



# MEND's Scottish Policy Pledges

## 2021



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# Introducing Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND)

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## MEND

Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) is a community-funded equalities NGO that seeks to encourage political, civic, and social engagement within British Muslim communities by empowering British Muslims to interact with political and media institutions effectively. Our approach to achieving this involves a combination of community engagement (through education, community events, local campaigns to encourage voting etc.) and advocacy work (involving victim support, policy engagement, submissions to parliamentary inquiries, media analysis, election resources, briefings etc.).

Our work has been recognised through the following accolades:

- The World Economic Forum commended our work as “best practice” in Human Rights “protection and promotion”.
- The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights rated us as a “best example for civil society organisations”.
- The EU Parliament Magazine stated that “The EU could learn a lot from MEND’s work on counter-radicalisation through engagement”.

## The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) was founded by MEND in response to rising anti-Muslim attacks across Europe and a growing tide of anti-Muslim sentiment. The IRU offers a platform for victims of Islamophobic hate crime and discrimination to report and share their experiences and serves as a source of free advice, support, and referral services.

The IRU serves three main functions:

- Data collection and monitoring,
- The provision of free legal advice and police liaison,
- Provision of basic emotional support and signposting to further professional services where required.

## MEND’s Policy Pledges

MEND’s Scottish policy pledges have been developed and ratified by our Scottish Regional Council. In accordance with the principles of representative democracy, our pledges are designed to truly reflect the diversity and interests of our volunteers and the Muslim communities that they represent. MEND’s policy pledges serve as the key basis upon which we engage with political parties, parliamentarians, councillors, and policymakers in our efforts to represent the interests of local Muslim communities.

# A Note from our CEO

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In recent years, the Scottish Parliament has been making commendable efforts to tackle Islamophobia and address the challenges faced by Scottish Muslims. At the same time, Scotland has often been at the forefront of efforts to support refugees from Syria and other parts of the world.

However, as in other parts of the UK, Muslims in Scotland continue to face numerous challenges, with Islamophobia acting as a significant barrier to their enjoyment of opportunities, rights, and freedoms on an equal footing with their non-Muslim counterparts.

Within this context, MEND aims to empower Muslim communities to engage at all levels in our democracy fully. In pursuit of this aim and in consultation with our Scottish volunteers and local stakeholders, we have devised a series of policy pledges that address the issues faced by Scottish Muslim communities in order to further their social, civic, economic, and political participation across society.

We hope that Scottish political parties, candidates, and representatives alike will take this opportunity to critically engage with these pledges and affirm their commitment to the pledges themselves, but also to the Muslim communities that they seek to serve.



**Azhar Qayum**

CEO, MEND



# Executive Summary

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## Understanding Islamophobia

The way that Islamophobia functions, is manifest, and is reproduced position it as a form of racism. Ultimately, Islamophobia encompasses a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic processes and phenomena that create exclusions, restrictions, or preferences against Muslim communities. Such exclusions serve to impair Muslims' recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of opportunities and freedoms on an equal footing with their non-Muslim counterparts.

*“Ultimately, Islamophobia encompasses a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic processes and phenomena that create exclusions, restrictions, or preferences against Muslim communities.”*

## Racial and Religious Equality

While the CPG on Tackling Islamophobia has previously done important work in defining Islamophobia, this has been disrupted by COVID-19. An agreed definition is essential in underpinning legislative and policy changes designed to combat the challenges that Scottish Muslims face. As such, urgently returning to this work is imperative.

At the same time, there is a need for adequate legal protections against Islamophobic and other forms of hate crime – of which an important step is the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, which (at the time of writing) is currently being heard in the Scottish Parliament. While there are indeed legitimate concerns surrounding the required amendments, it is vital that MSPs and political parties reaffirm their belief in the bill's necessity and their support for a victim-centred approach designed to enhance equality and justice for all.

Meanwhile, places of worship face a heightened risk of attack, as demonstrated by the conviction of neo-Nazi Connor Ward, who planned and prepared terror attacks against mosques in Aberdeen. With one of the greatest obstacles to protecting mosques and Islamic institutions being the lack of funding provided to ensure their security, MEND urges the Scottish Government to urgently outline a strategy to finance mosque security and allocate existing security funding in a manner that is proportional to risk.

### Policy Pledges:

1. Commit to adopting the definition of Islamophobia produced by the APPG for British Muslims: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”, and apply this definition in conjunction with the guidelines that Coalition Against Islamophobia has produced.
2. Commit to supporting the principles that the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (i) is a necessary piece of legislation; (ii) its aim must be to enhance equality and justice through the protection of vulnerable groups; and (iii) this aim should be met through a victim-centred approach and a focus on empowering vulnerable communities.
3. Commit to financing mosque security and allocating security funding in a manner that is proportional to risk, in line with what is already correctly provided to Jewish religious institutions.

## Youth and Education

Due to British Muslims' young age demographic, attention must be paid to the disproportionate impact of educational policies on these communities. At the same time, it is important to explore how accommodating religio-cultural identities positively impact the development of children from minority backgrounds, with the provision of Islamically-compliant student loans and state-funded faith schools being but two examples of beneficial initiatives.

At the same time, efforts must be undertaken to address unconscious bias as well as the overt bullying that children from minority backgrounds face. This must occur through targeted teacher training, prioritising PSE, supporting initiatives to decolonise education, and addressing unconscious and explicit stereotyping within teaching materials. Finally, increasing diversity levels within teaching is essential in providing role models for Muslim and BAME students that would directly impact their aspirations and educational attainment.

### Policy Pledges:

4. Commit to implementing Islamically-compliant student loans to encourage more Scottish Muslim students to attend university.
5. Commit to establishing state-funded faith school provisions for Muslims and other faith communities, thus allowing schools to continue to pursue the Curriculum of Excellence whilst remaining free to emphasise their religious identity and ethos.
6. Commit to developing training programmes for teachers focussed on tackling and addressing bullying based on race, religion, disability, or sexuality. Such training must include increasing the confidence and willingness of teachers to enforce policies and procedures and report incidences to the appropriate authorities when dealing with such cases.
7. Commit to prioritising PSE within schools and enlisting grassroots Muslim organisations to assist in developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia.
8. Commit to tackling the production and reinforcement of unconscious bias through educational syllabi by investigating the presentation of minority groups in teaching materials across all subjects and implementing awareness training for all teachers in conjunction with representative grassroots organisations.
9. Commit to supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst including an emphasis on colonialism, shared histories, and the contributions of minority communities in building our society as a compulsory component within the curriculum for excellence.
10. Commit to increasing the diversity within teaching, particularly at senior leadership levels, and through mentorship programs for junior BAME staff.

## The Labour Market

According to the CPG for Tackling Islamophobia's inquiry, 36.6% of Muslim respondents reported being abused at work, with increasing marginalisation of Muslims in the workplace, leading to long-lasting impacts, including higher unemployment levels, under-employment, and mental health problems amongst Muslim communities.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Muslim women continue to suffer a 'triple penalty' in terms of discrimination compounded by their ethnicity, religion, and gender.

### Policy Pledges:

11. Commit to tackling religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion.
12. Commit to supporting employers to recognise and accommodate religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace, including the provision of halal meat, prayer rooms, and flexible work hours during Ramadan.
13. Commit to the use of name-blind applications and targeted interventions within employment aimed at tackling the triple penalty and improving access to employment for Scottish Muslim women specifically.

## Crime, Policing, and the Criminal Justice System

In 2020, reports emerged of the Scottish Government's alleged "reticence to speak publicly" about institutional racism within Police Scotland for fear of negative media coverage.<sup>2</sup> Structural and institutional Islamophobia and racism embedded within the Scottish criminal justice system must be recognised and confronted. This must include examining issues of diversity and unconscious bias amongst criminal justice practitioners, structural and socio-economic inequalities, and the consequences of a history of mistrust of state apparatus within minority communities. At the same time, attention must be paid to Police Scotland itself, particularly in terms of its relationship with local communities, strategies to increase diversity, and accurate data recording.

### Policy Pledges:

14. Commit to investigating structural Islamophobia within the Criminal Justice System.
15. Commit to increasing diversity at all levels of seniority within Police Scotland and at all levels of the criminal justice system, including through positive intervention and mentorship programs for BAME members.
16. Commit to ensuring that Police Scotland record Islamophobic hate crimes as a separate category of hate crime.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry Into Islamophobia In Scotland* (The Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Gina Davidson, "Police Scotland Faces 'institutional Racism' Claim in Think Tank Report," *The Scotsman*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/crime/police-scotland-faces-institutional-racism-claim-think-tank-report-2913701>

## Political Engagement

Islamophobia and prejudice exhibited by political representatives at all ends of the political spectrum has been a growing concern for a number of years. Simultaneously, BAME and Muslim communities remain woefully underrepresented in the Scottish Parliament and within political party leaderships. However, where representation does exist, these individuals continue to face abuse and vilification for their religious and ethnic identities. Central to tackling these challenges is ensuring that political parties outline their strategies to tackle prejudice within their ranks and increase diversity within their candidate selection.

### Policy Pledge:

17. Commit to ensuring that all political parties outline their strategies to improve diversity within candidate selection ahead of all Scottish elections.

## Minority Rights and Integration

Despite the ever-changing nature of the UK's relationship with the EU, the aims and objectives of EU equal treatment directives will continue to have value for both the Scottish and the broader UK equalities landscape. At the same time, there is concern that the Ministry of Justice's recent independent review of the Human Rights Act 1998 may be used as a mechanism either to overhaul the protections afforded within UK law, or to obstruct victims' access to justice through potential limitations to Schedules 2, 3, and 4 of the Act. Regardless of Westminster's approach to human rights within reserved legislation, it is essential that the Scottish Government commits to supporting and protecting our current equalities principles, values, and commitments when it comes to devolved powers and Scottish policy strategies.

### Policy Pledges:

18. Commit to supporting the protections afforded by the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection.
19. Commit to preserving human rights and the protection of minority rights, including, but not limited to, the rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the wearing of religious dress or symbols as currently enshrined within the Scotland Act 1998 and within the Human Rights Act 1998.

## COVID-19

Understanding why certain communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 requires an examination of underlying structural inequalities. Muslim and BAME communities are faced with a variety of socio-economic challenges that make them more susceptible to catching the virus and more likely to face barriers to their physical recovery, as well as meaning that they will likely to feel the lasting economic impacts more acutely. Any recovery strategies must take the existing history of inequality into account and specifically mitigate the pandemic's increased harm on minority communities in terms of healthcare, education, and economic security.

### Policy Pledge:

20. Commit to an independent root and branch investigation into the socio-economic impact of COVID on minority communities, including examining areas such as education, economic impacts, the deployment of police powers, and increased health risks.



“Scotland’s diversity is one of its strengths.

However the rise in Islamophobia and hate crime in recent years is deeply concerning.

I was proud to lead an SNP Government that brought forward the Hate Crime Bill to ensure that offences motivated by prejudice are treated seriously.

We will ensure your voice is heard as we develop our next race equality action plan, and invest in programmes to increase leadership from our ethnic minority communities as well as develop an ethnicity pay gap strategy.

At this election, the SNP has taken positive action to ensure our candidates represent the society we live in.

I hope to work together to create a fairer, more inclusive Scotland.”

- Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister for Scotland



“My Scottish Liberal Democrats will always stand for equality, and for everyone’s right to pursue their hopes and dreams. This upcoming election hopefully will make our Parliament a true representation of Scotland’s vibrant and multicultural nature. All our candidates are committed to making Scotland a safe nation for everyone, and we strongly condemn any act of violence or discrimination based on religion, gender, and nationality. Islamophobia causes harm and fear every day. The next Parliament must do everything it can to eradicate it.”

- Willie Rennie, Leader of the Scottish Lib Dems





“In my time as an MSP, I have been committed to tackling Islamophobia, setting up a Cross Party Group and producing a world first report on responsible media reporting of Islam and Muslim people.



“Now as Scottish Labour leader, my resolve to take on this prejudice and discrimination has only strengthened. My party will always fight for equality in all its forms.

“My focus is a national recovery from the pandemic to deliver a stronger and fairer Scotland than the one before. That means striving for a more tolerant and inclusive society, one that celebrates the positive contributions Scottish Muslims make.”

- **Anas Sarwar, Leader of the Scottish Labour Party**



“The Scottish Greens are committed to building an equal and inclusive Scotland, and we believe that our communities’ diversity is something to be proud of. Islamophobia is a blight on too many lives, and it must have no place in Scotland. Every political party has a responsibility to tackle it, and we look forward to continuing to work with Scotland’s Muslim communities toward that shared goal.”



- **Patrick Harvie, Co-Leader of the Scottish Greens**



“No one should be marginalised or discriminated against because of their religion.

We have seen the sad and shocking statistic that a third of Scottish Muslims say Islamophobia is an everyday issue for them.

And with almost 80 per cent of Muslims saying Islamophobia is getting worse in Scotland, we need to see action to tackle prejudice at its root.

Recently we launched the Conservative Muslim Forum Scotland. This organisation supports people from the Muslim community to get involved with the Scottish Conservatives and ensure they are recognised by the Party for their contribution and commitment to Scotland. They will also be working to increase the number of candidates we have from the Muslim community at every level of government.

Across Scotland, the Scottish Conservatives will support measures to make Islamophobia a thing of the past.”

- Douglas Ross, Leader of the, Scottish Conservative Party





Since the opening of  
the **Islamophobia  
Response Unit** in  
2017, we have dealt with  
over **800 cases** of  
Islamophobic hate crime  
and discrimination.

These include cases of  
**physical assault,  
harassment,  
workplace  
discrimination**  
and more.

# Introduction:

# What is Islamophobia?

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## A definition of Islamophobia

In 2018, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Muslims launched an inquiry into a definition of Islamophobia. The APPG concluded this inquiry by proposing the following definition:

*Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.*

## Understanding this definition

The benefit of the above definition is that it frames Islamophobia within the lens of racism. This is important as Islamophobia manifests, functions, and reproduces as a form of racism, with Muslim communities being frequently seen and treated as a racialised group. As with all forms of racial discrimination, Islamophobia encompasses a broad spectrum of social, political, and economic processes and phenomena that act to create distinctions, exclusions, restrictions, or preferences against Muslim communities. Such exclusions ultimately have the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing Muslims' recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life. In other words, Islamophobia can be found in a wide variety of forms (from political statements, policies, and media representations, to the actions of individuals), all of which result in an environment in which Muslims are prevented from enjoying and accessing equal opportunities, freedoms, and treatment compared to their non-Muslim counterparts.

However, while the APPG definition of Islamophobia potentially provides a broad and holistic encompassment of the phenomenon in a conceptual capacity, from a policy perspective, it would benefit from greater clarity as to what exactly is included within its remit and how Islamophobia manifests itself within the daily lives of Muslims. Consequently, Coalition Against Islamophobia has developed the following [guidelines](#) that are designed to be used in conjunction with the above definition in order to provide a robust and policy applicable understanding of what Islamophobia is.





# Racial and Religious Equality

## Pledges

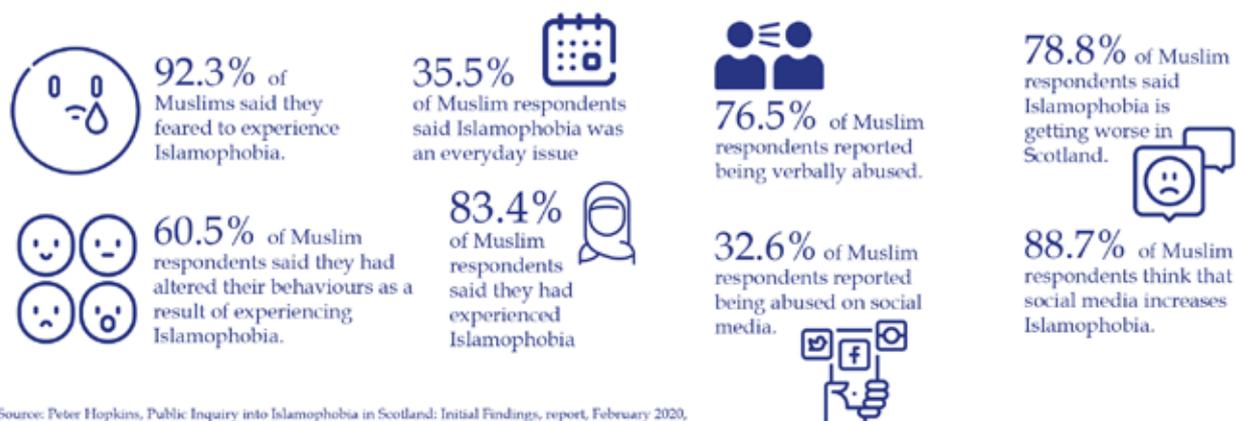
- Commit to adopting the definition of Islamophobia produced by the APPG for British Muslims: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”, and apply this definition in conjunction with the guidelines that Coalition Against Islamophobia has produced.
- Commit to supporting the principles that the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (i) is a necessary piece of legislation; (ii) its aim must be to enhance equality and justice through the protection of vulnerable groups; and (iii) this aim should be met through a victim-centred approach and a focus on empowering vulnerable communities.
- Commit to financing mosque security and allocating security funding in a manner that is proportional to risk, in line with what is already correctly provided to Jewish religious institutions.

## Islamophobia in Scotland

In recent years, the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Tackling Islamophobia has been doing valuable work examining the challenges facing Muslim communities. The initial findings of the first-ever inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland, which the CPG conducted and published in February 2020, illustrate the harrowing extent of Islamophobia across the country. According to the findings, among Muslim respondents, 83.4% said they had experienced Islamophobia, 35.5% said Islamophobia was an everyday issue, and 60.5% said they had altered their behaviours due to experiencing Islamophobia. Simultaneously, 78.8% of Muslim respondents said Islamophobia is getting worse in Scotland, and 92.3% said they feared to experience Islamophobia.<sup>3</sup>



## The first public inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland revealed:



Source: Peter Hopkins, Public Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland: Initial Findings, report, February 2020, <https://36v.c53.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Public-inquiry-into-Islamophobia-initial-findings.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hopkins, Public Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland: Initial Findings, report, February 2020, <https://36v.c53.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Public-inquiry-into-Islamophobia-initial-findings.pdf>

However, the first step in tackling this problem is developing a robust and policy-applicable understanding of what Islamophobia is, how it manifests itself, and how it impacts Muslim communities. Defining Islamophobia is thus essential as it will provide much-needed clarity in legislation and policies intended to protect vulnerable minorities.

The CPG on Tackling Islamophobia has itself been doing important work in this area, having held public consultations surrounding the definition throughout the latter half of 2019. However, this work was disrupted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it is essential that this work is urgently returned to and forms the foundation of future endeavours to develop meaningful strategies to combat public, institutional, and structural forms of Islamophobia that exclude Scottish Muslims from public and political life.

***In line with the understanding of Islamophobia laid out in the introduction of this Policy Pledge Booklet, MEND calls on parties and candidates to commit to adopting the definition of Islamophobia produced by the APPG for British Muslims: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness", and apply this definition in conjunction with the guidelines that Coalition Against Islamophobia has produced.***

## The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

Alongside a definition of Islamophobia is the need for adequate protections against its manifestations. Perhaps the most obvious of these protections are laws to tackle the hate crime and abuse often directed at Muslim communities. Certainly, according to the Crown Office & Prosecutor Fiscal Service, changes being brought in relation to hate crime have risen over the past year, with 2019-20 seeing a 4% increase in reports of racially motivated hate crime and a 24% increase in reports relating to religiously motivated hate crime compared to the year before.<sup>4</sup>

### Racially motivated hate crime

Remains the most **commonly reported hate crime.**

**3,038** charges were reported in 2019-20.

2019-20 saw an **increase of 4 percent** compared to 2018-19.

### Religiously motivated hate crime

There were **660** religiously aggravated charges reported in 2019-20,

2019-20 saw an **increase of 24 percent** compared to 2018-19.

Source: The Crown Office & Prosecutor Fiscal Service, "Hate Crime in Scotland, 2019-20," COPFS, June 12, 2020, <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site-news-from-copfs/1887-hate-crime-in-scotland-2019-20>

At the time of writing, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill is being addressed in the Scottish Parliament. This bill represents important progress in Scotland's mission to enhance equality throughout society. However, the bill has unfortunately become the centre of much divisive debate. It has been seen by some as an attack on existing freedoms, rather than as an essential tool in promoting equal freedoms and justice for all. Such debates threaten to undermine the progress already made in tackling the inequalities still faced by many minority communities across Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> The Crown Office & Prosecutor Fiscal Service, "Hate Crime in Scotland, 2019-20," COPFS, June 12, 2020, <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site-news-from-copfs/1887-hate-crime-in-scotland-2019-20>

**While there remain aspects of the bill in need of further critical analysis, debate, and amendment, it is essential that MSPs and political parties publicly support the following principles:**

- i. **The bill is a necessary piece of legislation to support victims of hate crime.**
- ii. **The aim of the bill must be to enhance equality and justice through the protection of vulnerable groups.**
- iii. **This aim should be met through a victim-centred approach and a focus on empowering vulnerable communities.**

## Protecting places of worship

One of the most unavoidable reminders of the global danger of the far-right is the tragic events in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019, when an attacker opened fire on worshippers in two mosques during Friday prayers. Closer to home, the murder of Jo Cox by Thomas Mair in 2016 and the murder of Makram Ali by Darren Osborne in the Finsbury Park attack in 2017 are reminders of the need to radically recalibrate how far-right violence is understood and tackled within security discourse and strategies. According to the Global Terrorism Index, 2019 witnessed a 320% increase in far-right incidents worldwide over the past five years.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu recently announced that right-wing ideologies pose the fastest-growing terror threat to the UK,<sup>6</sup> with figures from Europol demonstrating that the UK reported the highest number of far-right terror attacks and plots across Europe in 2019.<sup>7</sup> Such evidence highlights that these are not isolated events but part of a broader far-right phenomenon of xenophobic and ethno-nationalist agendas leading to the potential for politically motivated violence.

*“Neo-Nazi Connor Ward was convicted in 2018 for planning terror attacks against mosques in Aberdeen. The police found an array of weapons at Ward’s house, including ball bearings that can be used in pipe bombs; rocket tubes capable of firing projectiles; a stun gun; knuckle dusters; knives; and deactivated bullets.”*

Such threats emanating from the far-right raise concerns about the safety for members of minority communities, as well as buildings and properties belonging to or representing these communities (such as mosques, schools, and community centres). With mosques embodying a visual representation of Islam and Muslim identity, they are often the target of harmful rhetoric and threats directed at Muslim communities as a whole. This is particularly evident in anti-immigration and far-right protests,<sup>8</sup> which often have banners displayed with such slogans as “ban mosques” or “no more mosques”,<sup>9</sup> lest it become part of the “Islamification of Britain” process.<sup>10</sup>



In December 2016, Islamophobic graffiti was spray-painted on a mosque in Cumbernauld, including the words “Saracen go home” and “Deus Vult”, a Latin term meaning “God wills it”.

5. Institute For Economics & Peace. 2019. “Global Terrorism Index 2019 Measuring The Impact Of Terrorism”. <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf>.

6. Dearden, Lizzie. 2019. “Far Right Poses Fastest Growing Terror Threat To UK, Head Of Terror Police Says”. *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terror-attack-plots-uk-far-right-wing-extremism-threat-met-police-neil-basu-a9112046.html>.

7. Europol. 2020. “EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report (Te-Sat)”. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020>.

8. “Islamophobia behind far-right rise in UK, report says”, *BBC News*, February 2019. Accessed on: 19/07/2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47280082>.

9. Peter Walker, “Ukip’s Gerard Batten reiterates his belief that Islam is a ‘death cult’”, *The Guardian*, February 2018. Accessed on: 19/07/2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/18/ukip-gerard-batten-islam-muslims-quran>.

10. Dale Hurd, “Islamic Takeover: Why Mass Immigration Signals ‘the End of Britain’”, *CBN News*, March 2017. Accessed on: 19/07/2019. <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2017/march/why-mass-immigration-may-mean-the-end-of-britain>.

Both are crusader slogans that have become popular with far-right groups in recent years.<sup>11</sup> In an even more disturbing case, neo-Nazi Connor Ward was convicted in 2018 for planning terror attacks against mosques in Aberdeen. The police found an array of weapons at Ward's house, including ball bearings that can be used in pipe bombs; rocket tubes capable of firing projectiles; a stun gun; knuckle dusters; knives; and deactivated bullets. They also discovered that he had downloaded thousands of pieces of far-right propaganda and documents on military strategies and firearms. They further uncovered a book that Ward had authored entitled '*Combat 18 British Mosque Address Book*'.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most significant obstacles to protecting mosques and Islamic institutions remains the lack of funding to ensure their security. While the Government rightfully provides funds of £14 million per year for synagogues and Jewish schools, there remains no regular funding for mosques, with the last 'Places of Worship Security Fund' launched in 2016 providing only £2.4 million to be distributed across mosques, churches, temples, gurdwaras, and other institutions.<sup>13</sup> The Government has recently pledged £1.6 million funding to mosques for security.<sup>14</sup> However, in April 2020, the Prime Minister commendably increased security funding for Jewish institutions in light of a rise in anti-Semitic attacks, committing £14million to support the security of over 400 synagogues and 150 Jewish schools (equivalent to almost £25.5k per institution).<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the £1.6million pledged to support 1825 mosques amounts to a mere £877 per institution.<sup>16</sup> As such, financial strategies must be accompanied by a comprehensive risk analysis in order to develop effective strategies and devise funding plans that are proportionate to the threats that mosques face.

***Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to urgently outline a strategy to finance mosque security and allocate existing security funding in Scotland in a manner that is proportional to the risk that mosques face.***

11. May Bulman, "Mosque Sprayed With Islamophobic Graffiti In 'Worrying' Attack", *The Independent*, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/mosque-sprayed-islamophobic-graffiti-god-willing-police-scotland-north-lanarkshire-hate-crime-a7481926.html>.

12. "Man Jailed For Planning Mosque Attacks", *BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-43725367>.

13. "Home Office Grants £14 Million Funding For Security At Jewish Institutions". 2020. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-grants-14-million-funding-for-security-at-jewish-institutions>.

14. "Places Of Worship To Get Security Funding Boost". 2019. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-get-security-funding-boost>.

15. "Home Office Grants £14 Million Funding For Security At Jewish Institutions". 2020. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-grants-14-million-funding-for-security-at-jewish-institutions>.

16. Muslims in Britain. 2017. "UK Mosque Statistics / Masjid Statistics". [http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid\\_report.pdf](http://www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf).

**NO**

**MORE**

**MOSQUE**



# Youth and Education

## Pledges

- Commit to implementing Islamically-compliant student loans to encourage more Scottish Muslim students to attend university.
- Commit to establishing state-funded faith school provisions for Muslims and other faith communities, thus allowing schools to continue to pursue the Curriculum of Excellence whilst remaining free to emphasise their religious identity and ethos.
- Commit to developing training programmes for teachers focussed on tackling and addressing bullying based on race, religion, disability, or sexuality. Such training must include increasing the confidence and willingness of teachers to enforce policies and procedures and report incidences to the appropriate authorities when dealing with such cases.
- Commit to prioritising PSE within schools and enlisting grassroots Muslim organisations to assist in developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia.
- Commit to tackling the production and reinforcement of unconscious bias through educational syllabi by investigating the presentation of minority groups in teaching materials across all subjects and implementing awareness training for all teachers in conjunction with representative grassroots organisations.
- Commit to supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst including an emphasis on colonialism, shared histories, and the contributions of minority communities in building our society as a compulsory component within the curriculum for excellence.
- Commit to increasing the diversity within teaching, particularly at senior leadership levels, and through mentorship programs for junior BAME staff.

## Catering for the religio-cultural needs of a young age demographic

Muslims have the youngest age profile of all religious groups in the UK,<sup>17</sup> with 33% aged fifteen or under and 48% below the age of twenty-five.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, Muslims account for 9% of babies and toddlers aged 0-4years old.<sup>19</sup> As such, Muslim youth have a huge potential to contribute positively to Scotland's socio-economic life in the coming decades, particularly considering the creativity, innovation, and dynamism traditionally associated with younger generations. At the same time, policies and issues surrounding youth and schools will necessarily have a disproportionate impact upon Muslim communities due to their overrepresentation within young age demographics. Therefore, policy development and implementation must be sensitive to the needs of Muslim families.<sup>20</sup>

*“Muslims have the youngest age profile of all religious groups in the UK, with 33% aged fifteen or under and 48% below the age*

17. “Ethnicity and religion by age,” Office for National Statistics, accessed June 07, 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencypandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/ethnicityandreligionbyage>.

18. “British Muslims in Numbers A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health profile of Muslims in Britain drawing on the 2011 Census,” Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), accessed June 07, 2017, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/muslimstatistics/>.

19. Ami Sedghi, “Is it true there is a startling rise in the birthrate of British Muslims?,” The Guardian, January 10, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/jan/10/rise-british-muslim-birthrate-the-times-census>.

20. Open Society Institute, “Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens,” Open Society Foundations, 2005, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/muslims-uk-policies-engaged-citizens>.

In particular, issues surrounding barriers to young Muslims' development must take into account religio-cultural factors. As but one example, Scotland is widely applauded for its commitment to covering the cost of tuition fees for Scottish university students. However, the need to finance living costs remains a concern for many young people. This barrier has an added layer of nuance when considering the desire of young Muslims to adhere to their religious beliefs in not paying interest. A solution in terms of offering Islamically-compliant finance, also known as alternative student finance (ASF), has been developed by the UK Government but has hitherto not been implemented.<sup>21</sup> If the Scottish Government were to formulate a similar strategy to offer Islamically-compliant student loans, it would further empower Scottish Muslim students who may otherwise be deterred from applying to university.

***Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to implementing Islamically-compliant student loans to encourage more Scottish Muslim students to attend university.***

As another example, many Muslim families feel that they would benefit from the provision of state-funded faith schools. Indeed, school environments are vital in nurturing and encouraging students' robust sense of self. Consequently, supporting cultural and religious expression within education plays a crucial role in encouraging students to develop secure and healthy religio-cultural identities whilst empowering them to engage confidently as social actors as they mature.

However, due to persistently high levels of Islamophobic bullying in schools and experiences of unconscious bias or a lack of cultural understanding amongst teaching staff (as will be discussed further below), there are concerns that families experiencing such hardship may resort to home-schooling and withdraw their children from mainstream education. As such, there is an appetite for mechanisms to ensure that children can stay in mainstream education whilst feeling secure and supported in expressing their identities. It is for this reason that establishing provisions for state-funded faith schools for Muslim families would be incredibly valuable.

Moreover, the evidence arising from Muslim schools in England and Wales demonstrates the beneficial impact that such an environment has on the attainment of Muslim children. Tauheedul Islam Boys and Girls Schools in Blackburn were ranked first and second in the country in 2016 by the Government's Progress 8 measures. This means that the schools were the highest rated for improving pupils' attainment across the whole country.<sup>22</sup> In more recent data from 2019, the top three secondary schools on Progress 8 measures were all Muslim; Taheedul Islam Girls' High School in Blackburn, Eden Boys' School in Birmingham, and Eden Girls School in Coventry.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, facilitating state-funded schools capable of pursuing the Curriculum of Excellence whilst remaining free to emphasise their religious identity and ethos would be a valuable asset in supporting students to thrive and develop a secure sense of identity as Scottish Muslims.

***Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to establishing state-funded faith school provisions for Muslims and other faith communities, thus allowing schools to continue to pursue the Curriculum of Excellence whilst remaining free to emphasise their religious identity and ethos.***

## Islamophobia in schools

Muslim pupils frequently encounter everyday micro-aggressions and forms of structural and institutional Islamophobia that hamper their development and create barriers to achieving their potential. Respondents to the public inquiry into Islamophobia by the Holyrood's CPG on Tackling Islamophobia highlighted Islamophobia in schools as a primary challenge, commenting

21. "Sharia-Compliant Student Finance," Hansard, accessed July 6, 2019, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2019-07-25/debates/EE789E3A-C4D8-4731-9FC4-B4DF2A6CE523/Sharia-CompliantStudentFinance>.

22. Richard Adams, "Two Blackburn Faith Schools Top Charts for GCSE Progress," The Guardian, October 13, 2016, accessed May 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/oct/13/two-blackburn-faith-schools-top-charts-gcse-progress-tauheedul-islam>.

23. "All Schools and Colleges in England - GOV.UK," Find and compare schools in England (UK Government), accessed October 23, 2019, <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?step=phase&geographic=all&region=0&phase=secondary&for=secondary>.

that children were often excluded from everyday activities of school life, such as representing their school or taking part in sports activities. Consequently, Muslim children do not have positive educational experiences, which can only inevitably lead to poorer life chances and a possible withdrawal from engagement with education in general.<sup>24</sup> In addressing Islamophobia in Scottish schools, of particular concern are issues surrounding bullying, the inclusivity of current curriculums, and a lack of diversity within teaching

### Islamophobic bullying

In its examination of underlying barriers to Muslims in terms of economic progression, the Social Mobility Commission highlighted experiences within education and educational settings as a key factor in determining the social mobility of Muslims in the UK.<sup>25</sup> According to the Commission, “perceptions that they will be targets for overt bullying/harassment based on their appearance, beliefs and their overall ‘difference’ means that young Muslims may avoid asking for help in classes at school which can affect their academic attainment.”<sup>26</sup> The research that exists highlights a pressing need to tackle this kind of bullying and harassment that will undoubtedly impact Muslim students’ ability to reach their potential. A recent freedom of information request by the Scottish Liberal Democrats found at least 2,251 instances of racism in Scottish schools in the three academic years prior to September 2020.<sup>27</sup> Glasgow City Council saw the highest number of reported incidents with 642 reports.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, research published by Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC) in 2016 found that 55% of Muslim high school respondents and 53% of Muslim primary school respondents had encountered verbal Islamophobia. At the same time, 15% of high school respondents and 26% of primary school respondents had encountered physical Islamophobia, while 57% of children who reported an incident to a teacher experienced a negative outcome.<sup>29</sup>

*“there were at least 2,251 instances of racism in Scottish schools in the three academic years prior to September 2020”*

Incidents of identity-based bullying are likely to stifle students’ attainment potential and subsequently affect their future life chances. The capacity of teachers to deal with bullying incidents is, therefore, of vital importance so that schools are environments in which children may flourish and prosper, not ones that they fear or avoid. The Scottish Government should thus dedicate resources to building the capacity of teachers to tackle such issues effectively.

*“57% of children who reported an incident to a teacher experienced a negative outcome”*

**Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to developing training programmes for teachers focussed on tackling and addressing bullying based on race, religion, disability, or sexuality. Such training must include increasing the confidence and willingness of teachers to enforce policies and procedures and report incidences to the appropriate authorities when dealing with such cases.**

### Islamophobia within teaching and curriculums

24. Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry Into Islamophobia In Scotland* (The Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2020).  
25. “The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims”. 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).  
26. “The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims”. 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).  
27. “The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims”. 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).  
28. “The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims”. 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).  
29. “Islamophobia in Edinburgh Schools”. 2017. Samena Dean. <http://www.sacc.org.uk/iphobia>

- **Prioritising PSE within the Curriculum for Excellence:** PSE is a valuable conduit for children to learn about and discuss important social issues, including themes such as citizenship, racism, Islamophobia, and homelessness, to name but a few. This exposure is essential for nurturing young people into confident and critically engaged social actors who are aware of the realities and nuances of living in a diverse society and capable of maturely approaching social, cultural, religious, and political differences. Moreover, the existing strategies for addressing racism and prejudice through education must be examined for potential improvement, with an emphasis on highlighting gaps and protected characteristics that may not be receiving proper attention. As highlighted by one respondent to the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)'s 2018 survey of their BAME members, "There are modules that address equality and diversity, but lecturers and learners can easily choose the protected characteristic they are most comfortable with. [This is not] effective for challenging attitudes."<sup>30</sup>
- **Tackling bias within teaching and educative materials:** Unconscious bias both on the part of teachers and within teaching materials embed micro-aggressions into the everyday experiences of young Muslim students and those from minority backgrounds. In fact, another area of concern highlighted by the Social Mobility Commission was that "low expectations by some teachers, including placing Muslims students in lower or middle sets, and a lack of encouragement to take challenging subjects, have a negative impact on the confidence of young Muslims which in turn limits their educational aspirations and attainment."<sup>31</sup> The underestimation of students from minority backgrounds is well documented and, in the case of Muslim children, is often predicated upon the assumptions and biases that have been nurtured by the securitising and criminalising representations of Muslims that overwhelm media, political, and public discourse. The EIS's 2018 survey found that 71% of respondents had experienced racism in their capacity as a teacher or lecturer, with 44% reporting racist or Islamophobic attitudes being demonstrated by colleagues and 26% reporting colleagues actively using racist or Islamophobic language.<sup>32</sup> However, such biases are often further entrenched by orientalising depictions of minority communities within teaching materials themselves. Indeed, 41% of respondents in the EIS survey reported curriculum content which lacks ethnic diversity, while 22% and 13% reported curriculum content which actively perpetuates racial or Islamophobic stereotypes respectively.<sup>33</sup> As such, immediate attention must be paid to exploring and tackling unconscious biases both amongst teachers and within current teaching materials.
- **Decolonising education:** As well as tackling unconscious bias within syllabi, active steps must be taken to ensure an encompassing representation of the socio-cultural and political reality in which we live. Thus, it is essential that school curriculums reflect the diversity and shared history of British society – an issue that the Black Lives Matter Movement has only too poignantly highlighted. In particular, there must be a renewed emphasis on colonialism, shared histories, and the contributions of minority communities in building our society as a compulsory component within the Curriculum for Excellence. Indeed, recognition of the legacy of the British Empire and the contributions of minority communities is essential for nurturing a shared identity across society. Furthermore, the works and figures studied within our education system must extend further than the traditional ethnocentric focus upon the achievements of predominantly white western men and expand to encompass a broad spectrum of perspectives and voices. It is only through this decolonisation of education that a truly shared history can be developed and children may be prepared for life in a pluralistic society with a rich culture of dynamic perspectives, interests, and experiences.

30. "Teaching in a Diverse Scotland: Increasing and Retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers in Scotland's Schools", Scottish Government, November 2018. Accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teaching-diverse-scotland-increasing-retaining-minority-ethnic-teachers-scotlands-schools/pages/6/>.

31. "The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims". 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).

32. "Teaching In A Diverse Scotland: Increasing And Retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers - Gov.Scot". 2018. *Gov.Scot*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teaching-diverse-scotland-increasing-retaining-minority-ethnic-teachers-scotlands-schools/pages/16/>.

33. *Ibid.*

Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to:

- **Commit to prioritising PSE within schools and enlisting grassroots Muslim organisations to assist in developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia.**
- **Commit to tackling the production and reinforcement of unconscious bias through educational syllabi by investigating the presentation of minority groups in teaching materials across all subjects and implementing awareness training for all teachers in conjunction with representative grassroots organisations.**
- **Commit to supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst including an emphasis on colonialism, shared histories, and the contributions of minority communities in building our society as a compulsory component within the curriculum for excellence.**

### Increasing diversity within teaching

Finally, a further observation of the Social Mobility Commission was directed at the impact of a

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)'s 2018 survey of their BAME members found that:

**71%** of respondents had experienced racism in their capacity as a teacher or lecturer

Amongst respondents ...  
x% witnessed

**56%**  
Learners using racist or Islamophobic language

**26%**  
Colleagues using racist or Islamophobic language

**25%**  
Being bullied or harassed on the grounds of race or religion

**22%**  
Curriculum content which perpetuates racial stereotypes



The Educational Institute of Scotland

*One respondent reported that: "I was told whilst under my desk fixing boxes if I was praying to Mecca! Again by the same member of staff I was told that once Scotland was independent, that me and all my kind would be chucked out of the country."*

lack of diversity within teaching on young Muslims. They noted that: “the lack of Muslim role models in school, including Muslim teachers, further compounds the poor experiences of many young Muslims and can contribute to their low aspirations or under-attainment. In contrast, where Muslim teachers are present in schools this is perceived to have a direct impact on young Muslims’ confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and educational and post-educational attainment.”<sup>34</sup> All children require nurturing and encouragement throughout their school careers. They also need to see themselves within the theories, histories, role models, and futures presented to them. As previously mentioned, one component of achieving this is decolonising educational syllabi and including the full diverse range of voices and experiences that have built our society today. However, an equally important component is ensuring that Muslim children have role models that they can relate to and rely upon for advice and guidance that resonates with the nuances of their religio-cultural identity and experiences. For this to be achieved, it is essential to support initiatives targeted at encouraging Muslim talent into teaching, whilst also addressing retention and promotion opportunities for Muslim staff.

According to the 2019 Teacher Census performed by the Scottish Government, only 0.89% of secondary school teachers identify as being of Asian ethnicity and 0.28% identify as Black,<sup>35</sup> compared to 3% and 1% of the Scottish population respectively, as highlighted by the 2011 Census (figures that are likely to have increased significantly in the intervening years).<sup>36</sup> The lack of diversity amongst Scottish teaching staff should thus be of primary concern. Meanwhile, the Scottish Government’s report, *Teaching in a Diverse Scotland*, highlights findings that 66% of BAME teachers were concerned about discrimination (compared to 11% of white teachers), and 75% of BAME teachers felt promoted posts are difficult for BAME teachers to obtain (compared to 10% for non-BAME teachers) – a feeling that is exemplified by the fact that “there are very few teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds in promoted posts in Scotland’s schools”.<sup>37</sup> Certainly, only 2% of primary school headteachers in Scotland are BAME,<sup>38</sup> despite constituting 4.7% of the Scottish population.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, the report also recognised experiences of prejudicial treatment and attitudes from colleagues, with one respondent commenting that “I was told whilst under my desk fixing boxes if I was praying to Mecca! Again by the same member of staff I was told that once Scotland was independent, that me and all my kind would be chucked out of the country.”<sup>40</sup> As such, effective strategies must be implemented to address the general lack of diversity within teaching and the barriers to career progression faced by BAME employees, including an investigation into racial and religiously motivated discrimination within Scottish schools and universities.

***Therefore, MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to increasing the diversity within teaching, particularly at senior leadership levels, and through mentorship programs for junior BAME staff.***

34. “The Social Mobility Challenges Faced By Young Muslims”. 2017. *Assets.Publishing.Service.Gov.Uk*. accessed 19.11.2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf).

35. “Teacher Census 2019”, Learning Directorate, Scottish Government, March 2020. Accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/07/teacher-census-supplementary-data/documents/teacher-census-2019/teacher-census-2019/govscot%3Adocument/Teacher%2BCensus%2B-%2BSupplementary%2BTables%2B-%2B2019.xlsx>.

36. “Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion”, Scotland’s Census. Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ethnicity-identity-language-and-religion>.

37. “Teaching in a Diverse Scotland: Increasing and Retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers in Scotland’s Schools”, Scottish Government, November 2018. Accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teaching-diverse-scotland-increasing-retaining-minority-ethnic-teachers-scotland-schools/pages/6/>.

38. “Teacher Census 2019”, Learning Directorate, Scottish Government, March 2020. Accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/07/teacher-census-supplementary-data/documents/teacher-census-2019/teacher-census-2019/govscot%3Adocument/Teacher%2BCensus%2B-%2BSupplementary%2BTables%2B-%2B2019.xlsx>.

39. Again, this figure is taken from the 2011 Census as the most recent comprehensive analysis of Scotland’s ethnicity demographics. However, the actual figure is likely to have increased in the years since the Census was taken.

See “Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion”, Scotland’s Census. Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ethnicity-identity-language-and-religion>.

40. “Teaching in a Diverse Scotland: Increasing and Retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers in Scotland’s Schools”, Scottish Government, November 2018. Accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teaching-diverse-scotland-increasing-retaining-minority-ethnic-teachers-scotland-schools/pages/6/>.





# The Labour Market

## Pledges

11. Commit to tackling religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion.
12. Commit to supporting employers to recognise and accommodate religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace, including the provision of halal meat, prayer rooms, and flexible work hours during Ramadan.
13. Commit to the use of name-blind applications and targeted interventions within employment aimed at tackling the triple penalty and improving access to employment for Scottish Muslim women specifically.

## Islamophobia in Scotland's labour market

One of the startling findings of the CPG for Tackling Islamophobia's recent inquiry was that 36.6% of Muslim respondents reported being abused at work.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, numerous studies in recent years have demonstrated the failure of Muslims to progress and reach the levels of success in the workplace that their non-Muslim counterparts enjoy. These studies have pointed to a combination of Islamophobia, racism, and discrimination as reasons for Muslims to be less likely to be in work, less likely to be in skilled and professional occupations, and less likely to break through the glass ceiling to access top-level executive positions. Indeed, only 6% of Muslims in the workplace are in higher managerial, administrative, and professional occupations, compared to 10% of the overall population.<sup>42</sup>

*"only 6% of Muslims in the workplace are in higher managerial, administrative, and professional occupations, compared to 10% of the overall population"*

Studies have also shown that Muslims have been disproportionately confined to unskilled professions or jobs with limited opportunities for progression,<sup>43</sup> with workers from ethnically Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds being more likely to be concentrated in the three lowest-skilled occupation groups. More than 2 in 5 Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers work in these lower-skilled occupations, compared to only 1 in 4 white workers.<sup>44</sup>

The first public inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland revealed that **36.6% of Muslim respondents reported being abused at work.**

Source: Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland: Initial Findings*, report, February 2020, <https://36v.c53.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Public-inquiry-into-Islamophobia-initial-findings.pdf>

According to the Social Mobility Commission, Muslims feel they are forced to work **"10 times as hard"** as their white counterparts in order to achieve equivalent levels of success.

Source: Anushka Asthana, "Islamophobia Holding Back UK Muslims in Workplace Study Finds," *The Guardian*, 07th September, 2017, accessed 05th January 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/07/islamophobia-holding-back-uk-muslims-in-workplace-study-finds>.

41. Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry Into Islamophobia In Scotland* (The Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2020).

42. "Young Muslims in the UK Face Enormous Social Mobility Barriers," GOV.UK, accessed 20th June, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-muslims-in-the-uk-face-enormous-social-mobility-barriers>.

43. Roger Dobson, British Muslims face worst job discrimination of any minority group, according to research", *Independent*, 30th November, 2014, accessed 12th June, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-muslims-face-worst-job-discrimination-of-any-minority-group-9893211.html>.

44. "Employment," GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures, accessed 20th June, 2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest>.

Employer attitudes have frequently been cited as a reason for the barriers to Muslims' progression in the workplace. Indeed, the Government's Social Mobility Commission cited a number of barriers to success for Muslims in the employment sphere, including ethnic minority sounding names being less likely to be offered interviews and Muslims feeling forced to work "10 times as hard" as their white counterparts in order to achieve equivalent levels of success.<sup>45</sup> This is echoed in research conducted by BBC "Inside Out", which found that CVs submitted under a non-Muslim name were three times more likely to be offered an interview than those with a Muslim name.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Muslim respondents to the CPG for Tackling Islamophobia's inquiry into Islamophobia noted that they felt that they were less likely to be shortlisted for jobs or considered for promotion because of their faith, with 84.4% of respondents reporting a belief that Islamophobia has an impact on the employment opportunities of Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim) in Scotland.<sup>47</sup>

*"CVs submitted under a non-Muslim name were three times more likely to be offered an interview than those with a Muslim name"*

Moreover, while religion and ethnicity intersect within manifestations of discrimination, gender adds a compounding dimension that frequently places Muslim women at a unique disadvantage. In 2016, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee stated that Muslim women often face a *triple penalty* in the employment sphere due to being women, being from an ethnic minority background, and being Muslim. Another study found that 1 in 4 employers admit to being reluctant to hire Muslim women due to concerns they would prioritise their family commitments above professional duties.<sup>48</sup> One of the more disturbing revelations from research into the difficulties ethnic minority women face in entering employment was that 1 in 8 Pakistani women has been illegally asked about marriage and family aspirations in job interviews, compared to 1 in 30 white women, demonstrating the levels of preconceived bias and racially and religiously shaped assumptions that Muslim women face.<sup>49</sup> The Social Mobility Commission further noted how this adversity is amplified for Muslim women who wear the hijab. Researchers found that women were confronted with situations ranging from "assumptions they were forced to wear the headscarf to jokes and casual comments in the workplace about Muslims".<sup>50</sup> These particular barriers faced by women who wear hijab are confirmed in research conducted by MEND in 2016, which revealed that more than 60% of Muslim women who wear a hijab felt they had been treated differently at work due to religious discrimination.<sup>51</sup>

Ultimately, as attested by the CPG for Tackling Islamophobia's inquiry, increasing marginalisation of Muslims in the workplace leads to long-lasting impacts, including higher levels of unemployment, under-employment, and mental health problems amongst Muslim communities.<sup>52</sup> Many victims reporting their experiences to the IRU describe a loss of confidence in the workplace, diminished job prospects, and a desire to work in more diverse work settings. It is clear that for Muslims (and Muslim women in particular) to progress in their careers,

*Muslim women often face a triple penalty in the employment sphere due to being women, being from an ethnic minority background, and being Muslim.*

45. Anushka Asthana, "Islamophobia Holding Back UK Muslims in Workplace, Study Finds," The Guardian, 07th September, 2017, accessed 10th May, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/07/islamophobia-holding-back-uk-muslims-in-workplace-study-finds>.

46. Zack Adesina and Oana Marocico, "Is It Easier to Get a Job If You're Adam or Mohamed?" BBC News, February 06, 2017, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307>.

47. Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry Into Islamophobia In Scotland* (The Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2020).

48. Siobhan Fenton, "6 Charts Which Show the Employment Barriers Faced by British Muslims," The Independent, 11th August, 2016, accessed 10th May, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-more-likely-to-be-unemployed-than-any-other-social-group-in-the-uk-mps-warn-a7185451.html>.

49. Ibid.

50. Anushka Asthana, "Islamophobia Holding Back UK Muslims in Workplace, Study Finds," The Guardian, 07th September, 2017, accessed 10th May, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/07/islamophobia-holding-back-uk-muslims-in-workplace-study-finds>.

51. *Tackling Racism and Employment Discrimination in the UK*, Presentation, MEND (2016).

52. Peter Hopkins, *Public Inquiry Into Islamophobia In Scotland* (The Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2020).

changes are required at both employer and government levels in order to remove barriers and give Muslims the opportunities to achieve their career aspirations.

***MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to tackling religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, including through the use of name-blind applications and targeted interventions aimed at improving access to employment for Scottish Muslim women specifically.***

Moreover, simple accommodations made by employers have great potential to attract Muslim talent into their workplace and support Muslim employees to reach their potential. Simple and inexpensive strategies include (but are not limited to):

- **Supporting prayer:** This can be done by providing prayer spaces and short breaks to facilitate prayer that need not be longer than a few minutes.
- **Supporting religious dress:** This may include providing for hijab or long sleeves in company uniforms, for example.
- **Supporting religious observance:** This can consist of considering annual leave requests for Eid or Hajj, allowing flexible hours during Ramadan, or providing halal meat or vegetarian options in staff canteens.
- **Engaging in more inclusive team bonding activities:** This includes organising social activities at cafés instead of pubs and other settings likely to be characterised by alcohol that may cause Muslim employees to feel uncomfortable and excluded.

Many of these strategies can be implemented with relative ease and support Muslim employees to thrive in their work environments, which has a natural benefit for the workplace as a whole.

***MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to supporting employers to recognise and accommodate religious festivals and religious observance within the workplace, including the provision of halal meat, prayer rooms, and flexible work hours during Ramadan.***



POLICE

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# Crime, Policing, and the Criminal Justice System

## Pledges

14. Commit to investigating structural Islamophobia within the Criminal Justice System.
15. Commit to increasing diversity at all levels of seniority within Police Scotland and at all levels of the criminal justice system, including through positive intervention and mentorship programs for BAME members.
16. Commit to ensuring that Police Scotland record Islamophobic hate crimes as a separate category of hate crime.

## Institutional racism within policing and the criminal justice system

Institutional racism and discriminatory practices ingrained within the criminal justice system require examination due to both their disruption to many Muslim and BAME communities' lives and the long-term consequences on their future social engagement as equal members in society. Institutional racism is not a new concept within analyses of criminal justice systems across the UK, and Scotland's criminal justice system is no exception. In 2020, reports emerged of the Scottish Government's alleged "reticence to speak publicly" about institutional racism within Police Scotland for fear of negative media coverage.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, in the context of the global Black Lives Matter Movement, the 2015 death in police custody of Sheku Bayoh, a 31-year-old Black man from Kirkcaldy, has gained renewed attention with the announcement of a public inquiry only emerging four years after his death.<sup>54</sup>

In 2016, the Lammy Review exposed a high level of disproportionate representation of minority groups within policing and criminal justice systems across the UK, with BAME individuals constituting 25% of prisoners and over 40% of young people in custody, despite representing only 14% of the population. Meanwhile, Muslims were found to make up 15% of the total prison population, while amounting to less than 5% of the general population.<sup>55</sup> It appears that such disproportionate representation is also found when examining the Scottish context specifically. Indeed, Scottish Government data from 2019-20 demonstrates that African, Caribbean, and Black communities experience incarceration rates of 7.6 per 1,000 people compared to the 3.8 per 1,000 people experienced by white people.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, as observed within research commissioned by the Public

*"BAME individuals constitute 25% of prisoners and over 40% of young people in custody, despite representing only 14% of the population. Meanwhile, Muslims were found to make up 15% of the total prison population, while amounting to less than 5% of the general population"*



53. Gina Davidson, "Police Scotland Faces 'institutional Racism' Claim in Think Tank Report," *The Scotsman*, 15th July, 2020, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/crime/police-scotland-faces-institutional-racism-claim-think-tank-report-2913701>

54. "Sheku Bayoh: 'Why Did My Brother Die In Police Custody?'," 2020. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-53076269>.

55. "The Lammy Review: final report", *Gov.uk*, 08th September, 2017, p. 3, accessed 23.10.2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>

56. "Scottish Prison Population: Statistics 2019 to 2020," Scottish Government, accessed 14th July, 2020, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2019-20/pages/4/>

Petitions Committee, “although numbers of Muslims in Scottish jails are small, they represent another disproportionately imprisoned group”.<sup>57</sup>

## Explaining inequalities within the criminal justice system

Over recent decades, political discourse has led to a climate wherein Muslim identities have become increasingly securitised and viewed through the lens of counter-terror, violence, and threat. This has led to the public perception of a community ‘at risk’. However, in reality, a wide range of structural inequalities contribute to the conditions wherein Muslims (and BAME communities more generally) suffer disproportionate representation within the criminal justice system.

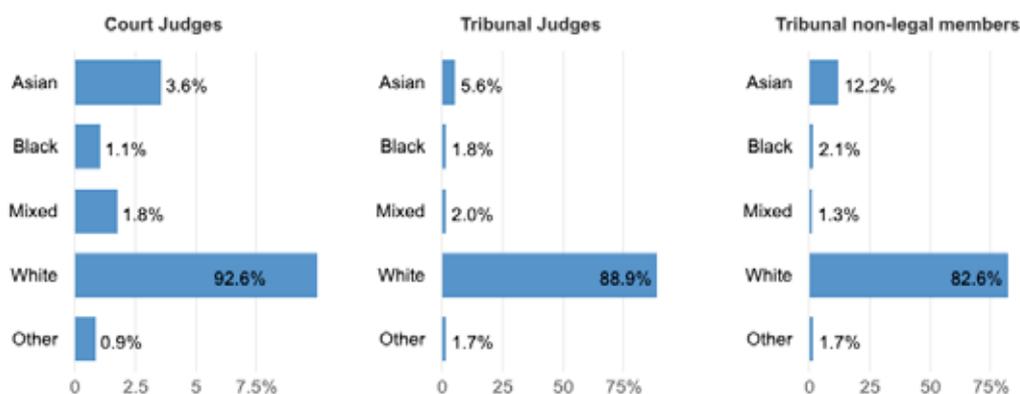
### Cultural stereotypes

The disproportionate representation of Muslims in the criminal justice system cannot be fully understood without an appreciation for unconscious biases and cultural stereotypes. The influence of widespread public Islamophobia in the unconscious biases of criminal justice practitioners against Muslims has a necessary impact on the criminal justice system’s approach to Muslim individuals. Indeed, over the past decade, public discourse surrounding Muslims has been almost exclusively associated with crime, terrorism, and issues of integration, creating the impression that young Muslims are less integrated, have less in common with their non-Muslim peers, and possess ambivalent loyalties. Therefore, it is inevitable that such perceptions would necessarily infiltrate the decision-making processes of those tasked with upholding criminal justice provisions, particularly considering the overwhelming lack of diversity amongst practitioners themselves.

### Homogeneity in the criminal justice system

Unconscious biases and cultural stereotypes are compounded by a potential lack of understanding of the experiences of minorities. At the core of this problem is homogeneity and a lack of diversity within the system itself. Data from 2019 demonstrates that across England, Wales, and Scotland, 92.6% of court judges, 88.9% of tribunal judges, and 82.6% of tribunal non-legal members are white.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, strategies to rectify this situation appear to be slow in producing results. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice acknowledged that BAME candidates are overrepresented in judicial appointment applications but less likely to be successful.<sup>59</sup> In research conducted by T2A Alliance, a senior probation officer emphasised the importance of a lack of diversity amongst legal and judicial appointments, stating that, “I would argue whether you could even say a magistrate has been through any type of formal training. They are people from a particular background who won’t understand the needs of ethnic minority communities.”<sup>60</sup>

Percentage of court judges, tribunal judges and tribunal non-legal members by ethnicity



57. “OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS AND SENTENCING PATTERNS IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK”. 2010. *Parliament.Scot*. [http://www.parliament.scot/S3\\_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions\\_07/Researchpublished-24-12-10.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S3_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions_07/Researchpublished-24-12-10.pdf)

58. “Judges and Non-legal Members of the Judiciary,” GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures, 06th November, 2020, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/judges-and-non-legal-members-of-courts-and-tribunals-in-the-workforce/latest#ethnic-groups-by-role>

59. *Diversity of the Judiciary: Legal Professions, New Appointments and Current Post-holders*, report, 17th September, 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/918529/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2020-statistics-web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918529/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2020-statistics-web.pdf)

60. “Young Muslims on Trial”, *Maslahah*, March 2016, accessed 29th May, 2018, [https://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Young\\_Muslims\\_on\\_Trial.pdf](https://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Young_Muslims_on_Trial.pdf)

## Lack of understanding of Muslim diversity

Within media and public discourse, Muslims are often perceived as having a homogenous identity. When combined with the aforementioned lack of diversity amongst practitioners, many working within the criminal justice system do not possess an understanding of different Muslim communities, whether they are Somali or Pakistani, Shia or Sunni, or varying perceptions of everyday life for those living in different areas of the UK. It is crucial to understand the rich diversity of intersectional experiences within Muslim communities if holistic understandings of contributing factors to criminality are to be achieved and if meaningful rehabilitation strategies are to be devised.

*“14% of Scottish Muslims live in the top 10% of the most deprived areas”*

The issue of a perceived homogeneity of British Muslims is significant as it frames Muslims within the ‘War on Terror’ narrative, thus making the simplistic distinction between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ Muslims. The Runnymede Trust points out that “Muslim communities are constructed as ‘suspect’ through the frequent implicit and explicit juxtaposition of the terms ‘law-abiding majority’ and ‘extremist minority’ when discussing both sets of communities”.<sup>61</sup> In the criminal justice system, this can result in discrimination occurring on the simple basis of prejudice deriving from the mainstream interpretation of what constitutes an acceptable interpretation of Islam.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, such a simplistic characterisation disregards other key factors that can lead to more equitable understandings and treatment within the criminal justice system, such as ethnicity, education, class, place, gender and political outlook. The failure to acknowledge the inherent difference among Muslim communities thus results in the inability to understand the proclivities and aspirations of young Muslims living in the UK. This can result in a broad-brush application of the law and difficulties in addressing the root cause for criminality within impacted communities.<sup>63</sup> In short, “to ensure that everyone receives fair and equal treatment, it is critical to understand the needs of equality and minority groups and identify what separate provision may be required. *This is likely to be different not just across different protected characteristics but within them.* Indeed, one of the key things highlighted... was the importance of not assuming homogeneity amongst the needs of all individuals from a particular group.”<sup>64</sup>

## Socio-economic challenges

Considering the severe economic deprivation experienced by many Muslims (with nearly half of Muslims in England and Wales<sup>65</sup> and 14% of Scottish Muslims living in the top 10% of the most deprived areas),<sup>66</sup> disproportionality in the number of Muslim inmates should be seen, not only as a result of discrimination but also as a reflection of socio-economic realities. Research has demonstrated that living in deprived neighbours has a negative effect on multiple aspects of life, including general well-being, education, employment, and crime.<sup>67</sup> The socio-economic inequalities faced by BAME individuals, and Muslims in particular, are thus critical in understanding and tackling criminality through meaningful policy development.

## Mistrust

The issues mentioned above combine with broader issues concerning a history of negative interactions and relationships between minorities and state institutions, thereby creating a mutual feeling of distrust that has a profound impact on the lives of BAME and Muslim communities.<sup>68</sup> Such a situation has unavoidable repercussions for these communities’ experience and perceptions

61. Kjartan Pall Sveinsson, “Criminal Justice v. Racial Justice: Minority ethnic overrepresentation in the criminal justice system”, *Runnymede*, accessed 15.02.2018 <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/CriminalJusticeVRacialJustice-2012.pdf>

62. Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason, “Tolerance, Freedom, Justice and Peace”? Britain, Australia and Anti-Muslim Racism since 11th September 2001”, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Volume 27, 2006 - Issue 4.

63. Gabe Mythen and Fatima Khan, “Futurity, Governance and the Terrorist Risk: Exploring the Impacts of Pre-emptive Modes of Regulation on Young Muslims in the UK”, accessed 20.02.2018 <https://www.kent.ac.uk/scarr/events/beijingpapers/Mythenppr.pdf>

64. “Tackling inequality in the Criminal Justice System”, *Clinks*, May 2015, accessed 20.02.2018, [http://www.recoepo.org.uk/dbfiles/news/246/Tackling\\_Inequality\\_within\\_CJS\\_Clinks\\_Report.pdf](http://www.recoepo.org.uk/dbfiles/news/246/Tackling_Inequality_within_CJS_Clinks_Report.pdf)

65. Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, accessed 05.09.2019 [http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport\\_2015.pdf](http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf)

66. “OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS AND SENTENCING PATTERNS IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK”. 2010. *Parliament.Scot*. [http://www.parliament.scot/S3\\_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions\\_07/Researchasublished-24-12-10.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S3_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions_07/Researchasublished-24-12-10.pdf).

67. “Communities in recession: the impact on deprived neighbourhoods”, *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, October 2009, accessed 05.03.2018, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/communities-recession-impact-neighbourhoods.pdf>

68. “Young, Muslim and British: Between rhetoric and realities”, *LSE Blog*, accessed 24.10.2017, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2017/04/young-muslim-and-british-between-rhetoric-and-realities/>

of the criminal justice system. As but one example, the justice system provides incentives for those who have committed crimes to admit guilt, such as potential reductions in sentences or access to interventions that keep them out of prison altogether. However, pleading guilty implies a level of trust between the accuser and the accused that many individuals from minority backgrounds may not possess due to the disparity in how they experience state institutions. As the Lammy Review suggested, “Many BAME defendants neither trust the advice that they are given, nor believe they will receive a fair hearing from magistrates” and are thus instinctively more prone to plea “not guilty” than their white counterparts.<sup>69</sup> However, this means that BAME defendants face harsher sentences if found guilty.

***In order to ensure the equitable outcomes and experience upon which the ideals of our criminal justice system are based, MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to investigating structural Islamophobia within the Criminal Justice System.***

## **Nurturing relationships between police forces and local communities**

In the daily lives of most people, the police are perhaps the most visible representation of the state. As such, the relationship between minority communities and their local police is reflective of the relationship between communities and the state. Therefore, trust and understanding are critical in building healthy communities. Consequently, the adequate representation of minorities within the police force becomes a fundamental asset in nurturing understanding, trust, and a feeling of solidarity. Indeed, increasing the diversity of local forces has the benefit of allowing communities to feel represented whilst also providing police forces with nuanced understandings of the issues and experiences of such communities and helping them respond to their needs and concerns meaningfully and with greater sensitivity.

*“It appears that only 253 out of 17,693 officers in Scotland (1.4%) are from BAME backgrounds, and there are no BAME officers amongst Police Scotland’s executive team of senior officers”*

However, it has recently been revealed that Police Scotland still suffers from a severe lack of diversity, especially amongst its senior ranks. It appears that only 253 out of 17,693 officers in Scotland (1.4%) are from BAME backgrounds, and there are no BAME officers amongst Police Scotland’s executive team of senior officers.<sup>70</sup> The lack of BAME representation at senior levels is particularly problematic. Indeed, such a lack of diversity affects the police service’s leadership, culture, and understanding of the community it serves. This has frequently been identified as a factor in the structural racism that underpins disproportionality in the application of policies such as Stop and Search. Meanwhile, people of a BAME background wishing to develop their careers within the police service may lack role models, encounter barriers when trying to access necessary training, and face selection panels that are potentially directed by the infiltration of unconscious biases.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, as previously mentioned, due to a long history of negative interactions between the police and BAME communities, there is often a notorious lack of trust, which creates barriers for communities to engage with their local police meaningfully. Until trusting relationships are achieved, recruitment from within these communities will remain a significant challenge.

Consequently, MEND would encourage Police Scotland to fully examine its current policies and procedures at all levels of recruitment, retention, and progression in order to develop a clear strategy for improving diversity across every level of seniority within the force. MEND would also encourage local forces to build relationships with representative grassroots organisations, such as MEND, who may assist them in a variety of ways, including:

<sup>69</sup> “The Lammy Review: final report”, Gov.uk, September 8, 2017, p. 6, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>

<sup>70</sup> “Police Scotland Slated over Diversity as Only 253 BAME Officers Recruited,” Dailyrecord, 21st June, 2020, <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cops-shamed-over-diversity-only-2226516>

<sup>71</sup> “Police diversity First Report of Session 2016–17”, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, accessed 20.02.2018, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhalf/27/27.pdf>

- Facilitating engagement and platforms for discussion with local Muslim communities,
- Providing training and expertise in the issues experienced by Muslim communities,
- Encouraging greater reporting of Islamophobic hate crime through our IRU, which is able to act as a liaison between police forces and local victims.

***MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to increasing diversity at all levels of seniority within Police Scotland and at all levels of the criminal justice system, including through positive intervention and mentorship programs for BAME members.***

## **Islamophobic hate crime and data collection**

As with the development of any social policy, the first step in addressing a problem is understanding it in terms of scale, origin, and consequences. Accurate data is central to that aim. However, one of the most significant challenges in approaching Islamophobic hate crime is the intersection between race and religion within the motivation of the offence. In many cases, it becomes essentially impossible to distinguish between the two motives. While animosity towards religion is frequently used as a justification for prejudicial sentiments, this hostility is also a product of animosity towards race, ethnicity, and culture, with Muslims becoming treated as a racialised group. A case in point is the conflation between ethnic and religious insults (such as the application of “p\*ki” in reference to a Muslim as well as an ethnic identity), or the reality that British Sikhs have frequently been the unfortunate targets of Islamophobic abuse based on their ethnicity and assumed connection to a Muslim identity.

However, at the same time, Muslims are incredibly diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, and an array of other variables. Therefore, Muslims cannot be considered a race in the same way as Jewish or Sikh communities. The result is frequently confusion in how to record such hate crimes, which impacts not only the protections to which victims are entitled but also the ways in which data is recorded; data which forms the foundation for exploring patterns of crime and highlighting areas in need of improved strategies and particular focus. Consequently, without recording Islamophobia as a specific category of hate crime within police procedures, the actual levels of Islamophobic abuse will remain hidden. At the time of writing, amendments to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill aim to ensure that data disaggregation becomes a legislative requirement in terms of hate crime. It is essential that this strategy is supported.

***MEND urges the Scottish Government to commit to ensuring that Police Scotland record Islamophobic hate crimes as a separate category of hate crime.***



# Political Engagement

## Pledge

17. Commit to ensuring that all political parties outline their strategies to improve diversity within candidate selection ahead of all Scottish elections.

## Islamophobia in political parties

Recent times have poignantly witnessed the role of numerous public figures in mainstreaming Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric across society. Those in positions of public influence, and our political representatives specifically, must show greater maturity and responsibility when discussing issues involving minority communities. In particular, they must take care not to cause hysteria for the sake of political popularity and agendas.

Over the past couple of years, accusations of Islamophobia have been directed at numerous major parties, with reports such as MEND's analysis of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party<sup>72</sup> and the leaked internal Labour Party report<sup>73</sup> demonstrating the need to address Islamophobia within political party ranks.

Within MEND's 2019 report *From "Letterboxes" to "Ragheads" Over 100 Examples of Islamophobia within the Conservative Party*,<sup>74</sup> there was a multitude of instances of Islamophobia found within the Scottish context. As but a handful of examples:

**Stephen Goldsack, councillor for Steps, Chryston, and Muirhead Ward in North Lanarkshire:** In 2018, Stephen Goldsack was referred to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland for reportedly expressing Islamophobic sentiment regarding the planning of a local mosque.<sup>75</sup> Goldsack reportedly argued that "we can't give more access to these people," and added that "if it was Church of Scotland, it would be ok."<sup>76</sup> It was later discovered that he had been an activist and former "Scottish security adviser" for the far-right British Nationalist Party (BNP).<sup>77</sup>

**George McIntyre, council candidate for Bonnyrigg Ward in Midlothian:** Charges of Islamophobia were levied against George McIntyre due to a Facebook post in which he stated that he was "sickened to the core" by the "whinging Muslims" regarding gelatine in flu vaccinations. He said that those who complain should "go and live in a Muslim country" and that "its time for our councillors to man up and tell them to sod off. whinge over" (sic).<sup>78</sup>

<sup>72</sup> "From 'Letterboxes' to 'Ragheads': Over 100 Examples of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party" (London: MEND, 2019) <https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Islamophobia-in-the-Conservative-Party-MEND.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> "Leaked Labour Party Report Reveals Islamophobia and Inaction Within the Party," Muslim Engagement and Development, 22nd April, 2020, <https://www.mend.org.uk/leaked-labour-party-report-reveals-islamophobia-and-inaction-within-the-party/>

<sup>74</sup> "From 'Letterboxes' to 'Ragheads': Over 100 Examples of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party" (London: MEND, 2019) <https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Islamophobia-in-the-Conservative-Party-MEND.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> "Councillor denies mosque row claim", *The Sunday Post (Dundee)*, Accessed 26th May 2018. <https://www.pressreader.com/>

<sup>76</sup> "Tory councillor expelled over BNP links", *BBC News*, May 2018. Accessed: 02nd May 2019. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-44223449>.

<sup>77</sup> "Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Andy Shipley, "Midlothian Tory candidate suspended over anti-Muslim rant", *Edinburgh Evening News*, March 2017. Accessed: 02nd May 2019. [https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/our-region/midlothian-tory-candidate-suspended-over-anti-muslim-rant-1-4388995?fbclid=IwAR0QPXts22yhUg-X1yo5IsOdu8I97AoOWj9z7vL7PbGxHt\\_B2L1iBzx6Y](https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/our-region/midlothian-tory-candidate-suspended-over-anti-muslim-rant-1-4388995?fbclid=IwAR0QPXts22yhUg-X1yo5IsOdu8I97AoOWj9z7vL7PbGxHt_B2L1iBzx6Y)



George McIntyre

October 4, 2013 · 🌐

Sickened to the core! The entire City of Glasgow childrens flu inoculations were halted because a handful of Muslims were whinging about the fact there was geletine in the mix and they can't take it!!! Well don't frigging take it then and shut your whinging mouths, no wonder people get sick to the back teeth of you!. If you are that way minded go and live in a Muslim country where you do not get any free preventive medication, oh but you won't do that will you..... ungrateful baskets I'm sick to the back teeth with them. Its time for our councillors to man up and tell them to sod off. whinge over

### *A post by George McIntyre.<sup>79</sup>*

Despite this comment being online since 2013, McIntyre passed the vetting procedures to stand as a Conservative candidate. While initially being suspended for his views, McIntyre was still actively involved with the Conservative Party campaigns, including that of senior Conservative frontbencher, Miles Briggs, in 2018.<sup>80</sup>

**Ken MacBrayne, council candidate for Benbecula and North Uist:** Ken MacBrayne was suspended for a variety of offensive social media posts.<sup>81</sup> These were reported to have included dozens of posts shared from the far-right group Britain First, one of which allegedly featured a video claiming Europe was “heading for civil war” and for “European resistance groups [to] start a Christian fightback” against Muslims.<sup>82</sup>

**Roxana Iancu, council candidate for Govan Ward in Glasgow:** Roxana Iancu was suspended for a variety of Islamophobic social media posts, including a post reportedly in response to the Nice attacks that argued that the French had “brought this on themselves” because “they supported the Muslims.”<sup>83</sup> She also allegedly argued that Syrian refugees “deserved” what had happened to them and wrote: “Karma can be a real bitch.”<sup>84</sup> In other reports, she is accused of calling for German Chancellor Angela Merkel to be hanged for her pro-Islam politics.<sup>85</sup>

However, the Conservative party is not alone in its need to recognise and address Islamophobia within its ranks. In reality, Islamophobia infiltrates every party. SNP councillor Craig Melville stood trial at Dundee Sherriff Court for allegedly sending Islamophobic messages to a colleague following the Paris attacks in 2015 in which he told her that he hated her religion and described Islam as a “horrible disease”.<sup>86</sup> He is reported to have further stated that “If I had a gun I’d shoot a Muslim but I’m not brave enough.”<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, in 2019 a post originating from a Facebook account linked to the Scottish Labour Party stated that “there is no such thing as Islamophobia. It is the right of every individual to question a religion which claims to be peaceful, and yet is responsible for more terror attacks than any other.” The meme was posted on the Argyll and Bute Labour account days after Anas Sarwar, MSP, questioned the party’s commitment to tackling Islamophobia.

79. David Clegg, “‘Shut your whinging mouths’ Scottish Tory candidate suspended over anti-Muslim rant”, *Daily Record*, March 2017. Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/shut-your-whinging-mouths-scottish-10000181>.

80. Andy Philip, “Senior Tory Miles Briggs caught chapping doors with banned bigots”, *Daily Record*, February 2018. Accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/senior-tory-miles-briggs-caught-12010553>.

81. Andrew Learmonth, “Scottish Tories Engulfed in Racism Scandal with at Least Seven Council Candidates Now in the Spotlight”, *The National*, 15th April, 2017, <https://www.thenational.scot/news/15226300.scottish-tories-engulfed-in-racism-scandal-with-at-least-seven-council-candidates-now-in-the-spotlight/>.

82. “Ken MacBrayne Becomes Third Tory Council Candidate Binned over Anti-muslim Remarks”, *CommonSpace*, 18th April, 2017, <https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/10779/ken-macbrayne-becomes-third-tory-council-candidate-binned-over-anti-muslim-remarks>.

83. Andrew Learmonth, “VILE HATE BLOG Wannabe Tory politician binned after blaming Nice truck attack on French authorities”, *The Scottish Sun*, March 2017. Accessed: 01<sup>st</sup> May 2019. <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/uncategorized/745900/wannabe-tory-politician-binned-after-blaming-nice-truck-attack-on-french-authorities-in-hate-filled-blog/>.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. Mark MacKay, “Craig Melville Can Keep Seat on Dundee City Council While Islamophobia Probe Is Carried out”, *The Courier*, 19th January, 2016, <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/dundee/249974/craig-melville-can-keep-seat-on-dundee-city-council-while-islamophobia-probe-is-carried-out/>.

87. STV News Archive, “Councillor ‘sent Islamophobic Messages’ to Former Lover”, *STV News Archive*, accessed 10th January, 2018, <https://archive.news.stv.tv/north/1405984-councillor-sent-islamophobic-messages-to-former-lover.html>



*A post by the Argyll and Bute Labour account.<sup>88</sup>*

If political leaders do not take meaningful steps towards eliminating hate within their own parties, they cannot hope to inspire tolerance and understanding across society; nor can they hope to inspire confidence in the communities they seek to represent.

## Increasing diversity within political parties

According to Dr Lucy Michael, the “integration of minority groups in equality terms” can be measured by engagement in party politics and governance.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, Islamophobia should be understood as a mechanism that marginalises and excludes Muslims from being able to participate in social, political and civic life fully. While data shows a growing trend of Muslim engagement in the field of politics, there remain significant challenges that Muslims face when operating within the political sphere. Ultimately, our political institutions need to reflect the communities that they serve. In these efforts, political parties must address structural barriers that exclude Muslims and other minority groups.

The Scottish Parliament has an admirable reputation for producing female leaders; however, there are concerns that progress may have regressed in recent times, with only 45 women elected to the chamber in 2016 out of 129 MSPs (down from 48 in 1999). Furthermore, the representation of ethnic minorities remains a serious concern. A case in point is that there has never been a Black woman elected to the Scottish Parliament.

The election of the first Muslim MP, Mohammad Sarwar, in 1997 was a pivotal moment in the history of political diversity. Likewise, the recent appointment of Anas Sarwar as the Scottish

<sup>88</sup> David Clegg, “Labour in New Racism Row as Facebook Account Blames Islam for Terror Attacks,” Daily Record, 09th May, 2019, <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-labour-new-racism-row-15022837>

<sup>89</sup> Michael, Lucy. 2009. “Securing civic relations in the multicultural city”. 164-186, in Krause, W. (Ed.) Citizenship, Security and Democracy: Muslim Engagement with the West, Surrey: Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK) and Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, 177 - 197. Cited in p.22 of Mustafa, Anisa. 2015. “Active Citizenship, Dissent And Power: The Cultural Politics Of Young Adult British Muslims.”. PhD, University of Nottingham.

Labour Party leader represents a similar landmark moment as he has become the first BAME leader of a major political party, not only in Scotland but across the UK political landscape. However, in almost two and a half decades since the historic election of Mohammad Sarwar to Parliament in Westminster, there have only ever been five BAME individuals elected in Scotland to either Westminster or Holyrood. Of the four BAME members elected to the Scottish Parliament in its history, all four were male, Muslim, of Pakistani ethnicity, and from Glasgow.

While such achievements of Glaswegian Scottish Pakistani Muslims cannot be understated, it is important to now replicate this success across Scotland and explore strategies to similarly empower Scottish Muslim women and Scottish Muslims of other ethnicities. In light of this need, MEND wrote to all the Scottish parties in 2020 demanding that they:

- Publicly acknowledge the manifestations of Islamophobia that result in the under-representation of Muslims within the political sphere;
- Declare their commitment to tackling Islamophobia in all its forms;
- Clearly outline their proposed strategy to take appropriate action in improving Muslim representation during the upcoming election, including through placing more Muslim candidates in winnable seats.

*Of the four BAME members elected to the Scottish Parliament in its history, all four were male, Muslim, of Pakistani ethnicity,*

## **Islamophobia as a barrier to political engagement**

An unavoidable component in increasing diversity within political parties is tackling the Islamophobic abuse that is all too often directed at Muslims in public positions. Following Humza Yousaf's speech in the Scottish Parliament on 10th June 2020, where he expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Justice was subjected to over 6,000 abusive social media posts in just one week.<sup>90</sup>

For many Scottish Muslims, seeing high-profile Muslim politicians being subjected to Islamophobic vilification reaffirms a feeling of disillusionment with the political process and has undoubted negative impacts, particularly on the aspirations of young Scottish Muslims in pursuing public office.

***MEND thus continues to urge all Scottish political parties to commit to outlining their strategies to:***

- ***Tackle Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice within their ranks.***
- ***Improve diversity within candidate selection ahead of all Scottish elections.***

<sup>90</sup> Annie Brown, "Humza Yousaf Targeted with over 6000 Racist Online Posts following BLM Speech," Daily Record, 04th July, 2020, <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/humza-yousaf-targeted-over-6000-22299076>





# Minority Rights and Integration

## Pledges

18. Commit to supporting the protections afforded by the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection.
19. Commit to preserving human rights and the protection of minority rights, including, but not limited to, the rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the wearing of religious dress or symbols as currently enshrined within the Scotland Act 1998 and within the Human Rights Act 1998.

## Religious rights in public discourse

Despite the protections afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Scotland Act 1998, recent years have witnessed numerous controversies, scandals, and vicious public debates that have challenged Muslim religious practice and observance in the UK context. Particular public controversy has surrounded the right to halal meat, the building of mosques, the right to access Shariah councils, and the right to religious dress, amongst other topics of public interest. Such debates demonstrate how religious practice, whilst protected by national and international legislation, can still be contested and the discourse around it used as a proxy argument to marginalise minority communities and Muslims specifically. An example of this can be seen in the previous example of George McIntyre’s Islamophobic Facebook post regarding gelatine in flu vaccinations. The post was in response to the delay in delivering a vaccine that contained gelatine amid concerns from Muslim communities that it contained pork products. Under both Islam and Judaism, pork is forbidden. The prerogative for Muslims and Jews to object to vaccines containing gelatine is protected under UK legislation, including the Human Rights Act 1998, which protects the manifestation of religious belief.<sup>91</sup>

## Protecting minority rights

In light of the current independent review into the Human Rights Act and the emerging ramifications of Brexit, human rights and equality advocates are currently observing the state of human rights in the UK with great trepidation.

As members of the European Union (EU), the UK was subject to the protections afforded by a corpus of EU human rights and equality legislation. These include the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,<sup>92</sup> as well as the many protections EU law afforded to our equality and non-discrimination rights through its directives and general principles. The potential disengagement from EU Directives is of particular concern for minority rights in the UK. Directives are a very common manifestation of EU law. While they do not have direct application in the EU member states, they nevertheless set out an objective to be achieved. Member states are then left to individually achieve these objectives however they see fit through what is known as “transposition”, which is the process through which an EU directive is translated into national law.

The European Commission protects various rights through numerous equal treatment directives.

<sup>91</sup> “Human Rights Act 1998”, *Legislation.gov*. Accessed: 07<sup>th</sup> June 2019. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>.

<sup>92</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission, “What is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union?”, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/what-are-human-rights/how-are-your-rights-protected/what-charter-fundamental-rights-european-union>, accessed on 13/10/2019.

These include:

- **Directive 2000/43/EC** against discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin.<sup>93</sup>
- **Directive 2000/78/EC** against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.<sup>94</sup>
- **Directive 2006/54/EC** equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation.<sup>95</sup>
- **Directive 2004/113/EC** equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.<sup>96</sup>
- **Directive Proposal (COM(2008)462)** against discrimination based on age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the ever-changing nature of the UK's relationship with the EU, these directives' aims and objectives will continue to have value for both the Scottish and the broader UK equalities landscape.

At the same time, there is concern that the Ministry of Justice's recent independent review of the Human Rights Act 1998 may be used as a mechanism either to overhaul the protections afforded within UK law, or to obstruct victims' access to justice through potential limitations to Schedules 2, 3, and 4 of the Act.

***Regardless of Westminster's approach to human rights within reserved legislation, when it comes to devolved powers and Scottish policy strategies, the Scottish Government must commit to:***

- ***Supporting the protections afforded by the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection.***
- ***Preserving human rights and the protection of minority rights, including, but not limited to, the rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision, and the wearing of religious dress or symbols as currently enshrined within the Scotland Act 1998 and within the Human Rights Act 1998.***

<sup>93</sup>. EUR-LEX, "CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION", <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>, accessed on 17/10/2019.

<sup>94</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>. Ibid.





# COVID-19

## Pledge

20. Commit to an independent root and branch investigation into the socio-economic impact of COVID on minority communities, including examining areas such as education, economic impacts, the deployment of police powers, and increased health risks.

## The impact of structural inequalities

As stated by Lynn Dobbs of *the Guardian*, “Coronavirus might not discriminate, but our society does. Whether it’s the fact that the workers propping up our lockdown lives tend to be poorer, or the higher numbers of black, Asian and minority ethnic people dying from coronavirus, this crisis is shedding light on the fault lines in our society.”<sup>98</sup> Understanding why certain communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 requires an examination of the underlying structural inequalities. The reality is that Muslim and ethnic minority communities face a variety of socio-economic challenges that make them more susceptible to catching the virus and more likely to face barriers to their physical recovery, as well as meaning that they will likely feel the lasting economic impacts more acutely.<sup>99</sup>

*“44.3% of NHS medical staff who are foreign-born or from a BAME background.”*

Such challenges include:

### An overrepresentation in frontline services

As explained by Dr Zubaida Haque, ethnic minority communities are “more likely to be in low-paid jobs or key workers – crucial transport and delivery staff, health care assistants, hospital cleaners, adult social care workers as well as in the NHS.”<sup>100</sup> In particular, the frontline of the NHS is indebted to the 44.3% of NHS medical staff who are foreign-born or from a BAME background. Overrepresentation within such services naturally leads to an increased risk of exposure to the virus.

### Overrepresentation in occupations that preclude remote working patterns

Muslims are highly concentrated in occupations that require customer contact and more likely to be concentrated in the three lowest-skilled occupation groups, with more than 2 in 5 Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers in these lower-skilled occupations.<sup>101</sup> As such, not only do individual workers face the risk of exposure, but this risk is translated to their entire household. When combined with other considerations such as deprivation, overcrowding, and the economic ramifications of having to self-isolate, the disproportionality of impacts in comparison to other social groups increases exponentially.

### Barriers to healthcare

Studies indicate that ethnic minority communities face disproportionate barriers in accessing adequate and effective healthcare as a result of significant inequalities. There are a variety of underlying forces that contribute to these inequalities, ranging from a lack of diversity in senior levels of the NHS and language barriers to a loss of confidence due to negative experiences.

<sup>98</sup> Dobbs, Lynn. 2020. “Universities Must Create Opportunities For The People Coronavirus Will Harm Most | Lynn Dobbs”. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/apr/16/universities-must-create-opportunities-for-the-people-coronavirus-will-harm-most>.

<sup>99</sup> “Ethnic Minorities ‘A Third’ Of Covid-19 Patients”. 2020. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52255863>.

<sup>100</sup>. Ibid

<sup>101</sup>. “Work, pay and benefits”, *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*, accessed 21.05.2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits>

These issues are not limited to the NHS but are often found across public services. As the NHS itself has noted, “Experience of discrimination from both public services and society can cause some people to avoid actively seeking help, especially if this is coupled with a lack of a personal support network.”<sup>102</sup>

### Overcrowding and deprivation

Muslims have been shown to suffer from the highest levels of overcrowding<sup>103</sup> and remain concentrated in some of the most deprived local authorities, with 46% of Muslims in England and Wales<sup>104</sup> and 14% of Scottish Muslims living in the top 10% of the most deprived areas.<sup>105</sup> Overcrowding is a particularly important consideration during the pandemic we currently face, as isolation becomes impractical. The link between the overrepresentation of BAME communities in deprived areas and vulnerability to increased health risks cannot be overlooked. Indeed, deprivation is a key indicator of an individual’s level of health. As pointed out by Dr Mohammed Ali, OBE, “unable to afford the luxury of a healthy lifestyle, some ethnic minority groups are prone to conditions like high blood pressure and heart disease. South Asians are six times as likely to develop type 2 diabetes as people of European descent.”<sup>106</sup>

### Caring responsibilities

The pandemic places additional pressures on those with caring responsibilities. As observed by the Race Equality Foundation in 2018, unpaid carers “save the economy an enormous amount of money but often at significant cost to themselves both to their well-being and in financial terms. As a result, carers themselves often need support.”<sup>107</sup> However, they also note the different experiences of BAME carers compared to their white counterparts and the need to recognise the additional challenges they may face, but that in facing these challenges, BAME carers are less likely to access services and more likely to find services less satisfactory than white carers.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, numerous studies show that carers frequently suffer negative consequences to their financial situation as a result of a reduction in paid working hours, as well as detrimental impacts to their mental and physical health, particularly in terms of increased tiredness and social isolation.<sup>109</sup> This has a significant impact on BAME carers as they are more likely to be in financial difficulty and are more likely to have care responsibilities for 20 or more hours a week (56% of BAME carers compared to 47% of white carers).<sup>110</sup>

### Economic impacts

Muslims currently suffer from the lowest employment rate for individuals aged 25-49 and the highest unemployment rate (11%, compared to just 4% of their white counterparts),<sup>111</sup> and are more likely to be self-employed (thereby disproportionately suffering the consequences that lockdowns inevitably have on businesses).<sup>112</sup> Meanwhile, BAME groups are more likely than their white counterparts to be subject to zero-hour contracts, as well as being more likely to be involved in both voluntary temporary work and involuntary temporary work (meaning working on a temporary basis while looking for permanent work, rather than because of a preference for this type of work).<sup>113</sup> Such precarious economic situations can only result in minority communities experiencing increased financial challenges in relation to being on furlough, loss of work hours, redundancies, and the unavailability of paid sick leave. Moreover, research published in 2016 by the Runnymede Trust and Women’s Budget Group (WBG) has shown that BAME groups have suffered disproportionately from the policies of fiscal austerity enacted by the Government since

102. “Improving Access For All: Reducing Inequalities In Access To General Practice Services”. 2018. *England.Nhs.Uk*. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/inequalities-resource-sep-2018.pdf>.

103. “Race Disparity Audit Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website”, *Cabinet Office*, October 2017 (revised March 2018), accessed 15.05.2018, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/686071/Revised\\_RDA\\_report\\_March\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf)

104. Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, accessed 05.09.2019 [http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCB\\_Census\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCB_Census_Report_2015.pdf)

105. “OFFENDER DEMOGRAPHICS AND SENTENCING PATTERNS IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK”. 2010. *Parliament.Scot*. [http://www.parliament.scot/S3\\_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions\\_07/Researchpublished-24-12-10.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S3_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions_07/Researchpublished-24-12-10.pdf).

106. “How Virus Discriminates Against Our BAME Communities – Dr Mohammed Ali”. 2020. *Yorkshireeveningpost.Co.Uk*. <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/how-virus-discriminates-against-our-bame-communities-dr-mohammed-ali-2552816>.

107. “Supporting Black And Minority Ethnic Carers”. 2018. *Raceequalityfoundation.Org.Uk*. <http://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/REF-Better-Health-484.pdf>

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*

110. NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care (2010). Survey of carers in households 2009/10, <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/personal-social-services-survey-of-adult-carers/survey-of-carers-in-households-england-2009-10>

111. “Work, pay and benefits”, *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*, accessed 21.05.2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits>

112. “Insecure Work And Ethnicity”. 2017. *Tuc.Org.Uk*. [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Insecure%20work%20and%20ethnicity\\_0.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Insecure%20work%20and%20ethnicity_0.pdf).

113. *Ibid.*

2010.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, all strategies directed at economic recovery must consider the lessons learned from previous crises and mitigate the disproportionate impacts to which minority communities are vulnerable.

## Education

As previously mentioned, Muslims have been shown to suffer from the highest levels of overcrowding<sup>115</sup> and remain concentrated in some of the most deprived local authorities.<sup>116</sup> Overcrowding is a significant factor in the ability of children to study at home, even outside of the current COVID-19 crisis. However, in light of home learning during the pandemic, it is inevitable that children will find it increasingly difficult to achieve an optimal environment to focus on their studies. The link between the overrepresentation of BAME communities in deprived areas and access to educational resources is thus an issue that must be considered. Furthermore, in light of the need to access lessons online, amenities such as laptops for each child and reliable Wi-Fi are beyond the means of many families, thereby significantly hampering many children's abilities to reach their potential.

At the same time, the mechanisms for examinations in the current situation must be critically examined and creative solutions are required. Indeed, with traditional exams being unrealistic, the reliance upon predicted grades has its own unique pitfalls. The unconscious bias of teachers has been raised as a concern for its potential to deprive minority students of the grades that they are capable of achieving. As observed by Professor Kalwant Bhopal, the director of Birmingham University's Centre for Research in Race and Education, "there's a lot of evidence to show that there are stereotypes around particular types of students, so their predicted grades are lower, and when they do the exam they do better than their predicted grade...students who are from white, middle-class, affluent backgrounds will do very well from these predicted grades, especially those from private schools."<sup>117</sup>

***Recovery from the coronavirus will take many years and needs to be approached critically by considering the history of structural and institutional inequalities that have positioned minority communities at a greater risk of experiencing the impacts of the pandemic more acutely. The first step in this challenge is committing to an independent root and branch investigation into the socio-economic impact of COVID on minority communities, including examining areas such as education, economic impacts, the deployment of police powers, and increased health risks.***

114. "New research shows that poverty, ethnicity and gender magnify the impact of austerity on BME women", *Women's Budget Group*, accessed 17.05.2018, <http://wbg.org.uk/news/new-research-shows-poverty-ethnicity-gender-magnify-impact-austerity-bme-women/>

115. "Race Disparity Audit Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website", *Cabinet Office*, October 2017 (revised March 2018), accessed 15.05.2018, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/686071/Revised\\_RDA\\_report\\_March\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf)

116. '2011 Census Data On Nomis', 2011 Census - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics, accessed 12th May, 2017, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>.

117. Weale, Sally, and David Batty. "Fears That Cancelling Exams Will Hit BAME and Poor Pupils Worst." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 19th March, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/19/fears-that-cancelling-exams-will-hit-black-and-poor-pupils-worst>

# A Policy Model to Tackle Islamophobia

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## A holistic approach

Islamophobia infiltrates every area of social, civic, political, economic, and public life. Therefore, it cannot hope to be tackled through the narrow framework of hate crime initiatives. In reality, it must be understood holistically as a barrier to Scottish Muslims' participation and enjoyment of opportunities, rights, and freedoms on an equal footing with their non-Muslim counterparts.

In approaching this understanding, honest and open engagement is required between political parties, candidates, and the Muslim communities they seek to represent. Engagement does not mean agreement on every issue. However, facilitating the exchange of ideas and perspectives is an integral component of a democratic society and is the most fruitful way to approach meaningful policies that have the potential for positive social impact. It is in pursuit of this ideal that MEND humbly offers the policy pledges outlined within this document. Ultimately, to solve a society-wide problem, a combination of legislative change, Government and industry initiatives, Muslim community empowerment, and wider community engagement is required. Thus, in conjunction with these pledges, MEND proposes the following policy model.

### Legislative changes

At the time of writing, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill is being addressed in the Scottish Parliament. This bill represents valuable progress in Scotland's mission to enhance equality throughout society. While there remain aspects of the bill in need of further critical analysis, debate, and amendment, it is essential that MSPs and political parties publicly support the following principles:

- i. The bill is a necessary piece of legislation to support victims of hate crime.
- ii. The aim of the bill must be to enhance equality and justice through the protection of vulnerable groups.
- iii. This aim should be met through a victim-centred approach and a focus on empowering vulnerable communities.

### Government and industry initiatives

**Racial and religious equality:** Regardless of Westminster's approach to human rights within reserved legislation, when it comes to devolved powers and Scottish policy strategies, attention must be given to supporting, protecting, and promoting human rights as they are currently enshrined within the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Scotland Act 1998. At the same time, Scotland must continue to recognise the value and need for the principles, aims, and objectives contained within the EU equal treatment directives to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services, and social protection.

**Employment:** The barriers to Muslim economic empowerment is an area that needs to be

tackled through both governmental and industry initiatives designed to address religious, racial and gendered discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, including through the use of name-blind applications.

**Media and broadcasting:** There needs to be an emphasis on promoting positive and normalised images of Muslims within media and broadcasting. It is also essential that support is given to educative and industry initiatives designed to attract Muslim and BAME individuals into the spheres of journalism and broadcasting.

**Political and public exclusion:** Public figures must show greater maturity and responsibility when discussing issues involving minority communities and take care not to cause hysteria for the sake of political popularity and agendas. Meanwhile, strategies must be devised to increase diversity amongst political candidates and to tackle Islamophobia within parties themselves.

**Crime and policing:** Areas in need of government support include:

- Tackling the high number of Muslim prisoners through schemes to facilitate rehabilitation, cut re-offending, and develop social inclusion pathways.
- Launching research into the underlying reasons for the disproportionately high numbers of Muslim prisoners, including issues of socio-economic deprivation and structural inequalities within the judicial system.
- Supporting educative and industry initiatives to attract BAME individuals into the police force.
- Addressing unconscious bias and structural Islamophobia and racism that pervades the criminal justice system.

**COVID-19:** Evidence has shown that minority communities have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Steps must now be taken to investigate and develop meaningful interventions to address structural inequalities that have led to worsened healthcare outcomes and the likelihood of disproportionate long-term impacts concerning the economic security and educational progression for minority communities.

### **Muslim community empowerment**

Muslims themselves have a responsibility to ensure that they are engaging with processes of democracy to overcome the challenges they face. As such, there are a number of ways in which Scottish Muslim communities may be empowered to play their full role as civic actors. Strategies to achieve this include:

- Supporting educative and industry initiatives designed to attract Muslims and BAME individuals into the spheres of politics, civil service, media, and broadcasting.
- Placing greater emphasis on educational programs aimed at empowering minority communities to be actively engaged within politics and media.
- Encouraging grassroots and community-led movements in order to overcome barriers to reporting hate crime.

### **Wider community engagement**

Islamophobia, like all forms of hatred, is an issue of social justice, and therefore, it is inherent upon every member of society to contribute towards ending it. As such, there are certain areas than MEND feels should be addressed:

- Promoting greater awareness of Islam.

- Promoting greater inter-community engagement.
- Prioritising PSE within the Curriculum for Excellence to prepare young people for life in a diverse and pluralistic society.
- Developing training programmes and resources for teachers focussed on tackling bullying based on race, religion, disability or sexuality.
- Developing teaching materials to educate young people on the dangers of Islamophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other forms of hatred.
- Supporting community and school-led programmes that encourage cultural exchange between pupils of different racial, religious, ethnic, and other backgrounds.
- Supporting academic freedoms and initiatives to decolonise education, whilst giving greater emphasis within the national curriculum to shared histories and the contributions of minority communities in building our society.





Muslim engagement  
& development

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