MCB MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

Regional Townhalls
November 2025

What issues are facing the British Muslim Community?

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Listening to the Community

The maturity, diversity and situation of British Muslim Communities has come a long way since the founding of the MCB in 1997. As part of the process to professionalise as an organisation and to form coherent strategy going forward, Regional Townhalls were an eye-opening exercise.

The following pages contain a fascinating snapshot of the findings, illustrating the sheer breadth of issues that we as a community are facing. What the pages do not capture, however, is the consolation felt by many attendees from the opportunity to finally feel heard. We are grateful to those who came forward in this constructive process to help us build an MCB that can meet the British Muslim community at this vital stage of its journey.

X

Factoid here on number of people who took part.

21? Number of townhalls held

The Townhalls

The "Townhall" format is an intentional platform to foster transparency and community engagement. Participation is horizontal, open to community representatives, professionals, community members and others. Format could include question-and-answer sessions, short speeches, discussion and debate.

FACE-TO-FACE TOWNHALLS
Birmingham, April 2025
Walsall, May 2025
West London May 2025
Bristol, May 2025
Black Muslims (East London), June 2025
Leicester, July 2025
Bradford, July 2025
Manchester, July 2025
Youth (East London), August 2025

ONLINE TOWNHALLS
Mental Health, May 2025
Youth, June 2025
Refugree June 2025
Professional Networks, June 2025
Prisons / Criminal Justice System, June 2025
Education, July 2025
Ulemas / Imams, July 2025
Middle East & North African Muslims June 2025
Reverts / Converts, June 2025
Turkish Community, June 2025
Far East / East Asian Muslim, June 2025
European Muslims, July 2025

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Problems & Responses by Key Themes

The following pages document issues voiced and possible solutions offered during Townhalls

1: Identity & Integration

Youth: Risk of losing confidence in Muslim identity at schools /unis due to Islamophobia & peer pressure

Reverts/Converts: Often isolated, face prejudice even within Muslim communities, lack of mosque integration / support

Turkish & MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) Communities: Struggling to maintain heritage while integrating with wider UK Muslim landscape (especially language & mosque disconnect)

Refugees: Faith erosion due to neglect by 'settled' communities; some leaving Islam under missionary pressure and more active support from churches

Far East Muslims: Under-represented; identity invisible in mainstream Muslim spaces

Possible Response:
Faith-sensitive programs (e.g. mentorship, mosques offering English/heritage khutbahs, convert care/refugee support frameworks, supportive madrassas for children).

2: Welfare, Safeguarding & Support

Reverts/Converts: Vulnerable to abuse: domestic violence, marriage exploitation, abandonment, housing insecurity.

Refugees: Extreme poverty (living on £8.95/week), food insecurity, often no verified halal food provided, trauma/PTSD, children left unsupported (both in education and within Muslim communities).

Mental Health: Taboo, stigma, no NHS faith-sensitive services, lack of trained Imams/teachers/community leaders.

Prisoners: Ex-offenders face stigma (including within Muslim communities and wider society), lack of housing, jobs, and support post-release; prison converts lack safeguarding.

Possible Response:
Develop Muslim safeguarding frameworks, frontline engagement hubs, connect with psychotherapists with faith sensitive approaches, establish accredited MH & prison chaplaincy programs.

3: Leadership, Safeguaring & Support

Youth & Professionals: No clear pipeline into senior leadership or government representation; Muslims in management often disconnected from their communities.

Turkish, MENA & Far East Muslims: Almost no leadership representation within MCB structures; language and cultural barriers compound exclusion.

Professionals: Struggle with accessing influential Muslims, lack of advocacy at work (bias, freedom of speech restrictions/ censorship particularly around Palestine and other sensitive topics).

Refugees: No united national voice; localised, under-coordinated work, increasing hostility.

Possible Response: Establish MCB Working Groups or close partnerships for those currently underrepresented (e.g. Turkish, MENA, Far East), support structured youth / professional pipelines, and develop lobbying presence in Parliament / committees.

4: Funding & Resources

Youth (inc FOSIS): Perennial underfunding vs Christian/Jewish youth orgs.

Reverts/Converts: No funding for post-Shahada care, vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

Refugees: Reliant on overstretched orgs; most efforts unfunded. Third sector support is often coming from church groups.

Mental Health: Mosques/charities working on shoestring budgets; NHS ignores faith-sensitive needs.

Professionals: Limited funding restricts reach & programs.

Possible Response:: Need for sustainable funding streams (MCB could highlight funders who offer grants, endowments, affiliate subscriptions etc), and distribute based on mapped need. Support with applications? Joint working?

5: Community Cohesion & Coordination

Professionals: Fragmented across political lines, weakened by lack of collaboration.

Refugees: Scattered efforts, no national coordination, risk of duplication.

Mental Health: Multiple small groups, no joint strategy, stigma, duplication of services.

MENA & Turkish Muslims: Lack integration with South Asian-majority mosques, reinforcing silos.

Possible Response:
Mapping exercises + coalition building (Who's Who in each sector), regular cross-group convenings, and shared best practice frameworks.

6: Islamophobia & Discrimination

Youth: Discrimination in schools, universities, workplaces.

Professionals: Barriers in career progression, silencing Muslim voices.

Refugees: Far-right hostility, systemic neglect, Islamophobia in asylum processes.

Mental Health: NHS bias and lack of faith-sensitive provision.

Prisoners: Structural racism in criminal justice system; converts often doubly stigmatised.
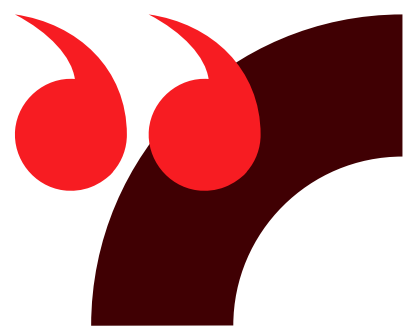
Possible Response:
Advocacy campaigns, legal support, monitoring Islamophobia in institutions (education, NHS, justice system, workplaces), addressing bias within Muslim communities.

Specific Needs by Groups

Notes from Townhalls organised by group

Group	Common Themes (overlap with others)	Specific Needs (unique to group)
Youth (inc FOSIS, ISocs)	• Underfunding vs other faith groups • Islamophobia / discrimination in schools & workplaces • Socioeconomic deprivation in deprived boroughs • Lack of coordinated youth leadership platforms	• Develop MCB Youth Council/Board for structured representation • Online Youth Hub with resources, mentorships & scholarships • Long-term FOSIS funding for student / university engagement • Youth-led Islamophobia campaigns using creative / media strategies • Imam training on youth issues: gangs, drugs, mental health, wellbeing
Reverts / Converts	• Funding / resource gaps • Weak mosque support / organisational collaboration • Islamophobia and prejudice from Muslims & wider society • Isolation and mental health challenges	• Post-Shahada care system: buddy / "adoption" style networks, housing, welfare • Legal / marriage / domestic abuse support • Converts (esp. women) face exploitation, visa marriages, abandonment • Appointment of Walis for vulnerable women • Dedicated mosque spaces & resources for women • National convert directory + MCB-backed platform • Best practice framework for mosques to safeguard and integrate reverts
Turkish Community	• Strong Islamic identity but facing assimilation/identity dilution • Youth engagement gaps • Islamophobia and lack of recognition • Funding/visibility issues	• MCB Turkish Working Group • ESOL / adult education for first-generation migrants • Empower digital presence via younger Turks (mosques / associations lack this) • Leverage Turkish gov't / embassy for bursaries, teacher training, religious support • Cultural / heritage exchange events (Ramadan, Eid, history) to connect youth with roots
Professional Network	• Community fragmentation and political divisions • Limited funding • Islamophobia in workplaces & career ceilings • Lack of mentorship pipelines for young Muslims	• Employment rights training (discrimination, career progression, HR bias) • Mentorship networks: link students/young professionals to senior Muslims • Campaign for freedom of speech at work — counter "silencing Muslims" • Establish new sector bodies (e.g. Muslim Journalist Network) • Govt collaboration for parliamentary / select committee representation • Promote ethical leadership + fight "Muslims in management" disconnect
Refugees	• Funding / resource scarcity • Poor coordination among Muslim orgs • Islamophobia & far-right hostility • Risk of losing faith identity due to neglect	• Frontline engagement system (mosques, butchers, clinics) for arrivals • Scale & support Madrassa Project (700+ children, preserving faith identity) • Coalition of Muslim refugee orgs; MCB to map "Who's Who" • Address extreme poverty: families live on £8.95/week, rely on food banks & unhealthy food, lacking halal meals • Safeguards against missionary pressure (churches exploiting refugee needs → conversions) • Connect psychotherapists & counsellors for trauma/PTSD support • Regional champions for sustained long-term refugee care

Group	Common Themes (overlap with others)	Specific Needs (unique to group)
Far East Muslims	• Lack of engagement with MCB • Islamophobia / segregation challenges • Very limited representation nationally	• Far East Muslim Working Groups • MCB awareness campaigns (social / digital outreach) • Leadership training & pathways for representation in civic / national roles • Cultural exchange programs to integrate with wider Muslim & UK society • Celebrate heritage while fostering unity with other ethnic Muslim groups
Mental Health Community	• Chronic underfunding (mosques & services under-resourced) • Lack of coordination among orgs (duplication, inefficiency) • Islamophobia's direct impact on wellbeing • Stigma/taboo around mental health in Muslim communities	• Audit of Muslim MH sector + mapping of services • Push NHS for faith-sensitive mental health provision (currently absent despite research) • Accreditation for Muslim practitioners • Training for Imams, teachers, community leaders to handle MH issues • Awareness campaigns to break stigma, esp. on anxiety, depression, PTSD • Develop subgroups (youth, teachers, imams) • Tech-based support: apps, online therapy, awareness campaigns • Lobby for policy inclusion (white paper on Muslim MH inequalities)
MENA Community	• Scarce / disorganised resources • Disconnect from South Asian mosques & leadership • Islamophobia / discrimination in wider society	• MENA Working Groups via MCB • Joint initiatives with South Asian mosques: shared khutbahs / events • More English khutbahs to include youth & MENA attendees • Address alienation: cultural exchange, translators for elders • Economic solutions: halal mortgage access, job support for older members • Dedicated MENA Youth engagement programs • Cultural sensitivity training for mosque boards / leaders

Loved the pizza!

Little photo montage of images from the Townhalls plus relevant quotes, not so much on the quality of the food, but on life-changing their evening was.