

A Guide to Engaging Muslim Communities



Matrix
housing partnership



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FOREWORD

The housing association sector is in the vanguard of building the safe, sustainable and cohesive communities where people want to live.

Nowhere is this more apparent than within the Muslim population which has in recent times become the most intensely scrutinised group in the United Kingdom.

Research shows that Muslim people are more dependent on social housing than the general population (28 per cent compared with 20 per cent), which it is suggested is more to do with socio-economic circumstances than tenure preferences. They are also the largest minority ethnic faith – an estimated 1.6 million people.

In 2004 the Housing Corporation published the report *Muslim Housing Experiences*. The report was the first major housing publication to help service providers understand the nature and extent of Muslim housing needs and aspirations. This guide builds upon that work and highlights the positive experiences of a range of organisations in working successfully with Muslim communities and 'breaking down the barriers' which may exist.

Too often approaches to community cohesion start by focusing efforts on communities as primary organising units and strive to foster cohesion at an inter-community level. Such an approach assumes communities are unified. Our experience as housing associations working with some of the most vulnerable people in society is that power is rarely shared evenly across communities, and communities (often unwittingly) impose significant barriers to active civic participation. This results in many communities having both low aspirations and low levels of sustainable cohesion. These communities are consequently poorly equipped to manage change or perceived threat, all too often bearing out negatively in inter-community relations.

There is much the social housing sector is doing already to build sustainable cohesive communities. The challenge now is to widen the participation and involvement of others in the sector so that we can make our proper contribution alongside local and central government.

Jas Bains

Chief Executive
Ashram



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WHAT THE GUIDE IS ABOUT



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About 1.6 million people in Britain identify themselves as Muslim, and that figure is growing as the balance of the population changes through natural increase and further immigration from traditionally Muslim countries. Most Muslims live in England, but smaller numbers live in Scotland (60,000 – more than half of these in Glasgow), Wales (50,000) and Northern Ireland (4,000).

Muslims are ethnically and socially diverse. People who identify themselves as Muslim cover a wide spectrum of nationalities, including some white British people, as well as covering the full range of income groups.

This guide is about engaging Muslim ‘communities’ however, by which is meant identifiable groups of Muslim people living in particular neighbourhoods. Some of these (eg Bangladeshi communities in Tower Hamlets, Somali communities in Sheffield) may be mainly social housing tenants, others (eg Pakistani communities in Bradford) may be mainly living in older, owner-occupied neighbourhoods. Because of the nature of the work of housing and regeneration professionals, the emphasis is on engaging with poorer communities that are likely to be socially excluded but may also be directly affected by housing or regeneration programmes.

Within Muslim communities, there may well be ‘hard-to-reach’ groups whose engagement is even more important. For example, some people may be recent arrivals in a particular place (and may or may not have been accepted by other communities already living

there). Some groups may be poorer and more excluded than others. And women and young people within Muslim communities may need to be approached in different ways if they are to be engaged successfully.

This is an issue which should be of interest to all housing and regeneration agencies, and fortunately there is already experience of working successfully with Muslim communities and of ‘breaking down the barriers’ which may appear to exist.

In preparing the guide we have looked at the experiences of different housing agencies, talked to those involved, and discussed the principles and ‘good practice’ approaches that can lead to successful engagement. Based on such discussions, the guide calls not for a ‘faith-based’ approach to services, but one which is *sensitive* to the needs of different faiths – in this case Islam.

Guides about cultural issues have to tread carefully, walking a tightrope between being too general or stereotyping the rich diversity of communities they try to portray. The aim is to provide some limited, but accessible, information that applies widely in the fields of housing and regeneration, and give pointers to more detailed sources for those who want more in-depth information.

WHY MUSLIM COMMUNITIES?

What is different about Muslim communities (compared, say, with Hindu communities) and why should we be concerned particularly about engaging with them? Of course, engagement should include all groups, but this guide recognises that there may be a particular need to work with Muslim communities – the largest minority faith group – and also that there may be particular barriers to overcome.

Here are some reasons why engaging with Muslim communities needs particular attention.

■ Muslim communities often identify themselves very clearly by reference to their faith

Faith is of particular importance to Muslims, and often their expressions of faith are very communal – in calls to prayer, fasting during Ramadan, ways of greeting each other, and in various other ways. Some other communities have similar characteristics, for example Orthodox Jewish communities, but they are not as numerous and – with one or two exceptions such as in Gateshead – they are not likely to be major communities in social housing or regeneration schemes.

■ Muslims have very diverse communities

The Muslim faith predominates in countries stretching across large parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and including European countries such as Kosovo. Migration from these countries has brought this diversity to Western Europe and to the UK, where distinct communities often live in the same area or adjacent areas. Although sharing a faith, they may have very different characteristics, requiring different approaches to engagement. Conflicts between different Muslim communities based in the UK may also occur – particularly over access to resources or alleged favouritism towards one community over another.

■ Muslims communities are often poor communities

Many nationality groups from traditionally Muslim countries, from places as different as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey and Somalia, are poorer than average, live in worse housing conditions and are based in neighbourhoods where change is taking place through regeneration or new housing development. Muslim communities are therefore often marginalised simply because they are poor, and suffer similar disadvantages to other poor communities.

■ Muslims can be doubly marginalised or excluded

The political and social climate following the terrorist attacks in the USA and London has promoted Islamophobia, adding a further layer of exclusion for Muslim communities. Political rhetoric linking Islam to terror, and the negative portrayal of Muslim communities by some newspapers, have influenced the way Muslims are perceived. This ranges from people believing that Muslims are not interested in integration with the rest of society to mutual fear and a sense of alienation. Muslims

may feel that they are automatically under suspicion from police and other authorities. Such exclusion can become even worse if there is an apparent terrorist threat, when racist attacks are targeted at Muslims, or when incidents occur overseas that rebound on Muslim communities in Britain. For example, even in 2004 Muslim tenants of housing associations were twice as likely as tenants generally to be victims of racial harassment.

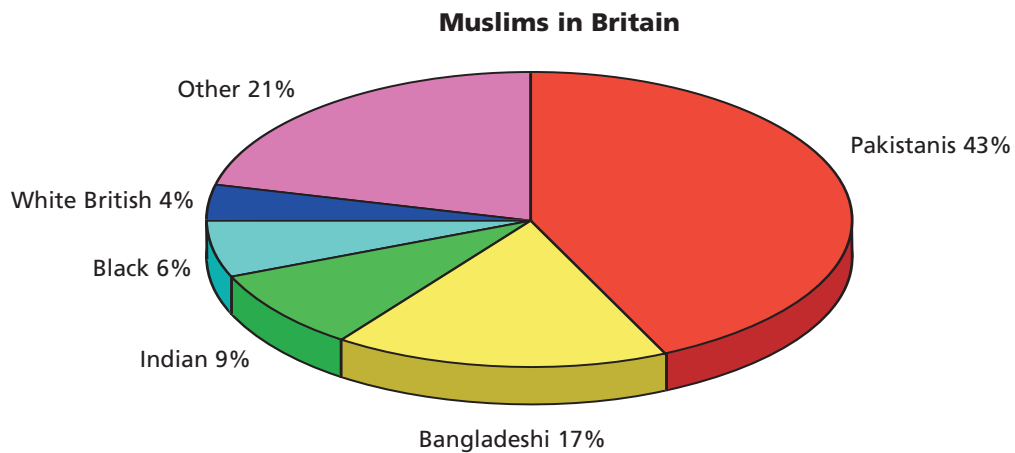
■ Government policy aims to reduce exclusion of Muslim communities

Finally, the government has an active policy (and a funding programme – see page 22) to reduce the exclusion of Muslim communities. As well as working to prevent extremism, it has established a National Muslim Women's Advisory Group, has published case studies of projects which empower Muslim women and has a programme to build local leadership capacity in Muslim communities.



BRITAIN'S MUSLIM POPULATION – SOME BASIC FACTS

In the 2001 Census about 1.6m people identified themselves as 'Muslims' – almost three per cent of the population. It is thought that the figure is now closer to two million. Muslims come from a diverse range of ethnic groups, as can be seen in the chart.



69 per cent of UK Muslims are from the Indian subcontinent. There are also significant numbers from other parts of the world – for example, the 'other' category (21 per cent) includes Muslims of Arab, Turkish and Persian ethnicity.

In London, there is an almost even split between Muslims from the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere. London is home to the vast majority of Muslims who describe themselves as 'white', coming from a range of countries in Eastern Europe, including Turkey, and the Middle East. At the same time almost 40 per cent of London's Muslims were born in the UK.

According to the census, large Muslim communities outside London include Birmingham (over 140,000) and Bradford (over 75,000). However, almost everywhere has at least a small Muslim population (eg Berwick on Tweed with ten people), which means that isolation may be a factor to take into account in many places.

But census figures almost certainly under-represent many communities. For example, according to the census, there are just over 40,000 Somalis in Britain – but *The Economist* puts the figure at up to 100,000. The majority of Somalis are Muslims, and there are large Somali populations in several cities such as Birmingham, Sheffield, Leicester and Milton Keynes, as well as London.

Muslims have the youngest age profile of all the faith communities in the UK. At the time of the 2001 census, 34 per cent of Muslims were under age 16. Households headed by a Muslim were the most likely to contain children, with 63 per cent containing at least one dependent child, and a quarter having three or more children.

In general, Muslim communities are poorer than the overall population. In 2004, Muslim men had an unemployment rate of 13 per cent across Britain, compared with an average rate of less than five per cent. Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are particularly deprived. They are two and a half times more likely than the white population to be unemployed and nearly three times more likely to be in low pay.



Photograph courtesy of hact. Photographer: Paula Solloway

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING

Muslims continue to suffer socio-economic disadvantage, which translates into an acute housing crisis, with Muslim households disproportionately overcrowded and in poor quality accommodation.
(from *Muslim Tenants in Housing Associations* – see below).

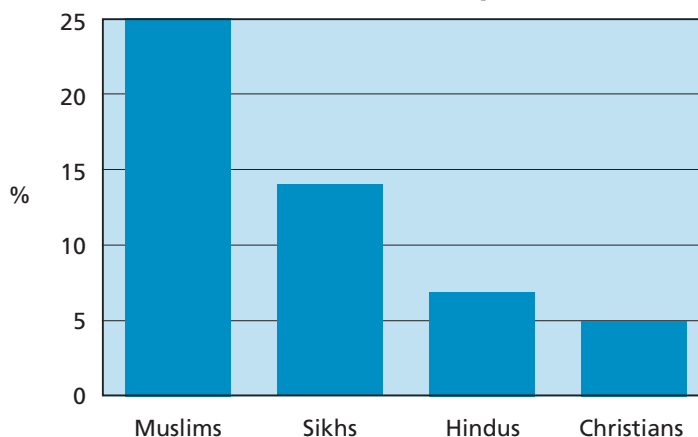
Muslims are less likely to be home owners – 52 per cent are owners compared with an overall average of 69 per cent. And they are more likely to be social housing tenants – 28 per cent compared with less than 20 per cent. One reason may be that few mortgage products are available in Britain which comply with Shariah (Islamic) law (see page 19).

However, the overall figures mask many differences. Only 15 per cent of Pakistanis, for example, live in social housing, whereas 41 per cent of Bangladeshis and 80 per cent of Somalis do so.

This affects the regional patterns of Muslim housing tenure – with a majority of Muslims in the East Midlands, London and Southern England being in tenanted property, while more in the West Midlands and North are home owners (typically, in inner city terraces).

Many Muslims live in poor conditions, whether in rented or owner-occupied property. For example, 42 per cent of Muslim children live in overcrowded households, and the figure is particularly high for Bangladeshis and Somalis. This is partly because of their larger families (see graph).

Households with three or more dependent children, 2001



Nationally, one third of Bangladeshi and Pakistani homes are deemed unfit and 12 per cent of Muslim households have no central heating.

In a study of housing association tenants, Muslim households' satisfaction with their homes (72 per cent) was lower than that of tenants overall (81 per cent), and only 62 per cent considered their landlord maintained their home in a decent condition compared with 70 per cent overall.

As will be clear from the case studies, assumptions about housing needs should always be checked. For example, there is an assumption that older Muslims will be looked after by extended families, but this may no longer be true as people become more affluent and move away for jobs, etc. This raises sensitive issues about the need for care and support (see example on page 19) that may be contentious because of traditions about support being provided within families.

More information

- Housing Corporation (2005) *Muslim Tenants in Housing Associations*. Sector Study 46.
- Housing Corporation (2004) *Muslim Housing Experiences*. Sector Study 34.
(both can be downloaded from www.housingcorp.gov.uk)

WHAT DOES BEING 'MUSLIM' MEAN?



Trident/PA

■ Religion is a key marker of identity for most Muslims

In contrast to the general population, religious belief is a key part of the identity of many Muslims. In 2007, 86 per cent of Muslims agreed that 'my religion is the most important thing in my life,' compared with only 11 per cent of the general British population. This suggests that Islam is a much more important part of Muslims' identity than is the case with (say) many people who might describe themselves as Christian.

■ Fundamental beliefs

The word Islam means both 'peace' and 'submission'. It is the second largest religion in the world, developing over one billion followers since it began in Mecca more than 1,400 years ago. Muslims, followers of Islam, believe that there is only One God, known in Arabic as 'Allah'. While Jesus, Moses and Abraham are respected as prophets, the final prophet and the key figure in Islam is Muhammad, who lived in 570-632. Islam is a complete way of life for Muslims and the two main sources of guidance and teaching are the Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings or sayings of the prophet Muhammad). The 'five pillars' of Islam are declaring their faith, praying five times a day, giving money to charity, fasting and a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.

■ Branches of Islam

Islam is practiced in so many regions of the world that it is not surprising that (as with Christianity) some practices and beliefs vary widely according to culture and tradition in particular countries. There are two main branches of Islam. Around 90 per cent of the world's Muslims are 'Sunni' Muslims; the remaining ten per cent are 'Shi'a' or 'Shi'ite' Muslims. However, both branches have variations, particularly in the strictness with which traditional rules are followed.

■ Aspects of daily life

Names. In some communities, Muslims may prefer not to be addressed by their first name, therefore it is important to ask people what they want to be called (without, of course, asking for a 'Christian' name).

Languages. Arabic is widely used as it is the language of worship, and also because the Qur'an is written in Arabic. Muslim communities have many languages and the most common in Britain are Bengali (and the dialect Sylheti), Urdu, Somali and Farsi.

Dress. There are many variations, although the general dress 'code' is to dress modestly. Men may wear a head covering (topi or kufi). Women may simply cover their heads with a scarf, often called a hijab. Some Muslim women veil part of their face with the niqab. In some communities, women cover the whole of their face and body with a dress called a chador or burqa.

Diet. Pork and pork by-products such as ham are strictly forbidden. Islam requires any meat products to be 'halal'. This should be born in mind in arranging meetings (and meat dishes should be kept separate from non-meat ones). Drugs and alcohol are also forbidden, and smoking may be restricted.

Fasting. During the month of Ramadan, most Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset. It is important to be aware of this and that Muslims won't be able to take part in the normal social intercourse of eating and drinking. People may want to get home by sunset in order to eat (or break their fast by having a snack).

■ Social Customs

In Islam, men and women are equal, although their respective roles can be very distinct. There is a strong sense of decorum amongst Muslim women, and men do not normally shake hands with women and vice versa. Some Muslim women may not feel comfortable being alone in a house with a male who is not family and communications may have to take place in the presence of another family member. Some Muslims may consider direct eye contact to be rude and therefore may avoid it – this should not be misinterpreted as being evasive.

■ Meetings

Social customs and rules about alcohol should be considered when community meetings are held. Some communities may want separate events for men and women, or separate seating areas for men and women in the same event. When arranging meetings, prayer times (including Fridays) should be avoided.

■ Visiting at home

Muslims – like other families – often remove their shoes on entering the house and you may feel it appropriate to do the same or to ask if you should. When visiting Muslims, prayer times should be avoided if possible, as people may not respond. Women may prefer to have a family member or someone else present during an interview, so it may be appropriate to arrange visits in advance so that this can be organised.

■ Mosques and prayers

The mosque is the communal building for prayers, and different communities often have different mosques (and perhaps associated madrassas or schools). The leader is called the Imam and together with the council of the mosque may be a useful contact in the community. Women, especially young ones, may not always attend the mosque. If a non-Muslim woman enters a mosque it is appreciated if she covers her head and her legs. In the prayer hall, shoes are removed by both men and women.

There are five sets of daily prayers (with a different midday prayer on Fridays) and men are strongly encouraged to pray in congregation in their local mosque. There is a ritual washing before prayer.

■ Festivals

The Islamic calendar is lunar-based – with a 12-month year of about 354 days. This means that the dates of festivals change each (Gregorian) year by about ten days compared with the previous year.

The two key festivals are Eid-ul-Fitr (or just 'Eid') which marks the end of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha which follows the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Different Muslim communities might celebrate Eid on different days because of variations in calendars. For more information on faith festivals see the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/).

■ Work environment

Muslims are able to achieve their full potential in employment without jeopardising or compromising their faith. Relatively minor changes to practices by employers can make a significant difference. For example:

- where food is provided, ensuring halal food is available and/or vegetarian food that is clearly separated and labelled
- recognising that time off may be needed for major festivals
- allowing for observance of daily prayer (during normal work hours) and for adequate facilities for ritual washing beforehand.

For more information see the ACAS guide *Religion or Belief and the Workplace* www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/f/l/religion_1.pdf

Gateshead, Portsmouth and Bristol inform their staff

The Gateshead Housing Company (an ALMO) has a detailed employee web resource which helps employees deliver services while being sensitive to different cultures and faiths. The above information is partly based on this.

Portsmouth City Council has a 140 page ring-bound guide to minority cultures and faiths in Portsmouth called *One City, Many Cultures...* The 'faiths' section covers Islam and other religions, while the 'communities' section covers all the various groups living in Portsmouth and the differences that apply to Kurds, Bangladeshis, Arabs, etc that practice Islam.

Bristol City Council has produced a booklet *Five Key Myths about Islam ... and the Facts*. It addresses some common suspicions or misconceptions about Muslims. Staff training covers issues relating to the Muslim community and staff can also attend a more in-depth Islamic Awareness course. The booklet can be downloaded at www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Community-Living/Equality-Diversity/faith.en (or contact: equalities.team@bristol.gov.uk).

ENGAGING MUSLIM COMMUNITIES – GETTING STARTED

Before starting to engage with Muslim communities it is important to know why you are doing it, what you are trying to achieve and how you will go about the work. If engagement is part of a wider strategy then this should guide your objectives and shape your approach.

Here are some basic questions to ask (and answer) when getting started.

■ What do we want to achieve?

At the start of this guide we suggested several reasons why you might want to engage with Muslim communities in particular. The aims you have might include some of the following:

- make sure services meet the needs of all communities
- identify new groups (eg migrants) that have unmet service needs
- engage with communities affected by specific measures (eg planned modernisation schemes or new development)
- tackle specific housing issues like overcrowding
- build community cohesion in neighbourhoods where you are the landlord.

Whatever the immediate aims, you need also to show how they fit within your organisation's business plan or relevant strategy (eg a BME housing strategy, equality and diversity strategy, etc).

■ Are we committed to it?

Any involvement with communities needs a decision about whether it is for the short term (consulting on a decision) or whether it aims to be sustainable, long-term engagement (see the CIH guide to *Community Engagement* referenced on page 23 for full discussion of levels of engagement).

Engagement requires two types of commitment. The first is to have the resources (people, space, time, skills, information) for engagement itself – see below.

Second, and equally important, is to have wider commitment to the process from the organisation. For example, if engagement shows that services or schemes need changing, will that be done? If it produces new information about service users (or potential users), how will this be fed into the organisation's database so that it is available to frontline staff and service planners, and actually influences what happens?

■ How will we do it?

This means having staff with relevant language skills combined (if possible) with community engagement skills and experience. It means devoting sufficient time to the process, to allow trust to develop with groups who might have had little prior contact/involvement. The skills might be found in part by ensuring that



William Sutton Trust

people from the relevant community know about and apply for potential jobs. Interpreter jobs might provide a particular opportunity. Remember that community development work always carries a risk of conflict: allowing sufficient time for consultation, having good experience in community development, and using transparent methods, will all help minimise the risk.

It will also mean having information about Muslim householders, or (if it is not available) building in time to develop a profile of who lives where. It means having or creating contacts within those communities (see the hints later on this page).

Finally, it means a shared understanding – perhaps based on this guide – about Muslim communities and how to approach them in culturally sensitive ways.

Pages 12-20 give a range of examples of engagement in different places and for different purposes that should help in addressing the issues about 'getting started'.

■ How will we know if we have been successful?

As with any project, if measurable outcomes can be included these should reveal whether the work has succeeded. For example, do more people from Muslim communities apply for lettings? Do they get them? Are under-represented communities being helped to access housing? Do more Muslim people get involved in tenants' or residents' groups?

Another important element in measuring success is to be guided by the communities themselves about their priorities and if possible to build these into any action plan that results from engagement, so that it is shared between the housing organisation and the community.

In a more general community development project, measurable outcomes may be difficult to specify, or may take longer to assess. One technique is to use a focus group which meets before, during and after the project, to provide feedback on whether it worked and what could have been improved. Or there could be a specific objective such as getting people from a particular community to take part in a tenants' forum

or similar event – and monitoring whether this happens and whether it continues.

■ Who do we contact?

Communities vary considerably as to the importance of the role of 'community leaders' – often based in the mosque. In some, they may be key figures whose co-operation will be vital in securing community engagement. In others, they may speak for part of the community, whereas some people may be disengaged or have other local affiliations. Judgement will be needed on the approach required in a particular area, and it may have to be revised as experience of working with the community develops.

In many Muslim communities there will be one or more local mosques – or possibly more distant mosques that people travel to from the area. Contact can be made with the mosque's council – who are likely to be the people responsible for engagement with other organisations.

But mosques often represent the more conservative parts of the community (and women are excluded or there may be generation gaps). It is important to identify and work with other local institutions or interest groups (such as women's, young people's or disabled people's organisations). Also there might be other, less visible Muslim communities. For example, many cities have active refugee and migrant organisations which relate to particular nationality groups (eg Iraqis).

Local community-based bodies which provide services to Muslim communities might be particularly useful contacts as they can advise on local needs. The same might apply to schools or the health centre, to which Muslims might already relate on a daily basis. Door-to-door contact, or talking to Muslim parents at the local school, may be useful ways to engage with Muslim women. Either should be done by a female staff member, with appropriate language skills if needed.

Many communities have newspapers in community languages and these – together with local community shops and (with permission) the mosque – might be good places to advertise meetings.

More information

- Contact details for mosques and other institutions can be found in the Muslim Directory – www.muslimdirectory.co.uk

ENGAGING MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES



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The guide has already pointed out that deprivation and marginalisation affect many Muslim communities and can make the building of cohesive neighbourhoods very difficult to achieve. Also, there may be what have been called ‘minorities within minorities’ – groups within communities that are more isolated because of their caste or other issues (see information at the bottom of page 13).

As the Commission on Integration and Cohesion pointed out in its interim report:

‘...isolation, alienation and segregation go hand-in-hand with poverty, inequality, discrimination and other forms of multiple deprivation.’

The Commission’s final report called for greater investment in community development, to tackle isolation and build confidence and capacity in marginalised communities.

There are (broadly) two situations where this work may be needed. The first is where major regeneration or redevelopment is taking place which will affect Muslim communities, and it is vital that they are involved (along with everyone else who is affected) if the project is to demonstrably engage with people in planning the changes that are to take place. The examples from Rekendyke and Pendle (see page 20) illustrate this.

The second, sometimes more difficult, challenge, comes in areas not affected by major change, but where nevertheless some groups lead isolated lives and don’t take part in the wider life of the neighbourhood nor do they engage with housing or other agencies. Here are three examples – from Brighton, North London and Halifax.

Moulsecoomb Inclusion Project, Brighton

The need for engagement with isolated women from Bangladeshi families in Moulsecoomb was identified as part of the East Brighton NDC programme. This led to PEP being commissioned by Brighton and Hove City Council to work in the community and set up a small team of two community workers and an interpreter.

They made contact with about 20 women through a combination of door-knocking, working through the local school and word of mouth. This enabled them to work with the women to identify their needs and the best means of coming together. Through close links with other agencies such as the Friend’s Centre and the Healthy Living Centre, the project was able to offer the women access to ESOL classes and also help with their ‘Life in the UK’ test. They also undertook first aid training, tailoring, exercise and swimming classes; the latter with support from the local swimming pool when it agreed to have women-only sessions.

The initial aim was to gain the confidence of the women, then to help them feel confident about working together as a group, to overcome their isolation. They have now reached the point where they hold lunchtime meetings. The women cook lunch and meet with local services including the police, drugs awareness workers and housing officers.

PEP feels that they have successfully supported a very isolated and deprived community to better engage with agencies in the neighbourhood, although there is concern that, without longer-term funding, activities may not continue.

Contact: Kaye Duerdoth at kaye.duerdoth1@ntlworld.com

Reaching Out in Enfield and Haringey

Reaching Out is part of a £100m million regeneration programme by London and Quadrant Housing Trust and Metropolitan Housing Trust in Edmonton Green. Both HAs saw physical regeneration as only part of the task and set up Reaching Out to work with the local Kurdish and Turkish community, which accounts for ten per cent of the population and has difficulties gaining access to housing and other services.

The associations first employed a Turkish-speaking consultant to work with the communities and identify their concerns. Then, a Turkish-speaking outreach worker was appointed to address these issues, which were made worse by language barriers. Reaching Out developed a range of services, drop-in sessions and monthly information meetings on health, education, community safety and other issues. It publishes a newsletter, runs English-language courses, supports a school homework club and runs other local activities that bridge gaps between communities. More than 200 people are involved in the project and nearly 1,000 have used its services.

Setting up a Kurdish and Turkish Residents' Association (KATRE), a company limited by guarantee, ensured community ownership of the project. The worker is now employed by KATRE.

The two HAs are keen to replicate the project. Work has already started with a Somali community in Leyton, East London and in Chalkhill Estate, Brent, where the Reaching Out format will be used to guide engagement.

Bringing two HAs together enables them to pool resources. If the number of Muslim tenants is too small for one organisation, joining forces with another might be an option to explore.

Another lesson is not to underestimate the role and power of women: in the Reaching Out communities, in many cases it is women who take decisions and have control inside the family home.

The project won a Housing Corporation 2007 Gold Award for 'empowering communities'.

Further information: www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.11225 or from Michael Downie, Metropolitan Housing Trust, Michael.Downie@mht.co.uk

Nashayman's community cohesion work

Nashayman Housing Association (part of Home Group) is based in Halifax and already has experience of developing ethnically mixed new build schemes. It is now planning to work in two areas of Halifax (among the ten per cent most deprived wards in Britain) where the majority of the population are either Pakistanis or Bangladeshis. Based on its own reputation with the communities concerned, it plans to appoint outreach staff to help reduce the communities' isolation, and tackle the racism they experience. The overall aim is greater integration of the communities with the rest of Halifax's population.

Nashayman has also identified that some families would like to move away from the traditional cluster areas and rent or buy elsewhere in Halifax. The project plans to work with other housing providers to help people do this, and to give them the necessary support in moving to non-traditional areas.

Contact: Bhavna Patel 01422 395300 (or visit www.nashayman.org.uk).

More information

- The interim and final reports of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion are available at www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk
- A report *Minorities within Minorities: Beneath the surface of community participation*, based on work in Bradford, can be downloaded at www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/1977.asp

SURVEYS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES



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In working with a larger or scattered Muslim community, a special survey might be appropriate to obtain information or to seek views. A survey may also be needed simply to establish some baseline information about a new community (eg recent migrants) that do not figure in official surveys.

Specific considerations that apply in surveying Muslim communities include:

- interviewers having relevant language skills and if possible to be identifiable as from the same community
- having female interviewers to ensure that women's views are obtained
- using various methods (eg combining one-to-one interviews with telephone surveys or with focus groups) to maximise the survey's coverage – but note that postal surveys are likely to be completed by men.

Some surveys have deliberately focussed on women or younger people in order to 'drill down' into local needs and aspirations – for example, the Bradford study *Breaking Down the Barriers* used focus groups with young couples from different communities, to see whether their aspirations differed from those of older people (they did). Some Muslim communities have carried out their own surveys to highlight problems they face. One approach is to commission such a survey from a local organisation or to positively recruit and train community-based interviewers.

Here are some examples of surveys – that might provide ideas.

Migrant group assesses own needs

Link Action is a group of Somali volunteers who worked with the Northern Refugee Centre to obtain training sponsored by Active Learning through Active Citizenship (www.togetherwecan.info/alac/). With the skills acquired, they carried out a survey into the problems faced by young Somali people, and produced a report *Somalis in Sheffield* directed at the local authority and other service providers, setting out the community's needs.

Further information: www.alacsy.org.uk

Aspirations of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women

A survey of second generation women in Bradford, Birmingham and Tower Hamlets showed that Muslim women born here now have many similar housing aspirations to those of white British women. For example, many still living in traditionally Asian areas would prefer to live in more mixed areas and not share a house with their extended family. Most want to be home owners, and do not place much importance on culturally sensitive house design or on Sharia-compliant mortgages.

The study *Housing Aspirations for a New Generation* is published by CIH for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see www.cih.org/publications).

Somalis in Birmingham

A partnership between Trident HA and AMANA, a fledgling Somali housing organisation, led to this survey. It combined home interviews, a focus group and discussions with Somali organisations and service providers from which the report, *The Unexpected Community* resulted. The report provides missing information on Birmingham's large Somali population, its needs and aspirations.

The report is published by the Human City Institute (www.humancity.org.uk/publications.htm).

More information

- *Breaking Down the Barriers* can be downloaded at www.cih.org/policy/free-publications.htm
- Techniques for researching new migrant communities are included in *Estimating the Scale and Impact of Migration at Local Level* (www.lgar.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pageId=42490).
- A comprehensive (2003) report on *Somali Housing Experiences in Britain* can be found at: www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/publication_downloads.html

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

There are large numbers of Muslim-based community organisations, some with resources (like the Muslim-based registered HAs) but many with limited funds or which are newly emerging (especially in recently established communities). By supporting these organisations, housing and regeneration agencies have a great opportunity to strengthen or create links with Muslim communities, and to help those communities develop their capacities.

Support can range from simple logistical support (eg providing a meeting room) to financial support (or help with obtaining it). More ambitious partnership work might include joint activities (such as the surveys on page 14), staff secondments or actually commissioning Muslim community bodies to provide services. Here are some examples.

Aashyana Outreach Service, Bristol

Aashyana is an Asian-led HA, part of the Affinity Sutton Group. It runs an outreach service in Bristol, aimed at the South Asian (mainly Muslim) community, and funded through the Big Lottery. The service offers interviews in community languages and deals with complex housing cases which are often compounded by financial or family problems. Outreach surgeries are held in local community organisations, already used by Muslim groups. It has specialist female staff to deal with women clients, including dealing with issues of domestic violence. The service is cross-sector, and therefore provides the additional support which other landlords in Bristol could not easily offer. It deals with around 300 cases per year, with limited paid staff supplemented by volunteer advisers.

Further information: 0117 970 3905

Muslim-based housing association works in wider partnerships

North London Muslim HA has a deliberate strategy of creating partnerships in order to promote the integration of Muslim tenants and achieve more cohesive communities. Some of its activities have included:

- establishing the organisation Faith in the Future Ltd which has a wide remit for 'housing plus' work
- undertaking research for Kensington and Chelsea about the needs of the Muslim communities in the borough
- working with other social landlords in the areas where it has stock, to promote inter-community contact (including between Muslim and Jewish communities)
- holding an exchange with a church in a rural village, to improve awareness of Muslim communities in a place which might have little contact with them.

NLMHA is willing to share its expertise in working with Muslim communities with other organisations.

Contact: Ahmed Mapara (NLMHA Chief Executive) 020 8815 4204; Salim Patel (Faith in the Future Ltd) 020 8806 7727

Local housing co-op partners larger HAs

Shahjalal Housing Co-op in Birmingham has been assisted by its association with the Matrix partnership to produce a new development strategy to help it respond to the housing needs of Bangladeshi and other communities in the Aston area of Birmingham. It prides itself on its community-based approach, but had been frustrated by its inability to carry out new development.

Now, as a Matrix associate, it has a small but growing programme. Accord HA is its development partner, and the Chief Executive of Trident HA has become a member of Shahjalal's board. Although Bangladeshi in origin 30 years ago, recent lettings of new houses have consciously been made on the basis of need – with tenants from Pakistani and Somali communities also receiving allocations.

Contact: Malik Ullah (chair of Shahjalal) 0121 328 2482 or John Morris (Chief Executive of Trident, johnm@trident-ha.org.uk)

More information

Ideas about working with community-based organisations, including Muslim organisations and those based in migrant and refugee communities, can be found in the following guides:

- *Housing and Support Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees* (CIH/JRF)
- *Community Engagement in Housing-Led Regeneration* (CIH)
- *More Responsive Public Services?* (JRF and hact)
- *An Opportunity Waiting to Happen? – Housing associations as 'community anchors'* (hact/NHF)

For contact details see page 23.

WORKING WITH MUSLIM WOMEN



Trident HA

In many Muslim communities, women may be keen to engage more widely but at the same time be constrained by traditional views about their roles. This means that engaging with women – and women’s organisations – is both important and needs sensitive handling. Several of the case studies in the guide have featured issues about involving Muslim women. Here are some examples focussed solely on women.

West Midlands BME Women and Housing Forum

This multi-faith forum has provided a platform to enable Muslim women, among other BME women, to make a significant contribution to shaping housing policy in the West Midlands. The forum works with the Housing Corporation and local authorities. Ashram HA, a BME-led housing association, has played a leading role in establishing the network, which is now providing opportunities for Muslims to engage with debates about housing, environment and community cohesion.

Source: Ashram HA *Engaging Muslim Communities*.

Developing the Capacities of Muslim Women

Women generally and more specifically Muslim women are largely under-represented in the built environment professions. An innovative programme involving but not restricted to Muslim women in community design workshops was developed between Ashram HA and Birmingham City University. The programme introduces women to design concepts, principles of urban design and building technology, and how these could be applied to culturally sensitive housing and community infrastructure. Several Muslim women are now engaged in it.

Source: Ashram HA *Community Design Prospectus*

Consultation for the Chicksand East Estate Stock Transfer

Spitalfields HA, a local Bangladeshi-led organisation, worked with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to engage Muslim women tenants in a planned stock transfer and secure their input to the regeneration proposals. Initially, Muslim women missed out on the consultation process. Spitalfields therefore engaged women outreach workers to make one-to-one contact with female residents. They then held separate women’s focus group sessions, run by women, to encourage them to discuss the proposals. These were successful and led to much more active participation in a Women’s Forum which was consulted on the main proposals.

Contact: Omar Mapara (Chief Executive, Spitalfields HA) 020 7392 5400

Engaging with Muslim Women in Old Trafford, Manchester

Manchester and District HA has a regeneration team in Old Trafford which makes efforts to engage with all local BME communities, but particularly Muslim women. They have sponsored the Ace Women's Group – local women who provide support and education to other Muslim women moving into the area with a view to reducing their isolation. The group is supported by the neighbourhood regeneration officer, who helps to promote the work they do and provides mentoring. Ace Women's Group in return provides language skills at new tenancy sign ups (if needed) and also advice to new Muslim female tenants of the services available.

M&D HA also hosts an annual multicultural celebration (at a cost of about £2,000). Now four years old, the event involves many local voluntary and statutory bodies, faith groups, Muslim groups (including local Somali groups) and local residents. The purpose is to introduce agencies and groups to each other and then to the community with the aim of promoting community cohesion. The event is usually attended by about 160 people and has clearly been successful in terms of ongoing work after the first of the celebrations. The celebration is now to be replicated in other areas of Manchester.

Contact: Lorna Powell, Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer 0161 912 4671

Gender issues in Muslim communities

Domestic violence, honour crimes and forced marriages are condemned by Islam but are of course issues faced in some traditional communities, of whatever faith. They should be an element in staff awareness training (eg in interviewing homeless Muslim women). Another issue to consider in staff training is prejudice about gays and lesbians within Muslim communities.

There are various services which provide specific help with these issues, some housing-related. For example, the Aashyana help-line (see page 15) assists Muslim women (young and old) experiencing domestic violence. Specialist female staff respond to sensitive issues.

More information

- There is a report on examples of work with Muslim women – *Empowering Muslim Women – Case studies* available from CLG (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/empoweringmuslimwomen).
- On domestic violence in Muslim families, there are resources at www.crescentlife.com
- The Home Office has worked with the charity Karma Nirvana to establish a helpline (0800 5999 247) for those affected by forced marriage or honour crimes.
- The Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation deals with issues of honour crimes – see www.ikwro.org.uk
- The Safra Project works on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender women who identify as Muslim – see www.safraproject.org



Photograph courtesy of hact. Photographer: Maja Kardum.

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

It is often more effective to meet young people on their own territory initially – and to find ways to engage with them that relate to their own interests, such as sport. In many respects engaging with Muslim young people is no different to engaging with young people more generally – although Muslim girls may experience more constraints as to the type of activities they can attend.

Both examples here encourage young people from Muslim and other communities to engage through joint facilities – and both were winners in the ‘Building Cohesive Communities’ category of the Housing Corporation’s 2008 Gold Awards.

These examples contrast with the community-specific focus of the Reaching Out project (see page 13), a previous Gold Award winner.

North London Muslim HA (see page 23) has also successfully organised play and other activities involving Muslim, Jewish and other young people.

Old Ford’s intercultural approach

Old Ford HA took over 1,600 homes from the Tower Hamlets HAT in 1997 and now has about 4,500 units, all in the same part of the borough. Old Ford has consciously worked to bring together the different communities in an ethnically mixed area which still has a large, traditional white community. It has resisted pressures to create separate facilities for different communities. It does offer culturally appropriate services for different communities – but always at common venues that are managed by ethnically mixed committees.

In relation to young people, it works from community centres (several managed by residents) and from a professionally led youth centre. Services include women-only sports sessions, which are therefore sensitive to the needs of Muslim young women without being specific to that faith or community. Old Ford decided to offer Arabic classes to meet demand from Muslim young people because otherwise they would be taught in an environment separate from other communities, and the classes encourage participation in the centres’ other activities. They also have a confidence-building programme which is based on young people’s use of mobile phones – part of the training is to collect and discuss the opinions of other young people.

Old Ford won the commission to deliver statutory local youth services from January 2007. Its young people’s sexual health programme won the ‘most innovative idea’ category in the 2007 Youth Work Awards.

Contact: Fokrul Hoque, Community Regeneration Manager, 020 7204 1567

Bend it like Birmingham

This project led by Ashram HA provides sports opportunities within five deprived and highly racially segregated neighbourhoods. It works with individuals and communities to remove barriers to participation, promoting integration within and between the five neighbourhoods.

The project is working with over 300 young people on a weekly basis and has 66 volunteers each committing four hours per week. It helps volunteers to gain coaching qualifications and develops pathways to employment in sport. It brings housing and sport together, working to break down cultural and religious stereotypes, especially relating to Muslim communities. For example, it has encouraged Muslim women to participate and even train as coaches. Project officer, Kameron Hussain, says:

‘We will be challenging traditional taboos and crossing cultures so people can see the 95 per cent that makes us the same, rather than just the five per cent that makes us different.’

Ashram’s project is in partnership with other HAs in the area, Birmingham City Football Club and others. Funding is from Sport England, the Football Foundation and from HA resources.

Further information: www.ashramha.org.uk

More information

- The Muslim Youth Helpline has written a guide to *Providing Faith and Culturally Sensitive Support Services to Young British Muslims*, downloadable from the National Youth Agency (<http://nya2.live.poptech.coop/information/100582/100583/109465/muslimyouthhelpline/>)

NEW BUILD SCHEMES AND HOME OWNERSHIP INITIATIVES

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion said that new development provides a tremendous opportunity to create mixed and cohesive communities. But if this is to be done, all affected communities (including Muslims) need to be involved in influencing the new development. The aim is to create ethnically mixed communities and avoid building in barriers to that taking place.

One or more of the agencies involved needs to have the confidence and understanding of Muslim communities, so that new developments are attractive to them (see the Firebird example). The community's preferences may also need to be reflected in the design – but based on real consultation (as in the Bristol case below) – not just assumed.

Bradford Partnership aims to Create Mixed Communities

Bradford Community Housing Trust (BCHT) has created a company, Firebird JVC Ltd, in partnership with four local HAs, including Manningham (MHA) which has extensive experience of working with Muslim communities. Firebird builds new homes – many to be managed in partnership with MHA, which has experience of encouraging people to move to unfamiliar areas, and in delivering culturally sensitive services. The aim is to meet the increasing demand for affordable housing and encourage mixed communities.

Firebird was part of the submission by BCHT and MHA for the Housing Corporation's 2008 Gold Awards, in which they were a finalist.

Further information: Jake Piergies, Strategic Partnerships Officer, 01274 254295

Lincoln Gardens, Bristol – Guinness Care & Support

Planning a very sheltered housing scheme involves careful consideration of the needs of potential users – particularly challenging in Lawrence Hill in Bristol because of the ethnic mix, including many older Muslim people.

Guinness and Bristol City Council consulted community organisations to build up a careful picture of what would create an attractive scheme, sensitive to different needs. Some requirements conflicted (eg preferences for showers or baths); on others compromise could be reached (eg sharing a multi-faith prayer room). It was less difficult to ensure that several flats have WCs that are not oriented towards Mecca. The kitchen will have a Halal preparation area and Halal meat will be used for meals provided to residents.

Further information: www.guinnesspartnership.com/living



Guinness Care and Support

Assistance towards home ownership

Many Muslims want to comply with the Muslim legal code ('Sharia') which covers many aspects of daily life. The key one in housing is a prohibition on borrowing which involves paying interest. Special mortgage products are often required, and Sharia-compliant (or 'halal') mortgages are now offered by both specialist and mainstream lenders, although they are usually more expensive.

However, there is a gap in the social housing sector, as there are often no suitable products for low cost home ownership supported with Housing Corporation funding. In its response to the Home Ownership Task Force report, the government promised to resolve with the Housing Corporation how to make suitable products available. In the meantime, a pilot mortgage is being trialled by Metropolitan Home Ownership (www.mho.co.uk).

More information

- Guide to Sharia-compliant mortgages: www.islamicmortgages.co.uk
- Also see the Financial Service Authority's consumer website: www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk

MEETING COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS THROUGH REGENERATION

Regeneration of existing neighbourhoods, especially when it involves redevelopment, must clearly involve all the affected communities in decision-making if the outcome is to be successful. There are many examples of successful community engagement, including engaging with ethnic minority communities (see sources on page 23). But Muslim communities may need special attention if they are isolated because of deprivation, or language barriers (or both). Here are two examples.

Consultation about redevelopment in Brierfield, Pendle

Brierfield is part of the market renewal area in Pendle, where redevelopment is planned. ConsultCIH has been acting for the preferred developer, Miller Regeneration, and organised a 'meet the developer' day – a successful event which involved the mainly Muslim community and was the start of on-going involvement.

Keys to its success included:

1. making contact with recognised community leaders, asking them to be at the event and be supportive
2. contacting established faith and other groups to ensure they were aware of the event
3. jointly badging the event with the council so that the community could see that it was 'official'
4. marketing the event as directly relevant to the community and capturing their interest
5. using a local building, with parking and good access for disabled people, and where refreshments could be laid on
6. running the event twice in one day – afternoon and early evening
7. doing a communal presentation then encouraging individual discussions with members of the team rather than having a general public meeting.

Language was not judged to be a barrier. However, few Muslim women attended and so a local HA, Pendle Homes, was asked to carry out home visits to discuss the proposals and obtain women's views.

The process enabled individual family requirements to be met in the redevelopment, such as providing the right number of rooms for extended families. Mike Lewis, Miller Regeneration's Managing Director, says that 'meeting the needs of existing residents who wish to relocate into the new scheme in providing 'bespoke' new homes, and integrating the new homes into the existing community, have been uppermost in our efforts'.

Further information:

www.millerregeneration.com

The Rekendyke Partnership, South Tyneside

The Rekendyke Partnership was set up in 2004 by William Sutton Homes and South Tyneside Council to regenerate Rekendyke, which is one of the few areas with a large BME population (14 per cent) – of which the majority are Muslim.

The partnership commissioned the Guinness Trust to research the housing and environment needs of the mainly Muslim community. It established that their needs and aspirations are often similar to the wider community's – such as access to affordable, adequate homes in a good environment – but they had additional support needs due to language difficulties, lack of awareness of services and social exclusion.

The findings were used in the development of the Neighbourhood Action Plan. Some of the practical solutions developed were:

- a 'community house' providing a base for meetings and for community development work
- a partnership with the local Arab and Muslim Community Service – helping to break down barriers between communities and develop cultural awareness
- a community caretaker scheme
- a private landlord accreditation scheme.

Muslim residents now often meet at the community house as an alternative to the mosque, strengthening their contacts with the wider community. At the same time the awareness work has led to regular visits to the mosque for non-Muslim residents to encourage understanding of Islam.

A review of the action plan in July 2007 concluded that consistent support had been given to all BME groups and the results are outstripping expectations. Work in Rekendyke brought short-listing for William Sutton Homes in the Housing Corporation's 2008 Gold Awards.

More information:

www.williamsutton.org.uk/news/local-partnership-scheme-as-good-as-gold

KEY MESSAGES ABOUT ENGAGING MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Many of the key messages about engaging Muslim communities are the same as those which apply to engagement more generally. But there are some special messages that apply to these communities:

■ Muslim communities have many differences with each other

The guide has looked at engaging 'Muslim communities' but all the experience in the case studies shows that such communities can be very different from each other, even in the same town. One consequence is that there is always potential – as in any community – for one group to feel neglected while another has benefited.

■ Find out about the community

This puts a premium on finding out as much as possible about each community and its needs – through a range of contacts that offer different perspectives. This should include checking language needs and the possible need to engage separately with women or young people.

■ Build confidence with the community

Because of their history of deprivation and sometimes isolation or persecution, it is vital to take the time to build confidence with Muslim communities. The process cannot be rushed, and while it needs to involve community leaders, it shouldn't be confined to them. It might be important to have staff available (especially women staff) who are identifiably from the same community.

■ Understand that many Muslims feel vulnerable

Until recently, Islam was more readily accepted as a minority religion in the UK alongside others such as Hinduism and Sikhism. But often this is no longer the case – with questioning of the nature of Islam taking place both outside and inside Muslim communities. In discussions about this guide, several people said that Muslims currently feel more vulnerable than other communities.

■ Respond to the community's needs

Some of the case studies have had an open agenda where a worker has built a relationship with a community so as to identify the community's needs and try to act on them. A bottom up approach, which allows for different views to come through, is much more likely to succeed.

■ Communities change

If the work with the community extends into the longer term, it should take account of the fact that communities aren't static but evolve and have their own impetus. Any change imposed from outside (eg redevelopment) may accelerate evolutionary changes already taking place in the community.

■ Test your assumptions against reality

In a short guide it is easy to stereotype Muslim communities. So any engagement should have built in



Matrix Housing Partnership

'reality checks'. For example, while the guide has emphasised differences such as cultural preferences in new housing, or the need for Sharia-compliant mortgages, actual communities may regard these as less important than living in safe, friendly, mixed neighbourhoods or having affordable opportunities to own a home.

■ Avoid being culturally insensitive

While meeting specific cultural needs is important, perhaps it is even more important to be sensitive and not 'put your foot in it'. Remember that many Muslim women won't expect to shake a male visitor's hand, and householders will appreciate it if you check if it is OK to keep your shoes on when you enter the house. If in doubt, ask.

■ Work to create bridges between communities

Again, while the guide is specifically about engaging Muslim communities it has included many case studies which have been about building bridges between communities, or including Muslims in wider activities such as sport. It is government policy, and a sound objective of any programme to improve community cohesion, that work with Muslims (and other faith communities) should promote their wider engagement in the areas where they live.

■ Remember that there are two 'sides' to 'engagement'

If Muslims feel that other communities are hostile to them it is likely to be because there really is hostility – whether through racist attacks, or simply suspicion or fear. Work is likely to be needed to challenge myths about Islam and show that Muslims are ordinary people like everyone else.

FUNDING FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

There are two specific sources of funding (in England) which may be useful for financing community-based work: general funding for community cohesion projects, and the Community Leadership Fund for work with Muslim communities.

■ Community cohesion funding

As part of the government's response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report *Our Shared Future* it established a £50m fund over three years to promote community cohesion and support local authorities in preventing and managing community tensions. The area-based grant element of the local government finance settlements 2008/09 to 2010/11 now includes £38.5m in support to local authorities as the main element of this funding.

As area-based grant is a non-ring fenced, general grant, it does not include any conditions, and authorities only have to report on their use of it through the new performance framework and other regular returns. Housing organisations will therefore need to find out locally how the funding is to be used.

CLG is also proposing:

- to channel £3m to local government led Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships to develop local government leadership capacity to tackle community cohesion challenges
- to make decisions next year about the existing £8m Connecting Communities Plus grant programme – which has community cohesion as one of its four themes and runs till the end of 2008/09.

There is also a £4.5m community cohesion contribution from CLG over 2008/09 to 2010/11 towards work with young people.

■ The Community Leadership Fund

This supports specific work that will assist individuals, organisations and communities to take the lead on tackling violent extremist influences. The funding will be focused on the following areas:

- capacity of organisations and communities
- supporting Muslim young people
- supporting Muslim women
- capacity of Muslim faith leaders
- local forums against extremism and Islamophobia.

Funding for the first four strands of work will be limited to projects which have national reach and significance. Funding for the fifth strand of work will go to projects delivered locally.

This fund complements the much larger scale work being taken forward by many local authorities. If you are considering a project in a single town or county you should check the information on work going forward in your local area at www.communities.gov.uk/communities/preventingextremism or through the local authority.

There will be two funding rounds. Deadlines for applications are in May and September 2008. Funding is limited to projects in England. There is a separate fund run by the Welsh Assembly Government.

■ Other sources of funding

There are of course many other sources of funding that might be used to engage with – or develop services for – Muslim communities. If funding community-based groups, it should however be noted that Muslim organisations may not accept lottery funding (as contrary to Islamic principles).

An example of imaginative use of funding is from Milton Keynes.

Xulashooyinka Guriyaha Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Council Housing Service was awarded a CLG grant in 2007 to help prevent homelessness, which they used to assist the local Somali community. The grant helped fund the production of a DVD providing housing advice to the community in their own language.

The Somali Housing Options DVD can be seen at: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing-mkc/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=53594

More information

- For the Connecting Communities Plus grant programme see: www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/grantsandfunding/
- For the Community Leadership Fund see: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communityleadershipfund

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION ON WORKING WITH MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Here are some further web-based sources of information about working with Muslim communities in a housing and regeneration context. Below these are some general sources of information about Islam.

Ashram Housing Association

www.ashramha.org.uk

Birmingham-based Ashram has worked extensively with its Muslim tenants and with Muslim communities more widely. Its work is summarised in the downloadable report *Building Community Cohesion by Engaging Muslim Communities*.

Chartered Institute of Housing

www.cih.org

CIH has published good practice guides to *Housing and Support Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees*, *Community Cohesion and Housing* and *Community Engagement in Housing-Led Regeneration*. All have examples relevant to Muslim communities. It also has a joint project, *Opening Doors*, with hact (see below) to improve housing services to refugee and migrant communities (see www.cih.org/policy/openingdoors).

Commission on Integration and Cohesion

www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

The Commission's website includes their interim and final reports, and a range of background documents.

Communities and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk/communities

The CLG site's communities section has links to its cohesion and faith work, and its programme to prevent violent extremism.

Hact (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust)

www.hact.org.uk

Hact has two programmes, *Accommodate* and *CommunitiesRUs*, which explore integration and improved services for minority communities, including examples of work with Muslim communities. Jointly with JRF (see below), hact published *More Responsive Public Services? – A guide to commissioning migrant and refugee community organisations*.

Housing Corporation

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

The Corporation's Centre for Research and Market Intelligence has practical examples of community involvement, including information on Gold Award schemes (some relevant to engaging Muslim communities) and the sources mentioned on page 7.

IDeA

www.idea.gov.uk

The 'knowledge' section of the IDeA site has sections (with case studies) on community cohesion, migration and preventing violent extremism.

Institute of Community Cohesion

www.coventry.ac.uk/icoco

Icoco publishes a range of material on cohesion issues, including its 2008 report on *Understanding and Appreciating Muslim Diversity*.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

www.jrf.org.uk

JRF has research programmes on immigration and inclusion, as well as on other issues relevant to Muslim communities. Reports referred to in this guide are downloadable from the JRF website.

Nashayman Housing Association

www.nashayman.org.uk

Nashayman has extensive experience of working with Muslim communities (see page 13) and its website has resources such as a guide to why Muslims fast.

North London Muslim Housing Association

www.nlmha.com

NLMHA has experience of cross-community work (see page 15), has a design brief which reflects cultural needs/aspirations in new build, has published a video *Working with Muslim Tenants* and has a 'housing plus' arm called Faith in the Future Ltd which does wider partnership work.

More information

General websites on Islam include:

- Muslim Council of Britain: www.mcb.org.uk/
- Islam.com: www.islam.com/
- BBC: www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/
- The Islam Page: www.islamworld.net/
- Islam guide: www.islam-guide.com/



The Chartered Institute of Housing

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the professional body for people involved in housing and communities. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 21,000 people – both in the public and private sectors – living and working in over 20 countries on five continents across the world. We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities. Our vision is to be the first point of contact for – and the credible voice of – anyone involved or interested in housing.

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www.cih.org



The Matrix Partnership

Matrix is a partnership of five housing associations at its core providing development and other services and support to a much wider range of housing associations. It has been in existence for more than three years, has developed and evolved over that time from a development partnership to a much broader based partnership with growing ambitions for the future. The core partners of Accord, Ashram, Caldmore, Trident and Rooftop own, manage and have under development some 20,000 dwellings, employ more than 1,000 staff, have assets approaching £1billion, a combined annual turnover of almost £100 million and a development programme of over 1,400 homes to a value of over £140 million.

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