Submission to the Citizens UK Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life

Muslim Council of Britain

December 2016

INTRODUCTION

1. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) founded in 1997 is an inclusive umbrella body that seeks to represents the common interest of Muslims in Britain. It is pledged to work for the common good of society as a whole. The mission statement of the MCB is "To empower the Muslim community to contribute towards achieving a cohesive, just and successful British society."

2. Reflecting the diversity of Muslims in the UK, the MCB is made up of mosques, educational and charitable bodies, cultural and relief agencies and women and youth groups and associations. At present it has over five hundred affiliates on its books, including organisations with a national branch network such as the Muslim Council of Wales and the Muslim Council of Scotland.

3. Whilst the MCB invariably highlights and campaigns on issues affecting Muslims, it does do so with a view to seeking parity with other comparable communities, not special privileges. In other words, fairness, not favours.

4. The MCB welcomes the opportunity to input into the Commission on Islam, Participation & Public Life. This document reflects a consensus view of our affiliates, and, we believe, across a broad spectrum of Muslim communities in the UK.

MUSLIMS IN BRITAIN TODAY

5. Alongside this submission, we also submit our report published last year 'Muslims in Numbers'. We hope this provides an essential evidential base for commentary on British Muslims.

6. In the document, we observe that 'Muslims are part of the social fabric of Britain's plural society and are to be found from Land's End to Stornoway. Muslim communities play a significant part in the increasing diversity of Britain.' With linkages to the Muslim world through Empire and trade, new arrival of Muslim immigrants have made Britain their home. They are joined by a growing community of Britons who have adopted Islam as their chosen faith. Muslims in the UK form one of the most diverse Muslim communities anywhere in the Muslim world.

7. Muslims have made Britain enormous contributions to the success of this country in blood and treasure: whether it is through the tens of thousands of Muslim soldiers who laid down their lives in the two world wars and still to this day[1], by building our public services, most notably the NHS, by the estimated £31 billion plus[2] it contributes to the

---

[1] Remembering the Brave, The Muslim contribution to Britain's Armed Forces, 2010
http://www.mcb.org.uk/remembering-the-muslim-contribution-to-britains-armed-forces/
[2] The Muslim Pound, Muslim Council of Britain, 2015 http://www.mcb.org.uk/muslimpound/

UK economy or the fact that they are the highest contributors to charities than any other faith group.[3]

8. In the last census, 73% of Muslims have actively identified themselves as British, which correlates with other research and polling data showing how Muslims have a higher affinity with this country than other comparable groups. 47% of Muslims are born in the UK.

9. In 2001, there were 62,000 Muslims in the 'Higher Managerial, Administrative and Professional' category of the Socio-Economic Classification (NS-Sec)[4]. A decade later, this stands at about 115,000. This significant increase in professional, 'better off' Muslims is a reflection of aspirations and endeavours for self-improvement.

10. Our analysis of the geographical distribution of the Muslim population in England and Wales also noted signs of social mobility, for example the population shifts in Tower Hamlets suggesting young professionals moving out to the suburbs.

11. There is also evidence of an entrepreneurial spirit, with the proportion of Muslims who are small employers or sole traders slightly more than the overall population (9.7% compared to 9.4%). This has been confirmed in the Scottish Muslims in Numbers report that notes the 'higher proportion of Muslims focusing on small businesses, as demonstrated by the figure for 'small employers and own account workers', which is 12.4% for Muslims, compared with 7.4% for the total population.'[5] These are laudable achievements, given that in many cases Muslims have had to overcome social class background, racial and religious prejudices, as well as the structural disadvantages of often living in deprived regions.

12. The authors of a recent academic study support this view of greater social mobility and fluidity, observing that with second generation Pakistani and Bangladeshi men (who will be predominantly of the Muslim faith)) "there has been an improvement in occupational attainment . . . class rigidity shows fairly clear signs of weakening among whites and visible minorities alike . . . the second-generation visible minorities were not as disadvantaged in the competition with members of the majority group from similar class origins as the first generation had been."[6]

13. The media and vested commentators have suggested that Muslims choose to self-segregate or live in 'no-go' areas. However, Census researchers have shown that this is

---

[3] Muslims 'Give Most To Charity', Ahead Of Christians, Jews And Atheists, Poll Finds,
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/07/21/muslims-give-most_n_3630830.html
[4] Census 2001, Table S157
[5] Scottish Muslims in Numbers, University of Edinburgh & The Al-Waleed Centre 2016; page 52
[6] Class Matters: A Study of Minority and Majority Social Mobility in Britain, 1982–2011, by Professor Anthony Heath (Nuffield College, Oxford) and Yaojun Li (University of Manchester), American Journal of Sociology, Volume 122 Number 1 (July 2016): 162–200

not the case. Ludi Simpson for example has stated that 'Research shows that the ethnic minority populations of England and Wales have grown, and live in more mixed areas in 2011 than before. This 'spreading out' has accelerated in the past ten years.' [7]

14.   Similarly, English language learning has become a touchstone issue for integration, with suggestions that Muslims have less command of English than other minorities. Yet, our 'Muslims in Numbers' report suggests that while there may be sections with limited proficiency, the issue should not be overplayed.

MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS

15.   In 1997, the MCB was established by a diverse range of British Muslim mosques, associations and schools. Together, they entrusted the Council to articulate a consensus view of Muslims. Underlying that view was the obligation that Muslims seek the common good not just for Muslims, but for fellow Britons as well.

16.   We are for a multi-cultural, multifaith Britain, a nation that is at ease with itself. We are for a more inclusive society whose shared values are shaped through the participation of people of all faith communities as well as those of no faith. Our vision is of a society that accepts and appreciates the contributions of the diverse cultures of all its citizens.

17.   The goal of creating a more united, and cohesive society, at all levels, has been the mainstay of much MCB work. Amongst Muslim communities, this has been undertaken at the MCB through campaigns to encourage voter registration, to guides outlining their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as participation in interfaith work and partnerships with institutions with shared concerns for social justice and combatting racism. In all of these, the MCB has evinced its ethos of working for the common good most clearly in its endeavours to promote deeper integration.

18.   The MCB sees its role as a facilitator on behalf of its affiliate members and as such regularly surveys their views to inform its policy positions. We have always been clear that we are an affiliate-based body encompassing a range of backgrounds and geographies. Though affiliation to the MCB is corporate and institutional, there are various specialist committees through which individuals seeking to contribute their time and talent to community development can participate e.g. media, youth, research, legal. We do not have individual membership or act on behalf of specific individuals in engaging with government officials. However, the last time a poll asked whether the MCB does a good job representing the views of Muslims, a majority said they did (BBC Comres poll, 2015)[8].

---

[7] Ludi Simpson, More segregation or more mixing? ESRC Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), 2012
[8] http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BBC-Today-Programme_British-Muslims-Poll_FINAL-Tables_Feb2015.pdf

19.   We recognise that many Muslim institutions struggle with issues of weak governance, which includes a shortage of women and young people in executive and leadership positions. The MCB has contributed to improving standards in mosques by providing specialist knowledge to the Mosques and Imams Advisory Board (MINAB)[9], as well as looking at its own governance which can be reflected in its new leadership team. MCB's youngest Secretary-General to date, Harun Khan, set out the bold and strategic vision of his leadership shortly following his election which was to place the youth at the heart of the MCB's mission, recognising the role they have to play in building a better Britain.[10]

20.   The MCB has also initiated a capacity-building programme (see case study below) and established a workstream for equal opportunities in mosques to address the barriers facing women in Muslim communities in participating in their religious communities. The MCB Youth Committee has also been reinstated with vigour, which will seek to focus on bridging the generational gap that exists in many Muslim institutions, and equipping young Muslims with opportunities to lead.

21.   On a community level, we believe the following objectives are necessary to address some of the endemic issues that face Muslim institutions, which are currently inhibiting them from full participation in public life:

21.1.   **Improve community harmony and build internal capacity:** institutions should seek ways to increase cooperation and coordination to minimise energy-draining conflict that deters progress in other areas.

21.2.   **Enhance youth involvement in the community:** young people have often felt disconnected from their mosques and institutions, therefore active steps need to be taken to engage interest such as employing home-grown Imams, and developing a professional ethos.

21.3.   **Reclaim women's positive role in community building:** this long-standing issue is a key deterrent to progress, and institutions need to seriously consider how to increase the accessibility and participation of women in their organisations.

21.4.   **Create endowments and professionalise institutions:** many Muslim institutions are run by volunteers on shoe-string budgets, which places limits on their growth and professionalisation. Mosques and community organisations need to increase their efforts in turning themselves into effective institutions with more transparency and accountability, and invest in making themselves financially sustainable.

21.5.   **Invest in media and politics:** capable and articulate young Muslims should be trained in media skills and encouraged to participate in public life.

---

[9] http://www.minab.org.uk/self-regulation/standards.html
[10] http://www.mcb.org.uk/daily-telegraph-harun-khan-18-august-2016/

21.6. **Stimulate thinking and build an inclusive culture:** spaces should be available for Muslim communities to develop new thinking by setting up scholarly and policymaking bodies and initiatives to help the community to improve its participation in public life.

21.7. **Mobilise Muslim civil society to address some social realities:** these include youth disaffection (the MCB in 2015 organised a roundtable of experts to define the role of a mosque-based youth officer), lone parent and single parent households, homelessness, criminality (the disproportionately high prison population and steps needed to reduce recidivism), and the provision of culturally sensitive elderly care.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Tackling discrimination and the glass ceiling

22. Employment discrimination is a big barrier to integration that needs to be tackled. 19.8% of the Muslim population is in full- time employment, compared to 34.9% in the overall population. 7.2% of Muslims are unemployed compared to 4.0% in the overall population. As observed in our Muslims in Numbers report (p. 19):

    "The higher levels of unemployment amongst Muslims as compared to the overall population are the outcome of numerous factors, however there is now enough evidence of the double penalty faced in entering the labour market – of racial discrimination as well as Islamophobia. The Employment Equality Religion or Belief Regulations introduced in 2003 (and subsequently subsumed in the Equality Act 2010) were intended to address these very issues. The impact of the imposition of positive duty on the public sector needs to be assessed by appropriate stakeholders e.g. the Equality & Human Rights Commission."

23. More than 10 years ago, it was the MCB who highlighted and supported the need for Muslim women to be more economically active and thus be integrated into society. But we must look carefully at the drivers, and avoid reducing the issue to culture wars. A 2015 Demos report "Rising to the Top", suggests that the greater economic inactivity amongst British Muslim women is primarily due to family care at home rather than not learning English, and that this is most pronounced in women above the age of 50. [11]

24. Moreover, we should not discount the 'Muslim penalty' Muslim women face in getting a job as well. 43% of Muslim women are in full-time education and there are real worries that because of their background, many cannot enter the job market. Last year, the MCB's 'Muslims in Numbers' report called on 'various stakeholders – Muslim civil

---

[11] Demos, Rising to the Top, 2015 http://www.demos.co.uk/project/rising-to-the-top/

society, policy institutes, employers, trade unions and the Department for Work and Pensions – to facilitate conditions and opportunities in the labour market.'[12] In its 'Fairness not Favours' report, the MCB highlighted the need for a range of measures including trialling name-blank applications, tackling unconscious bias and encouraging take up of government-funded free child care.[13]

25.   The MCB has anecdotal evidence of a glass ceiling for management positions in sectors such as the media, with higher turn-over for BME employees. It has raised the issue of staff diversity with the BBC Trust. However, further research is needed on the experiences of Muslim men and women in reaching and staying in the higher management positions.

Islamophobia and hate crime

26.   The term "Islamophobia" is defined as "unfounded hostility towards Muslims, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims."[14] The term was coined in the context of Muslims in the UK in particular and Europe in general, and formulated based on the more common 'xenophobia' framework.[15]

27.   As is clear from the definition, Islamophobia is not about disagreeing, criticising or condemning the faith of Islam. Instead, the concept refers to how that disagreement, criticism or condemnation involves the promotion of stereotypes and mistruths, and is used to intentionally promote, encourage or justify discrimination, hatred, bigotry or even violence.[16]

28.   Professor Tariq Modood notes that "There is not a single racism, but multiple racisms that include colour/phenotype forms but also cultural forms building on 'colour', or on a set of antagonistic or demeaning stereotypes based on alleged or real cultural traits. The most important such form of cultural racism today is anti-Muslim racism, sometimes called Islamophobia.[17]

29.   The social acceptance of Islamophobia has become one of the major concerns amongst the broad spectrum of Muslim communities, as expressed in the MCB's election

---

[12] Muslims in Numbers, *Op.Cit.*, p. 19
[13] Fairness, Not Favours: British Muslim Perspectives at the 2015 General Election, Muslim Council of Britain, 2015
[14] 1991 report by the race equality think tank Runnymede Trust
[15] http://crg.berkeley.edu/content/islamophobia/defining-islamophobia
[16] Islamophobia Today: State of the Nation Report May 2014, Chris Allen. See also See also Robin Richardson's essay, 'Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism – or what? – concepts and terms revisited'
[17] 'Remaking Multiculturism after 7/7', Open Democracy, 2007

document, 'Fairness not Favours' which itself was the product of a wide-ranging survey amongst its affiliates.[18]

30.   In an MCB survey of over 100 affiliates, 95% of respondents stated hate crime was a concern for the members of their organisation, and 64% were aware that someone in their institution had been a victim of hate crime, yet 56% of affiliates reported a lack of confidence in support the police might offer for victims of hate crime. Reassuringly, 72% of respondents felt they had a clear understanding of how hate crime can be reported to the police.

31.   A recurring theme within the comments was the need for greater, and more accessible, literature to be made available to raise awareness of hate crime, reporting mechanisms and local successes in tackling the problem. Concerns were consistently raised about irresponsible reporting in the media as being a key driver in causing Islamophobia. Politicians were also singled out as being in uniquely responsible positions to temper, rather than aggravate, community tensions. Other qualitative findings from the survey included the need for a renewed effort by local Muslim organisations to reach out to other community bodies, an emphasis on positive working relationships with local police forces and concerted local attempts to reach out to those most vulnerable to the influences of far-right ideology.

32.   Claiming that the media has played no role in the growth in Islamophobia is no longer a tenable position. Research by the University of Cambridge concluded that mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility toward Muslims in Britain.[19] Furthermore, findings of an Islamophobia Roundtable in Stockholm two years ago showed that the regular association of Islam and Muslims with crime and terror in the media and on the internet is vital to the spread of Islamophobic rhetoric.[20]

33.   Irresponsible headlines and the direct impact they have on the wellbeing of Muslims in the UK is a huge concern for the MCB. Creating a culture of fear only increases divisions in our communities, and increases the perception amongst Muslims of being rejected and unable to participate fully in public life.

34.   Our political leaders must be vigilant against feeding into this anti-Muslim echo chamber. The actions and words of leading politicians, often shapes the narrative of the country. For example, the fear-mongering during the EU referendum about Muslim

---

[18] MCB's election document 2015: "Fairness not Favours"

[19] University of Cambridge and Economic and Social Research Council Roundtable held at the House of Lords

[20] Report, Roundtable on Islamophobia in Europe, 2014 – by Department for Discrimination Issues, Ministry of Employment, Sweden

refugees entering the country has played some role in the current hostility being experienced by many Muslims.

35. The government launched a timely action plan 'Challenge it, Report it, Stop it: The Government's Plan to Tackle Hate Crime' in 2012 but many of the projects undertaken have had limited success.[21] After the resignations of Chris Allen[22], Matthew Goodwin[23] and others because the "government was simply not that interested in anti-Muslim hatred" and "resists real engagement with Muslims", leading to limited action, there have been fears that all forms of bigotry have not being treated equally.

36. It is hoped that the new 'Action against Hate'[24] plan by the government will be fully enacted, given it is very laudable with many important initiatives, including:
    - Providing education materials in resource packs for schools and teachers on hate crime, support projects to tackle anti-Muslim bullying.
    - Fund to provide protective security measures at vulnerable faith institutions.
    - Tackling hate crime on public transport through community-led advertising campaigns on public transport and roundtables to devise solutions to ensure public transport is safe for all.
    - Tackling online hate crime: guidance to police and partners, prosecutors on online hate crime, ministerial seminar on hate to set out an approach, increase awareness of TrueVision for reporting and examining online hate crime.
    - Encouraging reporting of hate crime: working with Muslim communities to raise awareness of hate crime and how it can be reported.
    - Improving police response to hate crime: identify training needs with updated policy and legal guidance for prosecutors on racially and religiously aggravated crime.
    - Improving support for victims of hate crime, including improved referral mechanisms and strengthening the voices of victims and advocates of hate crime.

37. There are other hate crime strategies e.g., by the Mayor of London[25] and the Police[26], and all strategies should be aligned for maximum effectiveness, with clear leadership, timelines and accountability for the proposed initiatives. This should include representatives of the police (e.g. a senior police officer with responsibility for Islamophobia appointed by the National Police Council), and government officials.

---

[21] Challenge It, Report It, Stop It Delivering the Government's hate crime action plan, March 2014
[22] Why I Quit the Government's Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, Dr Chris Allen in Huffington Post, October 2014
[23] The fight against Islamophobia is going backwards, Matthew Goodwin in Guardian, October 2015
[24] Action against Hate, Home Office, July 2016
[25] A HATE CRIME REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR LONDON, 2014-2017
[26] National Policing Hate Crime Strategy, 2014

38. The perception within many Muslim communities is that in spite of rhetoric from decision makers, practical steps to combat extremism focus on Muslims rather than those committing hate crimes against Muslims.[27] The reality is that failure "to tackle and take serious Islamophobia can have a detrimental impact on policies aimed at ensuring cohesion, integration, preventing radicalisation, equalities and more."[28]

Extremism and counter-terrorism

39. Terrorism, has cast a long dark shadow over Muslim communities in the UK and the West post 9/11. It has generated the culture of fear, but it has also generated ill-thought through counter-terrorism policies which, far from preventing terrorism, are alienating Muslim communities, especially young people whose extremist recruiters tell them that they have no stake in British society as practising Muslims.

39. Counter-terrorism legislation has had the greatest impact on Muslim communities, acting as a blunt tool to confront the threat but playing a major role in creating a perception amongst some within many Muslim communities that they are second class citizens. The concerns can be summarised as follows, but can be found in greater detail here:[29]

   39.1. Muslims being seen through the lens of terror - ordinary actions when committed by Muslims are seen as linked to terrorism.

   39.2. A perception that Muslims are targeted differently to those of other faiths, in particular following the Prevent duty being made a statutory duty on public bodies - this view is supported by statistics, case studies[30] and statements made by senior politicians.

40. The culture of fear also leads to the growing Islamophobia taking place in Britain today, which certainly is not aiding integration. 31% of young children believe that Muslims are taking over England; on average they believed that Muslims make up 36% of the population (not 5%); and 26% believe that Islam encourages terrorism/extremism.[31]

41. These extreme views amongst a significant proportion of young children has led to an increase in bullying against Muslim children. More than 1,400 children and young people contacted ChildLine for counselling about racist bullying in 2013, up 69 per cent

---

[27] MCB response to Home Secretary Theresa May's new counter-extremism strategy on 23 March 2015

[28] "Tackling Islamophobia", Chris Allen, 2014

[29] Response to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill, Muslim Council of Britain, January 2015 http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Response-to-the-Counter-Terrorism-and-Security-Bill.pdf

[30] Concerns on Prevent, Muslim Council of Britain, 2015 http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/20150803-Case-studies-about-Prevent.pdf

[31] Show Racism The Red Card poll of 6000 children between 10-15, The Guardian, 19 May 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/19/most-children-think-immigrants-are-stealing-jobs-schools-study-shows

on the previous 12 months.[32] Islamophobia is a particular issue in schools, according to the charity, with young Muslims reporting that they are being called "terrorists" and "bombers" by classmates. With little being seen to be done to challenge these extreme views and the impact on young children, there is a risk that many Muslim children will come out of school having experienced Islamophobia directly.

42.   When it comes to adult Britons, 37% would support policies to reduce the number of Muslims in the UK,[33] and more than half of Britons (56%) now regard Islam - the religion generally, as distinct from Islamic extremists - as a threat to the UK.[34] As the attitudes towards Muslims have become more negative, we have also seen an increase in attacks against Muslims, with Metropolitan police figures showing a 70% year-on-year increase - a startling rise that does not even include the chronic under-reporting of this form of crime.

43.   Issues such as grooming, FGM and forced marriages are ones that mainstream Muslim institutions often speak out against. But to label them as specifically Muslim problems is just as bad as not doing anything about them because of excuses of political correctness. In all three cases, for example, Muslim institutions themselves can and have played their part in speaking out against these essentially cultural practises:

43.1.   On grooming, the MCB organised a community conference on the matter and facilitated a Friday sermon day encouraging Imams to speak out and encourage the community to speak out.

43.2.   On FGM, the MCB issued leaflets and facilitated scholarly responses stating that there was no Islamic basis for this practise

43.3.   On forced marriages, there have been several initiatives around the country that have highlighted that in Islamic tradition, marriage without consent of the bride is not permissible.

44.   We want better community cohesion, and we want to certainly confront and counter terrorism. However, we are concerned with the government's trajectory of engaging in state-sponsored sectarianism in an attempt to define which version of Islam is most suitable to its subjective counter-extremism needs. The Prevent strategy does precisely this, alienating many Muslim communities in the process who have become wary of always being approached through the prism of security.

45.   Yet in the latest of a series of studies critiquing this strategy, the Open Society Foundation concluded that "the current Prevent strategy suffers from multiple, mutually reinforcing structural flaws", adding that there are "serious indications that Prevent is

---

[32] Youngsters' terror attack fears prompt rise in calls to helpline ChildLine, *Daily Mirror*, 20 November 2015 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/youngsters-terror-attack-fears-prompt-6863851

[33] Yougov poll, 2012 - http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/sep/16/voters-support-anti-immigrant-party

[34] 7/7 Bombings Anniversary Poll Shows More Than Half Of Britons See Muslims As A Threat, Huffington Post, 3 July 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/07/03/77-bombings-muslims-islam-britain-poll_n_7694452.html?utm_hp_ref=beyond-the-bombings

counterproductive". The government's counter-extremism strategy is flawed because it has defined extremism poorly and in highly subjective ways. The implementation of the Prevent strategy has resulted in numerous case studies of young children, teachers and health patients being referred to Prevent for spurious reasons, making up 80% of a growing number of referrals.[35] This includes the case of a hidden Qur'an in a child's bedroom as a sign of radicalisation.[36]

46.   The government has stated that Prevent works best when delivered in partnership with communities, civil society groups and individuals. And yet it refuses to open the Prevent strategy to scrutiny or oversight. More importantly, it refuses to engage with the very communities it seeks to serve. For example, while we feel policy is best served if there is engagement with diverse stakeholders, the government has refused to engage with the MCB; an organisation which is the largest non-sectarian umbrella body of Muslim institutions and mosques across the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

47.   In light of the comments above, below we have outlined our recommendations for tackling the barriers to participation in public life for British Muslims.

48.   On hate crime and Islamophobia, government and decision-makers should:
   - **Engage with Muslim communities when determining policy related to Muslims:** The government's unwillingness to work with elected Muslim community groups is not conducive to community engagement which is key for a successful hate crime strategy.
   - **Align strategies:** Varied strategies of the police, local mayors and central government in tackling all forms of hate crime equally should be aligned, ensuring clear timelines, metrics of success, and regular updates on progress made.
   - **Update legislation:** Protection of discrimination against some religious minorities (Sikhs/Jews) does not extend to Muslims (not a race according to Race Relations Act 1976 (amended in 2000 and 2003). However, given that it is the visible signs of a Muslim that lead to greater abuse rather than the belief system itself[37], the government should commit to a review of the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act as advised by the Law Commission[38]
   - **Commission reports into Islamophobia:** Through academic research, evidence-based policy can be developed.

---

[35] http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/20150803-Case-studies-about-Prevent.pdf
[36] How well are further education and skills providers implementing the 'Prevent' duty?, Ofsted, July 2016
[37] Study from Bristol University, 2008
[38] Hate Crime: the case for extending the existing offences, Law Commission, 2013

- **Education from a young age:** Further to the excellent proposals in the Action against Hate action plan, religious discrimination in schools should be tracked as is proposed in USA[39] and the teaching of Islam should become more widespread to remove basic misconceptions of the faith.
- **Develop procedures:** In order to deal with what would happen were there to be another significant attack on a mosque or Muslims in the UK.
- **Increase diversity and inclusion:** Promote diversity in public bodies and encourage those from ethnic minority backgrounds to participate in the wider public service (including as governors of schools following the Trojan Horse hoax).
- **Restorative justice:** Consider introducing a system of criminal justice which focuses on the rehabilitation of hate crime offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large.
- **Training:** Better training for police services across the country in identifying and investigating allegations of Islamophobia; training for public sector (NHS, education authorities, local authorities).
- **Public acknowledgement of Islamophobia:** Political will and leadership is required to acknowledge Islamophobia is a serious issue, as, for example, the Board of Deputies of Jews have done in a joint statement with the MCB.[40]
- **High-profile interventions:** Further to a public acknowledgement, politicians need to take responsibility to counter Islamophobic rhetoric in mainstream politics and make media intervention in specific cases.
- **Improve usage of language:** Avoid using patronising language when engaging with the community; separately, consider multi-agency co-ordination to stop using the term 'Islamic' or 'jihadi' when describing terrorism in line with the Obama administration.

49.   For the media, we recommend the following:
- **More effective regulation:** By a truly independent body with the willingness and ability to deter poor standards within the media, as recommended by Lord Leveson.
- **Training for journalists:** A good religious literacy in the world of media will be useful to ensure they "have a better understanding of Islam."[41] This can include a reference guide that journalists can use to encourage responsible reporting.
- **Greater diversity within the media:** Less than 0.5 per cent of UK journalists are Muslim, compared to almost 5 per cent of the national population.[42] This lack of

---

[39] U.S. to track religious discrimination in schools as anti-Muslim sentiment grows, The Washington Post, September 2016

[40] Joint statement - British Muslims and Jews Call for Peace, Wisdom and Hope over Conflict in Israel and Palestine, August 2014

[41] Point 47 in Action against Hate, Home Office, July 2016

[42] Research from City University

diversity is more evident at more senior positions. Such a lack of diversity is also noticeable within the media regulator IPSO and its Complaints Committee.

50.   On extremism and counter-terrorism:

- **Commission an independent review** of the Prevent strategy, especially in its statutory implementation in schools, healthcare and other areas of life. This should treat community cohesion separately and distinctly from Prevent.
- **Strengthen our police forces** so that they can focus on intelligence-led policing. This means that the police should focus on what they do best and not be embroiled in the contentious realm of non-violent extremism.
- **Build capacity to improve Mosque contribution** so that their narrative of the true message of Islam is more appealing from the pulpit than it is from the extremist propaganda of social media accounts.
- **Address mental health issues in communities:** A police study recently found that "Half of all people feared to be at risk of terrorist sympathies may have mental health or psychological problems."[43] In this regard, we support the National Policing Lead for Prevent Simon Cole, who has passionately argued for stronger mental health support at community levels. We also endorse the Home Affairs Select Committee's recommendation of the Aarhus process for foreign fighters where – rather than facing criminal sanction – they are offered assistance in mental health, counselling, healthcare and even education, employment and accommodation.
- **Remove the culture of fear** by addressing perceptions of an environment of suspicion and surveillance of Muslims.
- **Build consensus and cooperation** from across the board, and not just Muslim communities. The government, police, politicians civil society and, crucially, the media, all must encourage positive integration and actively shun the singling out and demonisation of any minority.

CONCLUSION

51.   The MCB's raison d'etre is to represent a faith-based constituency - one which is culturally, ethnically and socio-economically diverse – and more a community of communities. What binds this 'community of communities' together are a shared religious creed and values.

52.   The challenge we have is how best to serve as the best ambassadors of our faith in these difficult times of uncertainty and tension. The MCB is a leadership body and a 'servant body', in the sense that its mainly volunteer cadre are seeking genuine opportunities to work for the wider community development and the societal good in

---

[43] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/20/police-study-radicalisation-mental-health-problems

practical ways, rather than personal ambition or self-serving aims (though the two can overlap!). These are challenging demands.

53. The MCB is therefore grateful to Citizens UK for this Commission, and the opportunity to submit its views. We will take on board the Commission's findings in order to refine our own strategic vision in working for the betterment of British Muslims.

APPENDIX A: POSITIVE CASE STUDIES DOCUMENTED BY THE MCB

By the Muslim Council of Britain

1. As stated above, the MCB was established to seek the common good. In addition to seeking parity for Muslims, it also promotes initiatives that foster integration, unity and pluralism. Some recent examples are listed below, though there are many, many more:

   1.1. **Visit My Mosque Day:** Last year, as a result of the terrible Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, the MCB initiated the inaugural 'Visit My Mosque Day' around the country. Mosques were encouraged to open their doors (many already do anyway), invite neighbours, local faith leaders and others to explain what takes place at a mosque. The MCB will be holding another 'Visit My Mosque Day' next year and it is expected that some 100 mosques will participate.

   1.2. **Voter registration:** Even though the MCB is a non-partisan body that does not endorse political parties, it has, since its inception, encouraged British Muslims to fulfil their civic duties and participate fully in British life. This has involved voter registration campaigns, highlighting the importance of taking part in the election process and holding hustings. As such, a *Times* leader said in 2005 of the MCB: 'the Council has taken an important step to counter the marginalisation and alienation of many British Muslims, and to inculcate the notion that democracy is compatible with Islam.' [44]

   1.3. **Leadership Development Programme:** For over ten years, the MCB has organised a 'Leadership Development Programme', which brings together Muslim men and women, many of whom are leaders and activists in their own mosques and communities. The programme seeks to harness the potential of high achieving young Muslims by instructing them in the key qualities and characteristics of successful and effective leadership. The Programme attracts a diverse range of young British Muslims all of whom are selected on the basis of their civic contributions as well as their academic achievements. The course is run to ensure that young British Muslims are offered opportunities to develop skills for future use in their professional and civic lives. [45]

   1.4. **Intra-faith and inter-faith cohesion:** Concerned about foreign conflicts affecting the social peace here in the UK, the MCB has been proactive in order to calm tensions. In 2013, the MCB facilitated an 'Intrafaith Unity Statement' [46] urging Muslims from Sunni and Shia traditions to come together at a time of great conflict abroad. Since then it has worked at 'twinning' mosques belonging to different traditions so that British Muslims appreciate the plurality in Islam.

---

[44] The Right Choice, *The Times*, 21 April 2005
[45] See Leadership Development Programme website http://www.mcb.org.uk/ldp/
[46] British Muslims Sign Historic Intrafaith Unity Statement, June 2013 http://www.mcb.org.uk/british-muslims-sign-historic-intra-faith-unity-statement/

Similarly, in 2014, at the height of the Gaza crisis, the MCB issued a joint statement with the Board of Deputies of British Jews stating that whatever our differences over the conflict in the Middle East, we must maintain friendship and cooperation here in the UK.

1.5. **Governance:** The governance structure of the MCB mirrors other umbrella bodies including the Board of Deputies of British Jews; it therefore requires each affiliate to choose their representatives. With a low initial proportion of women, the MCB started by creating a target for % of women; with this being less than successful, it changed the constitution to enforce a target, which has now been achieved. It concedes there is still progress to be made in this area.

1.6. **Youth participation:** Last year, the MCB pledged to work with the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) to "to encourage and support all our affiliates made up of mosques, charities and other Muslim organisations, to have safeguarding policies, procedures and practices in place for the purposes of protecting and safeguarding children and young people."

1.7. **Encouraging cohesion:** Since 2007, the MCB has supported academic research to explore the role that History Education and Religious Education can play in creating a dynamic both of national inclusion and, vitally, self-inclusion for Muslim young people. Amongst other things, it has led the MCB to support the 'Curriculum for Cohesion' project. [47]

1.8. **Capacity Building in Mosques:** Following the publication of its 'Voices from the Minaret' survey of mosques in 2006, the MCB initiated a capacity building programme for 100 mosques and Islamic centres saw over 300 imams and mosque trustees take part in a process to update British mosques to modern realities. The programme marked with a willingness to address the challenges of ensuring that mosques do not resemble 'men's clubs' but become places of interaction for the whole community. The MCB recognises that much more needs to be done in this area and more recently established the Institutional Capacity-Building working group which works with mosques to strengthen their management and governance structures.

1.9. **The Footsteps Project:** In 2006-2009 the MCB organised male and female Muslim role models to conduct workshops in schools with high Muslim student populations. Feedback from the programme found that by single intervention 84% of respondents were inspired, 49% said the visit changed their goals, and 64% said that the talk opened up career choices.

1.10. **Books 4 Schools:** Launched in 2004[48], this project sought to address the issue of inadequate resources for teaching Islam in state schools, by distributing resource packs to teachers. These packs were funded by the Muslim community and aimed to provide an authentic understanding of Islam to harbour greater tolerance and harmony amongst Britain's diverse communities.

---

[47] http://curriculumforcohesion.org/curriculum-for-cohesion-makes-keynote-address-at-the-2012-mcb-education-conference/
[48] http://www.mcb.org.uk/books-4-schools/

From within Muslim communities

2. There are several initiatives the MCB can commend, but time and space do not allow. But here are some highlights:

    2.1. **Teaching English and life skills at mosques and Islamic centres:** Mosques are not only centres of worship, but a community hub. We encourage mosques to follow the example of other mosques in teaching additional skills that will allow British Muslims to play their full part in British society. At the Harrow Central Mosque for example, ITEC English language and skills classes are available for women. At the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre, their 'Women's Link' project was awarded the Matrix Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance Services. In addition to teaching life skills, they have a domestic violence support unit.

    2.2. **Inter-faith events at local level:** recognise the good work being done by different faith groups to get to know one another. Our affiliates are active in inter-faith forums, and some have deep relationships whereby they share each others religious events.

    2.3. **Muslim charities and fundraising:** As we have stated above, Muslim are the largest charitable donors and many British Muslim charities play a large part in helping others at home and abroad. Following Storm Desmond, Muslim charities excelled themselves by coming to the aid of those affected by flooding.[49] More recently, student Islamic societies raised over £1m for orphans and needy children.

    2.4. **Delivering life-saving training:** As part of the British Islamic Medical Association's (BIMA) Lifesavers project[50], mosques across the UK transformed into public centres where hundreds of Muslim health professionals taught CPR and basic life support skills to over a thousand people.

    2.5. **Campaign to Give Blood:** The Imam Hussain Blood Donation Campaign[51], established by the Islamic Unity Society, was started in 2006 and is the first campaign within the UK which aims to increase the number of regular blood donors from Muslim communities.

    2.6. **Ramadan Tent Project:** An award winning community-led initiative[52] aiming to participate in social change by creating bridges between individuals, bringing together communities, and fostering interfaith dialogue. Through its flagship project Open Iftar, Ramadan Tent Project invites the homeless and the public at

---

[49] Muslims Help WIth Flood Relief http://www.mcb.org.uk/storm-desmond-floods/
[50] Mosques Across the Country Open Doors for Life Saving Training http://www.mcb.org.uk/mosques-across-the-country-open-doors-for-life-saving-training/
[51] https://www.ius.org.uk/giveblood/
[52] http://www.ramadantentproject.com/about.html

large, Muslims and non-Muslims, to break fast together at dusk during the holy month of Ramadan each year.

2.7. **The Big Iftar:** Launched in 2012, The Big Iftar[53] is a platform for communities to come together around food during the holy month of Ramadan. Iftars take place in homes, community centres, places of worship, parks, town squares, schools and more in an effort that brings together people of all faiths and backgrounds.

---

[53] http://www.thebigiftar.org/about/