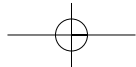
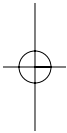
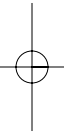


Islam in Britain: an introduction





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Contents

Author's Introduction	2
Forewords	3
Section A - Starting points	5
Section B - Meanings and contexts	6
Section C - The story of The Prophet Muhammad and Islam	14
Section D - Finding out about your local Muslim community(ies)	16
Section E - Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain	17
Section F - Further help	22
Notes	29

Is this for you?

You want to know some key terms and ideas in Islam to help you and your team work with young people, families and communities.

You need a reference outline of Islam for staff in police, education, fire and rescue, children's services including staff in youth offending teams and secure estate.

You want to understand some of the issue for Muslims living in Britain now which may come up in your community.

This document focuses on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. It cannot reflect all the different cultural practices which communities have adopted which are not drawn from the religious writings.

Front cover image: *Actors from Watch Over me 4 on set 2010*

Author's Introduction

The great Greek philosopher Socrates said in a moment of brilliance, 'The unexamined life is not worth living'. Muslims would wholeheartedly agree with this Socratic axiom. Islamic traditions provide the impetus for the adherent to examine his or her own life in order to become an illuminated human being whose being is solely for the purpose of worshipping the Divine. This purpose also incorporates the exemplifying of noble and virtuous character to God's creation – fellow human beings and the natural environment.

Terrorism, extremism and radicalism are all antithetical to the message of Islam. The noble Prophet Muhammad clearly stated, "Beware of going to extremes [in religion], for those before you were only destroyed through excessiveness." The Prophet Muhammad's life represented balance and moderation in all aspects of life. He urged his companions to follow and be aware of going to extremes as this leads to physical and spiritual destruction.

My aim is to present the above message in this booklet. This work is the collaboration of many people. I would like to thank the esteemed scholar and theologian Shaykh Ali al-Laraki and Uthman Morrison for their proof reading and checking of content. My gratitude also extends to Graham Robb for the endless struggle in arranging the text. I would also like to thank the Home Office, DCSF and the Kids Task Force for the opportunity to write this booklet.

I would especially like to thank Detective Chief Superintendent Barry Norman and the brilliant British Historian and head teacher Duncan Taylor for their constant support and companionship on the wild UK tour we are currently undertaking.

Muhammad Awan

Forewords

The Kids Taskforce is a national safety initiative for schools helping professionals to discuss all aspects of risk with children and young people. At the Kids Taskforce we believe that the most sensitive issues if not confronted and discussed with young people can put them in most danger. The Watch Over Me personal safety soap opera is a tool which can be used to open up debate in the classroom and help young people make their own strategies for dealing with risk.

The Kids Taskforce is creating a national standard of safety information in schools and is supported by the Presidents of the Association of Chief Police Officers(ACPO), the President of the Chief Fire Officers Association(CFOA) and the Chief Executive of the Professional Footballers Association(PFA). The Watch Over Me soap opera, has now been funded for use in all secondary schools in the country with the help of ACPO the Department of Children Schools and Families and the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism.

The third and fourth series of Watch Over Me tackle issues of extreme behaviour and the radicalisation of young people. They also look at the role of recruiters trying persuade young muslims to carry out acts of extreme violence in the name of the religion.

It has become clear that to fully discuss the issue with young people it is important to have a strong grasp of what Islam is about and during training sessions carried out across the country professionals have requested a simple introduction to Islam for non-muslims.

We hope that you will find this booklet makes you feel better prepared for discussion on the subject and most important that it will make you alert to the threat of those who would prey on some of our most vulnerable children. At the Kids Taskforce all our resources are designed to help prevent children from coming to harm and help adults to talk to them.

We hope you will give us your feedback on how you have been able to use the Watch Over Me series and this booklet.

Sharon Doughty, President Kids Taskforce

Forewords

Effective communication is key to effective policing and I imagine is key to every aspect of public service. Misunderstandings and ignorance can often lead to problems no matter how well intentioned people are. Throughout my police career this was a message that had to be learnt and re-learnt time and time again.

This booklet aims to equip people who would like to know a little more about Islam so they can engage with greater empathy with people of the Muslim faith. I believe some understanding of the closeness and connectivity of Islam to the UK and all the other major religions of the world will help break down any perceived barriers to communication between people of different faiths.

This booklet will help achieve this.

Barry Norman, Director of Kids Taskforce
Detective Chief Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service (retired 2009)

Education should always be more than basic instruction; it should instigate dialogue, leading to a wider knowledge and understanding of the issues studied. In the current climate there is an obvious need for a free exchange of information between all sectors of society and all major world faiths. It is hoped that this booklet will meet some of these needs, enabling communication, removing ignorance and creating a greater empathy with the views and beliefs of other people.

Having worked in education for 20 years, I understand that access to clear and concise data is often the easiest way to remove obstacles towards making informed judgements. This booklet aims to provide a simple yet thorough introduction to the basic teachings of Islam. It is designed to help people, particularly those in public service, break down some of the barriers and misunderstandings which may exist in their approach to this religion and its culture.

Duncan Taylor
Secondary Education
Kids Task Force

Section A – Starting points

You may be worried that it is easy to cause offence inadvertently by what you say or do. But be assured – Muslims, like all people, like others taking an interest in what they may see as the key part of their identity and, with the exception of those who seek out problems, people will not take offence. So the message is:

- Be interested in how the world looks to a Muslim
- Be honest about your knowledge and some of the difficult issues for Britain
- Be open to learning and debate

Some core ideas will help you:

Showing respect

- The phrase ‘May Allah bless him and grant him peace’ or ‘Peace Be Upon Him’ is repeated by practising Muslims after mentioning (or hearing) the name of the Prophet Muhammad. In some books SAW is used to abbreviate the Arabic for the blessing. AS is an abbreviation used for the Arabic to honour other prophets. This practice reaffirms and perpetuates the revered status Muslims reserve for the Prophet. The usual practice in Islamic writing is to repeat this phrase in print at every appearance of their names within the body of the text, especially that of the Prophet Muhammad. However, in this booklet, it is mentioned once only, here at the beginning, in order to preserve the fluency and conciseness.

A sense of history

- There is a long history of Islamic presence in the British Isles and contribution to communities large and small – from the time of King Offa onwards – examples are given throughout the booklet

Faith – some common starting points

- Christianity, Judaism and Islam share many of the same sources, practices and religious ideas – but there are also disagreements and debates within each faith community based on culture and history, and scholarly interpretations

Islam’s contribution

- Islamic scholars have made an enormous contribution in maths, medicine, science, philosophy, art and culture. Indeed many of the writings of Greek and Roman writers which were the basis of the western Renaissance would not have survived had it not been for Muslim scholars reading, translating and expanding on them.

Section B – Meanings and background

Key terms for Muslims (anglicised versions in brackets)	Which means	Some background
Islam	To give up or surrender oneself to Allah	As one of the three Abrahamic religions (which means recognising Abraham as a key founding father of religious understanding) Islam holds many elements in common with Christianity and Judaism
Qur'an (sometimes written as 'Koran')	The last and final revelation to mankind. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the book of Divine guidance and direction for mankind, and consider the original Arabic text to be the final revelation of Allah. For this reason the Qur'an constitutes the primary source from which the Shari'ah is derived	<p>Muslims believe that the Qur'an is miraculous by its very nature in being a revealed text, and that the production of a similar or equivalent text is beyond human endeavour. The Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years, which allowed a gradual process of change for the new believers in the cities of Makkah and Madina (in present day Saudi Arabia).</p> <p>The text of the Qur'an consists of 114 chapters of varying lengths, each known as a surah. The Qur'an teaches Muslim believers about the reality of Allah and submission to His guidance and how to prepare for the inevitable meeting with Him in the Hereafter and the consequences of one's behaviour in life. It speaks about the Universe and human nature, and it contains stories of previous prophets and their societies, and instruction as to how to establish a society that is in harmony with the natural order of Allah's creation.</p>
Hadith	Reliable and authentic record of the words of Prophet Muhammad	Hadith is a reliable and authentic written record of the Sunnah (witnessed example) of the Prophet Muhammad. The states, deeds and sayings of the Prophet

Section B – Meanings and background

		<p>Muhammad were recorded by his companions. The actions of the Prophet Muhammad are seen as the actual acting out of the Qur'anic teachings. 'He was the Qur'an walking' was the famous description of him given by his wife Aisha to a companion who had asked her about the character of the Prophet Muhammad.</p>
Ihsan	Excellence in worship	<p>Muslims believe Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, knowing for sure that He sees you – the fundamental quality of Ihsan is awareness of the presence of Allah and the only faculty capable of perceiving this is the human heart. For this reason the people who have excelled in this branch of knowledge have said that the development of Ihsan within the individual Muslim involves the purification of the heart. The science that teaches this is traditionally known as Tasawwuf (Sufism).</p>

Section B – Meanings and background

Five Pillars of Islam – the five things a Muslim must do

The Pillars	Which means	Muslims should
Shahadah	Declaration of faith	This is when a Muslim testifies that there is no god but <i>Allah</i> and that <i>Muhammad</i> is the Messenger of <i>Allah</i> .
Salat	Five obligatory prayers each day.	Prayers – the first prayer is done just before first light and prior to sunrise, the second at midday, the third at mid-afternoon, the fourth at sunset and the final one in the evening after dark. If a prayer is missed it must be made up for at the first available opportunity. Prayer is to remember and show gratitude to Allah, and to protect from corrupt behaviour. Muslims pray facing towards Makka (Mecca) and must perform a ritual cleaning (ablution). Each prayer lasts 3-5 minutes including verses from the Qur'an and supplications.
Zakat	Wealth deduction	This is to pay the yearly deduction from saved wealth. <i>Muslims</i> must pay approximately 2.5% of their annual savings to those appointed leaders who are reliable and trustworthy in the distribution of the Zakat funds to the rightful beneficiaries. If a person cannot afford to pay Zakat then he or she is entitled to receive it. The leader of the community is responsible both for organising the collection of the Zakat from those who owe it, and for its redistribution amongst the eight categories of beneficiary mentioned in the Qur'an <i>the poor,</i> <i>the destitute,</i> <i>those who collect it,</i> <i>reconciling people's hearts,</i> <i>freeing slaves,</i> <i>those in debt,</i> <i>spending in the way of Allah,</i> <i>and travellers.</i>

Section B – Meanings and background

Sawm	Fasting	<p>This means fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan every lunar year. This lunar element means that Ramadan does not correspond with any of the months associated with the solar Gregorian calendar we are familiar with. The lunar year being shorter than the solar year, means that the commencement of the month of Ramadan moves backwards in relation to the Gregorian calendar by 11 to 12 days each year.</p> <p>Fasting is only obligatory for those <i>Muslims</i> who are physically and mentally fit. The old, sick, pregnant, pre-pubescent and those on medication are exempted from fasting.</p> <p>The end of <i>Ramadan</i> is marked by the <i>Eid al-Fitr</i>. This celebration is acknowledged as a gift from Allah for those who have completed the month of fasting.</p> <p>Muslims may also voluntarily fast outside Ramadan</p>
Hajj	Pilgrimage	<p>This is to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (in today's Saudi Arabia) if a believer is able to do so. There are many parts of the Hajj ritual but all, rich and poor, must dress alike in white cloth and the final focus is the circling by all the pilgrims of the Ka'ba (House of Allah) – in the centre of the Mosque in Makka (Mecca)</p> <p>The <i>Umrah</i> is seen as the minor (non-obligatory) pilgrimage that <i>Muslims</i> can participate in at any time of the year. Its rites differ to those of the <i>Hajj</i> and can be completed in a much shorter period of time.</p>

Section B – Meanings and background

The Iman – The six main beliefs for a Muslim

Belief in:	
Allah	It is the foundation of <i>Islamic</i> theology and entails the affirmation that <i>Allah</i> is One in His Essence, Attributes and Actions, Unique and Absolutely Self-sustaining, and Everlasting with neither beginning nor end; that He has Power, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearing, Sight and Speech and that He is the Sustainer of everything in creation.
The Angels	<p><i>Muslims</i> believe that angels exist and have certain functions ordained by the command of <i>Allah</i>. In the Islamic tradition angels cannot be seen and work within an unseen reality. Some of the well-known angels in <i>Islam</i> are recognised by their names and their roles:</p> <p>The Archangel <i>Jibril</i> (Gabriel) –the angel who delivers revelation to the prophets</p> <p>The Archangel <i>Mika'il</i> (Michael) – the angel of creation</p> <p>The Archangel <i>Israfil</i> (Rafael) – the angel of annihilation</p> <p>The Archangel <i>Azra'il</i> (Ezrael) – the angel of death</p>
Previous revelations	<p><i>Muslims</i> consider the <i>Qur'an</i> to be the last and final revelation sent to mankind. The <i>Qur'an</i> makes it clear that <i>Allah</i> has sent other revelations to prophets before the Prophet <i>Muhammad</i>. Revelation is vital for <i>Muslims</i> because they consider it to be the word of <i>Allah</i> and hence, unimpeachable proof and guidance as to the right path of worship and <i>behaviour</i>. Other revelations valued by Muslims include:</p> <p>The <i>Zabur</i> (Psalms given to David)</p> <p>The <i>Torah</i> – (the first five books of the Old Testament given to Moses)</p> <p>The <i>Injil</i> (Good news) – <i>Muslims</i> believe a Bible was revealed to the Prophet <i>Isa</i> (Jesus) in order to confirm the Torah and consequently remind people of the Oneness of <i>Allah</i>.</p>
All the messengers	<i>Muslims</i> believe that <i>Allah</i> has sent approximately 124,000 Prophets and 314 Messengers down to mankind to spread the message of <i>Tawhid</i> (Divine Oneness). The first prophet is the Prophet <i>Adam</i> , the first man to step foot on earth and the last prophet is the Prophet <i>Muhammad</i> .

Section B – Meanings and background

The Last day	The Day of Rising is also a tenet of <i>Islamic</i> faith. <i>Muslims</i> believe that mankind will be resurrected before Allah in order to be held to account for the actions they did during their lifetimes. The Day of Judgment is seen as a deterrent and emphasises the belief that <i>Allah</i> is all-aware and knows what every human being does in public and private. This realisation pervades the consciousness of <i>Muslims</i> throughout their entire lives.
Predestination	Everything that happens in existence is in the foreknowledge of <i>Allah</i> , the Creator of the universe, and cannot occur in any other way than the way it does, but at the same time, this does not affect the fact that everyone is absolutely accountable for what they do.

Some other common terms

Key terms for Muslims (anglicised versions in brackets)	Which means	Background
Shari'ah (Sharia)	The concept of the Shari'ah may be loosely rendered into English as Islamic law, but only loosely so. Adherence to the Shari'ah guarantees, at a personal level, peace in this life and in the next and, at a social level, justice and civic harmony.	<p>The objectives of the Shari'ah are to protect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faith 2. Life 3. Posterity 4. Property 5. Intellect <p>The <i>Shari'ah</i> is generally accepted by Muslims as the normative framework designed for human kind by the One Who has created them and Who knows them better than they can ever know themselves. A believer will strive deliberately and conscientiously to subject every aspect of his or her spiritual understanding and everyday choices and motivations to the filter of the <i>Shari'ah</i>. The <i>Shari'ah</i>, therefore, provides the ultimate criterion for judgment on every facet of a Muslim's inner and social life.</p>

Section B – Meanings and background

Shi'ah (Shia)	Historically, the <i>Ummah</i> (the wide Muslim community) could be said to be split into two main sects, the <i>Sunnis</i> and the <i>Shias</i> . The vast majority of the Muslim <i>Ummah</i> is made up of <i>Sunni</i> Muslims and the minority is made up of <i>Shias</i> .	
Sunni	The origin of the schism could be said to be a result of political differences of governance, or leadership, after the death of the Prophet <i>Muhammad</i> . Those who would eventually come to be known as <i>Shias</i> felt that <i>Ali</i> , the Prophet's cousin, should have been appointed Caliph instead of <i>Abu Bakr</i> who, due to his own special standing and as the Prophet's closest companion, had been confirmed by the most senior companions present as the one most fitted to the task of leading the <i>Ummah</i> . Therefore, what began as a purely political positioning, has over the ensuing centuries evolved various doctrinal differences which at the extremes take their <i>Shia</i> adherents beyond the pale of Islam altogether.	
Sufic Orders (sufism)	Sufism is not a distinct form of Islam or in any way separate from it. Indeed, it is essential to the definition of Islam as a whole. However, across the Muslim world <i>Tariqas</i> (Sufic orders) have grown up over many centuries around the teachings and particular spiritual practices and disciplines (e.g. Qur'anic recitations, invocations, supplications, fasting and temporary seclusion etc) emanating from the Prophet Muhammad.	
Jihad	The Arabic word ' <i>jihad</i> ' basically means to struggle, to exert oneself and to strive. Two forms of <i>Jihad</i> exist; the 'greater' <i>jihad</i> and the 'lesser' <i>Jihad</i> . This term has been distorted and some people consider ' <i>Jihad</i> ' to be physical fighting.	The greater <i>Jihad</i> (struggle) could be said to be in line with <i>Ihsan</i> (Excellence in worship). The greater <i>Jihad</i> means trying to purify the self, striving to become a better human being. It includes the idea of getting rid of the spiritual diseases/blameworthy traits of the heart such as anger, jealousy, envy, ignorance and arrogance, etc and replacing these with praiseworthy traits such as kindness, generosity, caring, mercy, respectfulness and tolerance. The greater <i>jihad</i> is for life! The lesser Jihad In Islam fighting and warfare might sometimes be necessary, but it is only a minor part of the lesser <i>Jihad</i> . The Prophet <i>Muhammad</i> is widely known to have declared on returning from one of

Section B – Meanings and background

		the early military battles, ' <i>We return from the little jihad to the greater jihad.</i> ' However, the lesser Jihad is the last resort in a conflict, the absolute last step taken if nothing else proves effective.
Caliph	Ruler of the Muslim Ummah	The last Caliph was exiled from Istanbul in 1924.
Madhabs	These are different established schools of law in <i>Islam</i> . They agree on the fundamentals of their faith but differ on finer points of law and judgements because of different methodologies of interpreting the <i>Qur'an</i> and <i>Hadith</i> . The principal schools are <i>Hanafi</i> , <i>Maliki</i> , <i>Shafi'i</i> , <i>Hanbali</i> , among the Sunni, and amongst the <i>Shi'a</i> the <i>Ja'afari</i> and <i>Zaidi</i> .	Current day extremists/terrorists do not adhere to a particular school of Islamic thought. They would argue that this is not a practice of true Islam. As a result, they are prone to interpret the <i>Qur'an</i> and <i>Hadith</i> themselves – leading to major misinterpretations.
Fatwa	A legal opinion derived from religious teaching given by a <i>Mufti</i> scholar.	These can be given by anyone who has authority and the qualifications. Even in the UK there are a large number of scholars eligible to issue a fatwa.

Some Muslims will take the view that they should only live their lives informed by the original writings. Others accept the authority of more recent scholarship. As with Christianity and Judaism there are many continuing debates and competing views within Islam at global and local level. It is important to know about the particular religious stance of the local Muslim communities not least to understand some of the issues and tensions there may be within and between communities.

Section C – The story of Muhammad and Islam

The Prophet *Muhammad* was the son of 'Abdullah and belonged to the tribe of *Quraysh*, from which came all the ruling clans of *Makkah*. He was born in *Makkah* in about 570 CE. His father died before his birth and his mother Amina died while he was still a young boy, but he found a protector and a guardian first in his grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib, and after he died, in his uncle *Abu Talib*.

His childhood was very simple. He received no formal education of any kind and, as a boy, would look after his family's herd of sheep and goats in the hills surrounding *Makkah*. On one occasion he accompanied his uncle on a caravan to Syria and on this journey met a Christian hermit called *Bahira* who told his uncle that his young nephew would be the prophet of his people. When he was twenty-five years old, he again made the same journey, this time as a trader in the service of a wealthy widow named *Khadijah*.

As a result of his success and from hearing reports of the excellence of his character, *Khadijah* married her young agent. They had a number of children (not all of whom survived) and remained together for twenty-six years throughout the difficult years when he was trying to spread *Islam* among the people of *Makkah*.

It was his custom every year to spend a month alone in a cave on a mountain near *Makkah*. In his fortieth year, towards the end of this month, he heard a voice during the night which said to him, "Read!" He replied, "I cannot read." Again the voice came, "Read!" Again he replied, awestruck, "I cannot read." For the third time, the voice commanded, "Read!" He said, "What should I read?" The voice said:

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot...."
(*Qur'an* 96:1-2)

This was the beginning of the revelation of the *Qur'an* which continued, intermittently, until just before his death, twenty three years later. The voice told him that he was the Prophet of *Allah* and raising his eyes he saw the Angel *Jibril* (Gabriel) who was the means by which the revelation was conveyed to him from the Creator of the universe.

The number of *Muslims* steadily increased and so the nobles of the *Quraysh* tried to stop him with bribes, even offering to make him their king if he would only compromise with them and stop undermining their false gods; his new teachings and example, were endangering the social stability and the basis of their wealth. The savage persecution of his followers which followed led the Prophet *Muhammad* to send a group of them to Abyssinia where they found temporary asylum under their Christian King, who later secretly became *Muslim*.

Shortly after this, a small group of men from a city named *Yathrib*, some distance north of *Makkah*, listened to him when they came to *Makkah* for the pilgrimage. They recognized his Prophethood and returned to *Yathrib* with a *Muslim* teacher. The following year they returned with seventy-three new *Muslims* and invited the Prophet *Muhammad* to come to live in their city as their leader. From then on the *Muslims* began to leave *Makkah* and to

Section C – The story of Muhammad and Islam

settle in *Yathrib* and finally the Prophet, evading an attempt to murder him, escaped from the city of his birth and travelled with *Abu Bakr* (Prophet Muhammad's closest companion) to *Yathrib*, which was renamed as *al-Madina al-Munawwara* (the Illuminated City) or *Madina*, for short. This event is known as the *Hijra* (migration) and signals the appearance of the *Muslim* community as a political entity and marks the beginning of the *Muslim* calendar.

Historical sources confirm that *Madina* (second holiest city in Islam) was soon transformed into a bustling centre deeply rooted in *Islamic* revelation. During the last ten years of his life, the Prophet Muhammad commanded twenty-seven military campaigns, nine of which involved fierce fighting. He planned and sent out thirty more. By the time he died at the age of 63, he had fulfilled his divinely appointed task by establishing under Divine guidance, a flourishing humane civilisation with a just political, economic and legal structure which nurtured at its heart a deep and radiant spirituality.

The Prophet *Muhammad* died in the year 632 CE and was buried in *Madina*. Millions of *Muslims* visit the tomb of the Prophet in *Madina* to pay him their respects and reaffirm their allegiance to him as the Messenger of *Allah*.

The development of Islam

Islam holds that following Adam, the first prophet, a succession of some 124,000 prophets were sent to specific nations. The last manifestation was the Prophet Muhammad who was sent for the whole of humanity.

The spread of Islam after the death of the Prophet Muhammad began from the Arabian Peninsula and established itself in the land of Sham (Syria, Jordan and Lebanon) Yemen, Persian Empire (Iran and Iraq) into Central Asia and into the Indian sub continent. From there the spread was west via Egypt, North Africa and into Europe in Spain and to Southern France. To the east Islam spread through diplomatic missions and trading to China – which actually has the oldest standing Mosque outside Arabia. This spread happened within the first three generations of Islam.

After this Islam spread to east Africa and the Indonesian archipelago often via Yemeni merchants who included scholars and Sufis(mystics). In the same way Islam spread to Sudan, Burkina Faso and as far as Ghana. From the Middle East Islam also spread into South East Europe via Turkey.

Now there are Muslim communities throughout the world.

Section D – Finding out about your local Muslim community(ies)

This section sets out some basic terms to help you understand your local Muslim communities.

	Which means	Notes
Mosque	The western term for place of worship. The word means the place of prostration in worship. The key event is Friday prayers. The sacred day for Muslims is Saturday	Mosques have management committees who regulate the running of the mosque.
Imam	This is the leader of a mosque and the community. Similar to spiritual leaders, the imam may be the one who leads the prayer during Islamic gatherings – although any believer can lead prayer. Also the community will turn to the mosque imam if they have an Islamic question. In smaller communities an imam could be the community leader based on the community setting.	The Imam may come from a Muslim community heritage country – for example Pakistan – and need support to engage with the wider community. It is important to note that anyone can lead a prayer session. There is no group of church leaders or clergy as such.
Madrasah	A place of learning. This is mainly rote learning and reciting of the Qur'an in Arabic. Students learn the basic fundamentals of Islam.	This usually take place in mosques and can be for all ages but mainly age 6-17 boys and girls. Often takes place at 4-6pm.
<p><i>Find out from the Local Authority SACRE (Standing Advisory Committee on religious Education) about local Mosques and the population which a particular mosque serves - for example one may be attended mainly by people of Bangla Deshi heritage.</i></p>		

Section E – Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain

A long history of Muslims in Britain

There is evidence of strong links between Islam and what is now the UK going back to Anglo Saxon times. This has usually been based on trade, diplomatic actions and from time to time conflict.

Muslim families and communities lived side by side with Christian families as in other parts of Europe over many generations – working and contributing science, technology, philosophy, literature and arts to the community.

In modern times we can pick up individual stories - a lawyer from the Isle of Man named Abdullah Quilliam (c.1856 – 1932), converted to Islam in the early 1900s after travelling in Morocco. Subsequently he met the Ottoman Sultan Abdalhamid (who ruled the Ottoman Empire, based in modern Turkey, from 1876-1909) and became one of his representatives in Britain. He built one of the first mosques in England in Liverpool, and also an orphanage and Islamic school. A significant body of English men and women converted to Islam and for a time there was a thriving community centred on Abdullah Quilliam's mosque and school.

There are also many other documented cases of British Muslims -Peter Lyall, the Scots who was an admiral in the Ottoman navy; Benjamin Bishop, a British Diplomat in Cairo who turned Muslim and mysteriously disappeared; Lord Headley the peer; Lady Evelyn Cobbold the explorer and pilgrim to Mecca; Mubarak Churchward, the stage-painter and friend of Lily Langtry

Stories of British Muslims are given at:

http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/bmh/BMH-AMH-wiliam_williamson.htm

...including the extraordinary tale of William Williamson which would make a great adventure film!

Since the Second World War the migrations of people from the Indian sub continent, then from East Africa, and recently from other parts of the world, means that Muslim communities are now well established throughout the UK. These communities live lives of work and worship which reflect much that is their specific cultural heritage e.g. from the Balkans, Indonesia, Somalia or Nigeria) as well as their common adherence to Islam.

Presently, converts only count as a small percentage of the overall Muslim presence in Britain which is mostly made up of South Asians from Pakistan (over 90%) and an increasing number of Somalis (who, interestingly before the current wave of immigrants also have a Pre-World War I presence in Britain as sailors who married into local communities in Liverpool, Sunderland, Cardiff and London). The Muslim communities in Britain are often known as entrepreneurs and have a thriving business presence but also

Section E – Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain

are represented through all fields of British society – education, public services, police, military and Government. The social relationships of some Muslim communities are well integrated into the whole structure of British society, while others are still establishing those links.

Being British, being Muslim

So what can be said about being a British Muslim in the early twenty first century? Is there a damaging tension between being Muslim and being British?

Well the answer is no - it is clear from the writings of the Qur'an and hadith that a Muslim has a duty to obey the laws of the country in which they live. It is perfectly valid for a Muslim to live in a Christian country not least because of the recognition of the status of the Old Testament, Prophets and Jesus as a common base of the faith of Islam. For example in the year 615 CE a group of Muslims were counseled by the Prophet Muhammad to escape persecution in Mecca and travel to the Kingdom of Axum (Modern day Ethiopia) which was ruled by a Christian king. The Prophet Muhammad himself did not join this emigration.

So what about some of the issues which may cause tension between Muslims and some aspects of secular British society:

- The role of **women** is often culturally defined by different communities but the Qur'an says that men and women are equal before God; both created for the purpose of worshipping God through faith and good deeds.
- Be conscious of your Lord through whom you demand your mutual rights and honour the wombs; God always watches over you " (Qur'an 4.1)
- Laws on **marriage and divorce** are very similar to those in UK Law. The prophet gave more grounds for divorce to women than to men
- Wearing of the **veil** is not obligatory according to the Qur'an. Many of the traditions about clothing come from local cultural traditions not from the sacred writings
- The wearing of a **head covering**, and clothing which protects the modesty, is required but in schools, workplaces and other settings it has been shown that discussion and compromise can prevent this being a point of conflict
- **Halal food** – means meat slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines. These are explained in the British Food Standards Agency booklet 'Working Effectively with Minority Ethnic Food Businesses' . Food may be Halal – allowed or **Haram** - forbidden. Halal food has to be prepared in a specific way and with strict rules of welfare and slaughter. Haram food includes carnivorous animals, Pork and sea animals without fins or scales, alcohol or blood.

Section E – Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain

- **Prayer rituals** Muslims need access to fresh water for ablutions before prayers. A contemplation room for daily prayer and for withdrawal during Ramadan (fasting) does not need to have special features but knowing the direction of Mecca (Makkah) – south east from UK will be necessary.

A Muslim state?

Some Muslims seek a Caliphate – a single state based on Islamic rules - they assert that the solution to current social ills is to eradicate Western influences from the Muslim world and replace existing governments with a single political entity ruling over all Muslims and adopting Islamic law – a return to the historical ‘Caliphate’ (*Khilafa*). The legitimate Islamic presence in international politics in the present time is restricted by the fact that there is not a single sovereign government which is wholly Islamic or which claims itself as an Islamic government ruled by Islamic law as codified and understood by Islamic orthodoxy. Every state Muslim or non Muslim in the current geo-political world order has more or less subscribed to the doctrines and dictates of modern statism dating from the French Revolution to the present.

International issues

Muslims living in Britain have the same debates on global issues as any other Britons – issues of foreign policy, military action, trade, and intervention. At community level these debates may have a particular focus on regional conflicts such as tensions between India and Pakistan, the conflicts in Sudan and Somalia, or the Kosovan / Serbian conflict. Clearly the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan cause the widest debate and disagreements in all communities in the UK

So what does the Qur’an teach?

Teachings of the Qur’an and hadith promote engagement by Muslims in their community – so encourages democratic participation and peaceful protest under the law of the country of residence. The right of Britons to freedom of speech and association within the limits of the law is a vital mechanism to develop understanding, protest and find solutions to problems which otherwise might lead to more overt conflict.

Islam and violent extremism

It goes without saying that the proportion of Muslims who would consider taking violent actions is small – but the impact of the London bombings has brought a focus on how some of the terrorists used Islam as the rationale for their actions.

Any religion or doctrine is liable to misinterpretation by ignorant or manipulative people and Islam is no different in this regard. Individuals bent on personal power, wealth, satisfying their own blood lust or avenging perceived personal injustice or social injustice in an illegitimate manner are liable to claim that they have religious license to do so or that they are acting in the name of their religion or ideology but this does not make it so. In

Section E – Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain

Islam where the laws and rules on every matter are defined and codified by the scholars who are expert in the derivation of rulings from the primary Islamic sources - none of whom license vigilante terrorism.

It is interesting that the only phenomenon of terrorism in traditional Islamic societies was that of the infamous 'Assassins' whose extremist doctrines lead sunni scholars and also the shia to declare them to be non Muslims. This sect was dedicated to the assassination of Muslim and non Muslim leaders and scholars. They even tried to murder the renowned Salahudin Ayyubi (c.1138 – 1193 - better known in the west as Saladin) but fortunately failed and were subsequently defeated.

The roots of terrorism in modern western society may be traced to attacks on Tsarist Russia – nothing to do with Islamic beliefs. But terrorism has been adopted from outside of the Islamic context by disenfranchised modernist/extremist elements. It can be seen that there can be no such thing as 'Islamic terrorism' but only 'terrorism' regardless if is used by Muslims or non Muslims and regardless of the propaganda that accompanies it.

It is important to note that, as in other religious writings, those who want to can find quotations which they can use to justify illegal actions. The events of 2005 in Britain saw suicide bombing tactics used. What does the Qur'an have to say?

	What does the Qur'an say?	Quotes from the Hadith
Suicide bombing	<i>And do not kill yourselves. Allah is Most Merciful to you.'</i> (Qur'an 4:29 /	<i>He who killed himself with a thing will be tormented on the Day of Rising with that very thing.</i>
	The major scholars of Islam throughout the ages have all agreed on the interpretation of these verses and have reached a consensus that it means, not to kill one another. It forbids a man/woman to kill himself/herself through his/her anxiety over this world. Islamic extremists/terrorists ignore such textual evidences and choose to formulate Islamic justifications in accordance with their own political objectives.	

Section E – Living as a Muslim in 21st century Britain

The ideology - Al-Qa'ida

Al-Qaida's ideology claims that the (alleged) impoverished state of the Muslim world today is the result of a Zionist-Christian alliance against Islam dating back to the Crusades. They use a 'single narrative' linking a particular interpretation of history with a number of current grievances – some of which may be quite widely shared by Muslims and non-Muslims alike – to build up a picture of a global conspiracy against Muslims. These include perceived injustices (e.g. Palestine); opposition to military intervention (e.g. in Iraq or Afghanistan); the treatment of Muslim prisoners at Guantanamo; local perceptions of discrimination (e.g. a view that stop and search rules are not operated fairly).

Al-Qaida's members adopt an extreme interpretation of Islamic teaching which they believe places an obligation on believers to fight and kill to achieve their aims. Most Muslims and the world's leading Islamic scholars reject this position. Europe's foremost Islamic experts have declared, "Under no circumstances does Islam permit terrorism and the killing of civilians. Terrorism is in direct contravention to the principles of Islam and the vast majority of Muslims remain faithful to these teachings."

[See www.warda.info/fatwa.pdf]

Al-Qaida strongly opposes Western influences and ideas, regarding them as 'un-Islamic'. Notably, it is explicitly opposed to democratic principles. It claims that democracy is a rival 'religion' and that adopting principles such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion are equivalent to apostasy, punishable by death. Al-Qaida's opposition to 'un-Islamic' ideas extends to condemnation of Muslim religious practices of which they disapprove. In particular, Al-Qaida promotes a narrow and intolerant approach to Islam that encourages violent conflict and divisiveness, one mark of which is the readiness with which other Muslims will be branded by them as deviant or 'infidels'.

Al-Qaida and their like rely on a general lack of in-depth knowledge of the issues, the spread of misinformation and on the emotional predisposition of its target audience. It ignores factual evidence contrary to its claims about the role of Western powers (e.g. military intervention to protect Kosovan Albanian Muslims or aid to Palestinian peoples) and glosses over the fact that the majority of the victims of extremist violence are fellow Muslims.

SECTION F – further help

Glossary

1) Individuals and groups

Abu Bakr – closest companion of the Prophet Muhammed and the first Caliph after the Prophet's death

Ahl-al-kitab – The People Of the Book. This expression appears frequently in the Qur'an and refers to the Christians and the Jews

Allah – Arabic name for 'God', also used by Arab Christians

Al-Qa'ida – a Sunni Islamist terrorist movement founded in the late 1980's in Afghanistan

Ayman al-Zawahiri - a doctor who was heavily influenced by the writings of the ideological father of current day Islamic extremism, Sayyid Qutb. He is also one of the main founder's of Al-Qa'ida

Caliph – Ruler of the Muslim Ummah

Dajjal – The Anti-Christ (false Messiah)

Dawood – Arabic name for the Prophet David

Ibrahim – Arabic name given to the Prophet Abraham

Isa – The Arabic name of Jesus

Israfil – Arabic name given to the Angel Raphael, the angel of annihilation

Izrail – Arabic name given to the Angel Ezrael, the angel of death

Mahdi – 'The Guided One' who will revive the faith

Maryam – Arabic name given to Mary, mother of Jesus (Isa)

Mikail – Arabic name given to the Angel Michael, the angel of creation

Musa – Arabic name given to the Prophet Moses

Muslim – person who follows the faith of Islam

Prophet Muhammed – the last in the series of prophets sent by Allah to mankind, which includes Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist and Jesus.

SECTION F – further help

Quraysh – the dominant tribe in Mecca to which belonged the Prophet Muhammed

Sayyid Qutb – an influential Egyptian writer of the mid-20th century who declared Western civilization the enemy of Islam

Shia – significant minority denomination of Islam

Sunni – the great majority of the Ummah. Sunni Muslims are also referred to as Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jam'ah; the community of the example of the Prophet Muhammed

Umar Ibn Khattab – a close companion of the Prophet Muhammed and the successor to Abu Bakr as Caliph

Ummah – Arabic word for the global Muslim community

Usama bin Laden – one of the main founders of the extremist group Al-Qaida

Zakkariya – Arabic name for the Prophet Zachariah

2) Significant places and times

Arafat – Mount Arafat which stands about 70 meters high, is a granite hill to the east of the Holy City of Makkah (Mecca)

Ka'ba – The Ka'ba is a cubic structure located at the centre of the *Masjid al-Haram* in Mecca. It marks the direction (qibla) towards which Muslims must address their five daily prayers, and is the destination of the Hajj. The structure predates Islam and is believed to have been first built by the Prophet Abraham and his son Ismail.

Makkah – (Mecca) - Home to the Masjid al-Haram, it is the holiest city in Islam and plays an important role in the faith due to the presence of the Ka'ba

Mina – lies between the Holy City of Mecca and Muzdalifah. This major *Hajj* site has come to be known as tent city. The pillars representing the devil at which the pilgrims ritually cast their pebbles are situated here.

Muzdalifah – an open, level area near Mecca associated with the Hajj

Ramadan – the ninth month of the Islamic calendar when Muslims observe the obligatory fast

Shawwal – tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar

Yathrib – the city renamed as Medina after the Prophet Muhammad's migration there

SECTION F – further help

3) Religious writings and practices

Hadith – authenticated reports of the statements, deeds and actual behaviour of the Prophet Muhammed

Hadith Jibril – account of the famous encounter between the Angel Gabriel in the guise of a stranger and the Prophet Muhammed in the presence of his companions

Hajj – pilgrimage to the holy Ka'ba in Mecca

Hanafi – one of the four principal Madhhabs (schools of thought/jurisprudence)

Hanbali - one of the four principal Madhhabs (schools of thought/jurisprudence)

Ihsan – Excellence in worship, that is, to worship Allah as though you see Him, knowing that He sees you

Iman – belief in the Articles of Faith

Injil – the name of the Holy Book mentioned in the Qur'an as having been revealed to the Prophet Isa (Jesus)

Islam – name given to the Muslim faith.

Ja'afari – a Shia madhhab (school of thought/jurisprudence)

Jihad – Arabic word for struggle. It is defined as two main types: the greater *jihad* to improve oneself inwardly and outwardly; the lesser *jihad* comprises warfare as waged according to strict Islamic regulations

Maliki – one of the four principal Madhhabs (schools of thought/jurisprudence)

Qur'an – the primary religious text of Islam. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the book of Divine guidance and direction for mankind, and consider the original Arabic text to be the final revelation of God, revealed through the Prophet Muhammed

Sa'idi – Shia madhhab (school of thought/jurisprudence)

Sunnah – behaviour and example of the Prophet Muhammed

Salat – Arabic word for the ritual prayers

Sawm – Arabic word for fasting

Shafi – one of the four principal Madhhabs (schools of thought/jurisprudence)

SECTION F – further help

Shahadah – most important of the five pillars, it is the declaration of faith in the Oneness of Allah and the acceptance of Muhammad as the last Prophet and Messenger

Shari'ah – Islamic law

Tawaf - one of the Islamic rituals of pilgrimage. During the *Hajj* and *Umrah*, muslims circumambulate the Ka'ba seven times, in an anti-clockwise direction

Tawhid – the concept of monotheism in Islam; the Oneness of Allah

Umrah – non-compulsory pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca

Zabur – Arabic name for the Psalms revealed to the Prophet Dawood (David)

Zakat – compulsory annual deduction of approximately 2.5% from a person's accumulated wealth which is immediately distributed to certain fixed categories of the poor and deserving

Other resources

Many Local Authorities have developed their own resources giving insight into local faith communities. The Local Authority SACRE (Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education) is the best starting point for finding out about local faith community dynamics and resources which may support those working in schools and other settings.

Websites for further information

<http://www.religionfacts.com/> – Compares the terms and rituals of the major faiths

www.khayaal.co.uk – dedicated to the dramatic interpretation of Muslim literature and experience of Muslims living in the modern world

www.masud.co.uk – One of the Web's Leading and Original Resources for Traditional Islam

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/violentextremism> – 'Learning together to be safe' guidance resources for schools

www.thekidstaskforce.com site for 'Watch over me' materials for schools. Watch Over Me is a series of broadcast quality soap dramas for secondary schools that stimulate class discussion and help teachers introduce challenging topics such as terrorism, internet paedophiles and domestic violence.

<http://www.harunyahya.com/terrorism1.php> - A text outlining how and why Islam denounces terrorism.

SECTION F – further help

Books which explore issues for Muslims in Britain include

Lumbard, J. (2009) Submission: Faith & Beauty The Religion of Islam: Zaytuna Institute, USA

Bewley, A. (2008) Islam: Its Basic Practices and Beliefs: Ta-Ha Publishers, London

Armstrong, A. (1999) A history of God –Armstrong: Vintage books, United Kingdom

Armstrong, K. (2001) The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, USA

All documentaries are available to watch on www.googlevideos.com and available to purchase from all good DVD stores.

Muhammad : Legacy of a Prophet

A history of God - Karen Armstrong

A history of Christianity - Diarmaid MacCulloch (available on BBC Iplayer)

Burke, J. (2007) Al Qaeda: The true story of Radical Islam: Penguin Books, England

Hoffman, B. (2006) Inside Terrorism: Columbia University Press, USA

Malik, A. (2008) The State we are in: Amal Press, Bristol

Other Media

Some young Muslims in Britain will also use international TV / web channels, sometimes from their heritage country, as a source of news and views. Knowing the type of material being watched by people in your community will give an insight into some of the views people may be exploring.

SECTION F – further help

A gold coin from the Anglo Saxon King Offa of Mercia (774) bore the Kings Head on one side and Arabic script bearing a verse from the Quar'an on the other – either as a sign of respect or perhaps as a sign of trade links with Moorish Spain.

In 1205 in Northampton Peter the Saracen is recorded as being paid by King John as a 'maker of crossbows' – being paid 9d (pence) per day. 'Saracen' or 'Moor' may mean Muslim or someone of North African or Mid Eastern origin.

A few monasteries in Ireland have tablets in the walls with Arabic script declaring the Shahadah (the Declaration of faith 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God'). This illustrates early encounters between Christians and Muslims.

Some Arabic words used in English:

Alchemy, alcohol, alcove, algebra, algorithm, alkali, almanac, amber, aniline, arsenal, azimuth, bandouq, bint, breeze (possibly), camel, candy, carat, caraway, cat, chamois, cheque, cipher, coffee, cotton, cut, cuff, elixir, gazelle, ghou, giraffe, guild, jar, logarithm, loofah, lute, macabre, magazine, marzipan, mattress, mohair, mufti, nadir, racket, saffron, satin, sherbet, shufti, silk, sofa, sugar (originally Sanskrit), syrup, tabby, talisman, tamarind, tambourine, tangerine, tare, tariff, tarragon, turmeric, typhoon, vizier, zenith, zero.

Inventions by Muslims include: the cheque, candy, cotton, taffeta, silk, satin, sherbet, ketchup, dungarees, caravans, gymkhanas, bungalows, bazaars, oranges and tambourines.

www.1001inventions.com sets out the key role which Muslims have played in contributing to the development of Science and Civilisation. Materials include posters, books, video clips and games about the contribution Islam made to homes, schools, Hospitals markets and towns. This material is supported by the Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation.

SECTION F – further help

“If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there also much ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilisation owe to the Islamic world. It is a failure, which stems, I think, from the straight jacket of history, which we have inherited.

The medieval Islamic world, from central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history.”

H.R.H Prince Charles Prince of Wales Sheldonian Theatre Oxford. 27 October 1993

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Edmund Burke



Notes

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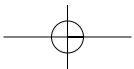
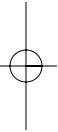
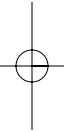




Notes

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department for
children, schools and families