Member Leicester

- These laws are unwarranted and an excuse for other agendas, current law is enough to deal with terrorism.

MC Member Leicester

- What links have they found to the Masjid? Muslims are law abiding citizens. The best regulation is self regulation.

MC Member Leicester

- One or two [so called] clerics used Mosques in London...should not associate Mosques to terrorism...there is no need for Mosques to apologise, the problem is not the Mosques and the government needs to hear us clearly.

- Certain organisations that are extreme prey on the youth give them leaflets outside of Mosque; these people are not in Mosques.

MC Member Leicester

- The problem is with foreign policy - nothing to do with Imams, Mosques and Muslims.

10. Islamophobia

- **Various London**
 - Reports of attack incidents after 7/7
 - Mile End Mosque attacked and windows broken
 - ELM receiving bomb threat, hate mail and hate calls.
- **Imam Leicester**
 - Had fireworks thrown into Mosques
- **MC Member Lancashire**
 - Burnley Mosque had bricks thrown in
- **MC Member Leicester**
 - One vandalism incident in Mosque
- **MC Member Lancashire**
 - 3 incidents of broken windows before 7/7, and one after.
- **MC Member Leicester**
 - There's been an increase in attacks and backlash after 7/7. We had support from the police.