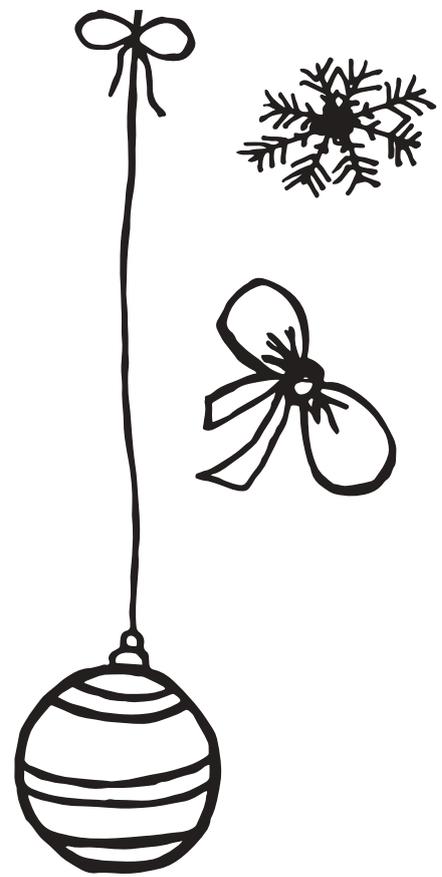


A Very Merry Muslim Christmas

December 2017



**All Party Parliamentary
Group on British Muslims**

A Very Merry Muslim Christmas

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The APPG pays tribute to the thousands of faith based charities, volunteer groups and community organisations in the UK who perform invaluable acts of charity in our local communities; not often recognised but never forgotten by those touched by acts of kindness.

The APPG acknowledges the work of its staff, Hayyan Bhabha, Gulsum Aytac, Muhbeen Hussain and Arman Musafir for their hard work organising the evidence sessions and in compiling this summary report.

The APPG would also like to acknowledge the kind support of Dr

Abida Malik and Louis Carserides, of Bridge Institute, for a focus group held in Nottingham for the purposes of this inquiry by the APPG.

The statistics reproduced in this report have been provided by the charities in their submissions to the APPG.

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Foreword

Too often, Muslim charities come to our attention because of negative media coverage of governance issues or bad practice among a handful of individuals working in the charity sector, or, because of latent fears about charities being abused for terrorism financing, even though evidence assembled by the Charities Commission recognises the near non-existent level of threat of such abuse in the sector. What is less well appreciated, and rarely celebrated, is the fantastic range of work done by Muslim charities in the UK which evoke the very best of our British Muslim communities: a commitment to giving to those less fortunate than themselves, a desire to help those in need, a willingness to volunteer time, professionalism and extend friendship to those who are simply in need of a warm embrace, a friendly face and/or a place to go for a free hot meal.

What we hear even less about is the ‘Muslim Merry Christmas’. The soup kitchens, the food banks, the Christmas dinners, the New Year clean up – work Muslim charities will be busy doing during the Christmas period.

The untold story of British Muslim charities is what the APPG on British Muslims wants to highlight in this summary report, drawing on oral and written evidence presented to the group during hearings held in Parliament in November. We want to showcase some of the amazing initiatives developed and delivered by Muslim charities, and to counter the negative stereotypes which mask and distort so much of the wonderful work they do in local communities.

In this season of peace and goodwill to all, the APPG on British Muslims wanted to refocus attention on aspects of

our British Muslim communities which are not considered ‘newsworthy’, which are not given due credit, and which all too easily slip into the background because too little of it is captured and disseminated by British Muslim charities themselves. While charity giving is a pillar of faith, so is observing humility. Muslims quietly go about charity giving in a way that is consistent with the emphasis in Islam on discretion; of ‘giving charity so that the left hand does not know what the right hand gives’, but this is a story which needs to be told and we want to be the ones to tell it. Let us celebrate the benefits of a multi-faith society, where people from different faith traditions focus their charitable activities on helping their neighbours in towns and cities across the UK.

We are a stronger society, a more vibrant, diverse and thriving society because of the many different contributions made to our lives and the lives of others by the Muslim charitable sector.

We have been touched by the evidence presented to us and humbled by the breadth of support given to vulnerable, marginalised and dispossessed groups by British Muslim charities. We have the privilege of presenting some of their work here while a full report on our findings will be released in the New Year.

British Muslim charities haven’t received the kind of attention they deserve. At this time of year, when Muslim charities are working alongside many other faith based charities to spread good cheer, peace on earth and goodwill to all we hope our preliminary findings highlights and celebrates their work. A very Merry Muslim Christmas to all!

Anna Soubry and Wes Streeting,
co-chairs of the APPG
on British Muslims.

Health

Blood Donation



IUS Imam Hussain Blood Donation Campaign

All from one charitable service provider

720

blood donations in 2016

Equivalent to

2,160

Adults



5,040

Children

Since 2006: Total Donations - 3,408
Equivalent to: 10,224 adults & 23,856 infants

32%

Expected increase in
blood donations 2017

Clinical Support

Muslim Doctors Association 2015 - 2016

In the last 2 years delivered free health checks, advice and life support training in the UK.

500

People were provided free health checks

1000

People were provided free health advice

The Muslim Doctors' Association is currently working on a smartphone app to improve access to high quality antenatal care for pregnant refugee women

Palmers Green Mosque

Aim to provide care for people with no fixed abode, who would otherwise find it difficult to access NHS.

Invested in an Ambulance
Yearly cost of Ambulance: up to £30K

**Extensive clinical
volunteer base of
over 300
clinicians**

Voluntary team includes:
Paramedics
General Practitioners /
Hospital Doctors
Nurses
Pharmacists
Emergency Responders

Grenfell Tower Response

Grenfell Muslim Response Unit



Over 400

Assisted



Over £140,000 Financial assistance was provided.

Over 3,000 hot meals were served.

Over 1,000 emergency calls were taken.

Over 30 people were provided emergency shelter.

Lead almost 50 funeral services.

Team Orange

Penny appeal were one of the first charities on the ground to support the victims and families affected by the Grenfell Tower.

Over two consecutive days at the Westway Trust' Sports and Fitness Centre, which was quickly established as a refuge, information hub and volunteer centre in collaboration with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Everyone Active, British Red Cross, among others.

Provided

Over 300

Hot Meals

Over 100

Large Blankets

Over 250

Food Parcels

Muslim Aid

Over £177,000

was raised by Muslim Aid in response to the Grenfell Tower Fire

Distributions Towards

Immediate Cash Assistance

Food Provisions

Resettlement Support

Funeral Services

Following consultation with various stakeholders, the project is now hosted by the National Zakat Foundation and is now funded by four amazing charities, NZF itself, Islamic Relief Aid, all of whom are committed to the vision of GMRU.

Homelessness

Total Assisted

Over 300,000

People

16%

Increase in homelessness
across the UK since 2016

Overall Food Distribution

Over 300,000

Food packs / Hot meals

InTouch Foundation Provided

200k

Meals

500k

Drinks

Almost 6,000

Winter Warmer packs,
Provided by Al-Mizan Trust,
Muslim Aid and Penny Appeal

National Zakat Foundation
Donation for supported housing

Over 350k

Human Appeal

Partnered with One Roof Leicester to pilot a multi-faith night shelter project that rotates around seven places of worship, for ten rough sleepers each night.

Prisoners

Prisoner Rehabilitation Project

234% Increase in Muslim prison population 1997 - 2015

Muslim Aid aims to reduce the re-offending rate through structured mentoring and opportunity placements utilising trained and skilled volunteers.

To date, 170 mentors have been recruited and referred to prison chaplains for training and pairing, and the expenditure on the project has almost reached £50,000.

General Welfare Fund

Al-Mizan Trust awards grants to meet recipients' individual needs. Prisoners are but one beneficiary.

Grant Size

£50+
Small

£200+
Medium

£500+
Large

Grants Provided

Over 200

2014 - 2015
Funded Applicants

Social Support

Food Banks

Al-Mizan Trust Partnered with: Beta Charitable Trust, Islamic Unity Society & Salam Centre to create Sufra NW London

Over £100,000

Invested in core costs

Over 14,000

People provided food aid over 4 years

Muslim Aid

Collaborated with Sufra NW London. They also provided hot meals to the elderly & the homeless.

Projected that 250 vulnerable people will benefit from the initiative

Aims to reduce street homelessness by 50% among service users

Salma: Food Bank
Provided food to 7,000 people

Food item donation
Open door policy
Warehouse open Mon-Fri

Human Appeal

Deaf world project

60

Hard of hearing young people support

Manchester Arena Attack

22 **Over £25,000**
Victims Supported Raised

Total Donation 2016

Over £19.2m

Women & Children

Housing

National Zakat Foundation of the total Zakat distributed

Almost

25% - 35%

Went towards women projects such as housing services

27

beds were also provided for vulnerable women

UKEFF 2016

Over £17,000

Was provided for income loss and temporary relocation, victims of abuse, women groups, young children.

Al-Mizan Trust

400

Provided mother & baby kits

400

Back to school backpacks

2014 - 2015

Appox 45.4%

of the general welfare fund was awarded to women & children

Adoption & Fostering Programme

Penny Appeal

Held over 30 adoption & fostering events

Cost:

£100,000

Over 300

Adoption & Fostering applications assessed

Over 40

Applications provided to service users

Cost:

£250,000

(Supported by DFE)

Key points

1 Impact of Muslim charitable works are difficult to estimate given the number of Muslim charities, their vast range of work, and the low priority given to documenting impact by Muslim charities themselves. This report showcases findings from evidence sessions held by the APPG on British Muslims and the oral and written submissions made to the group. It is merely indicative of some of the impact made by Muslim charities. It is in no way exhaustive of their contributions to British society.

2 Major festivals are a time to celebrate the values shared between religions. Values of charity, goodwill and caring for one's neighbour all come to the fore during Ramadan, Eid, Christmas and other festivals. Muslim charities do tremendous work during Christmas and the winter season by providing hot meals for the homeless, 'Winter Warmer' kits to keep the elderly and vulnerable groups warm in the colder months, and through provision of other essential items.

3 Media narratives portray Muslims as rejecting, even calling for the banning of Christmas, but as our findings reveal, Muslims are busy preparing for a 'Merry Muslim Christmas' with charities distributing food parcels, hot meals, thermal clothing and other essential items to spread good cheer and help individuals celebrate the season.

4 Some of the larger Muslim charities are recalibrating their distribution of charitable funds to commit more money to domestic projects and services. As the size of the young British Muslim population grows, they are increasingly focusing more of their time and money to charity at home.

5 Muslim charities are at the forefront of domestic crisis response. One notable example illustrated in this report is the Grenfell Muslim Response Unit; a collaboration between a handful of British Muslim charities that have spearheaded emergency response, food and shelter provision, burial services and ongoing support to individuals and families affected by the Grenfell Tower fire.

6 Muslim charities are increasingly responding to social needs in innovative and creative ways whether prisoner rehabilitation programmes or medical aid for homeless people to alleviate the strain on local A&E services. They are stepping in where other support or service networks are failing and in doing so demonstrate solidarity with their fellow citizens and exemplify the best of their religion.

7 Sustainable models for running food banks are being developed by Muslim charities such as UK Education and Faith Foundation, UK Islamic Mission and iCare. There is learning in the Muslim charity sector that is applicable to the wider charity sector.

Christmas Soup Kitchen Volunteers, Shia Ithna'ashari Community of Middlesex (SICM)

Since 2011, SICM have supported West London Churches Homeless Concern with volunteers on Christmas Day and Boxing Day to assist in soup kitchens.

Volunteers have prepared hot meals, welcomed guests, befriended them and cleaned up the area for the next service. The partnership offers homeless people a

community over the holiday period and encourages them to find a solution to their circumstance.

In addition to volunteering in church-led initiatives, SICM have participated in Mass on Christmas Eve for a decade building strong relationships of solidarity with churches in nearby Harrow and Hertfordshire.

Why was it necessary to establish an inquiry into Muslim charitable contributions to the UK?

Would it even be possible to quantify the impact of the Muslim charity sector in the UK?

Impact can be a difficult thing to quantify at the best of times. Would we be able to do justice to the work of Muslim charities in the UK and in doing so, shine a light on the myriad contributions British Muslims are making in their local communities and on the national scene?

As the APPG on British Muslims, we are keenly aware of the dominant stereotypes in circulation about British Muslims. The elision in the public imagination of Islam with violence and conflict, the perception of Muslims as ‘takers’ not ‘givers’, and the pervasive narratives which portray British Muslims as resistant to integration in British society, seemingly preferring to set themselves apart than be alongside their neighbours.

The charity sector is not immune from these wider stereotypes with Muslim charities usually making headlines for ‘behaving badly’. Whether it is poor governance issues or fears of abuse for

terrorism financing, despite figures from the Charity Commission negating the probability of such abuse, Muslim charities get the same raw deal many British Muslims do. And as with most coverage on Islam and Muslims in our media, the bad behaviour of a few individuals, sees the many tarnished with the same brush.

But such perceptions of British Muslims, and of British Muslim charities in particular, are wide off the mark. In order to uncover the huge amount of charity work that is being undertaken by Muslims, from charitable donations to volunteering with a preferred charity, and to dispel misperceptions of Muslims as taking but not giving, as self-segregating and not integrating, we set out to solicit documentation and statistics on Muslim charitable contributions to the UK. We did so because Muslim charities are illustrative of those facets of British Muslim lives which we rarely hear about: expressing compassion for those less fortunate than themselves, exemplifying Islamic teachings to give generously to alleviate poverty, hunger and to care for the elderly, the sick and the needy. Being civic-minded and socially aware are among the primary teachings of Islam.



It is well-known that charity giving is integral to Islam, as it is in other great religious traditions but what is less well known, indeed what is often wilfully ignored, is the role Muslim charities play in bringing communities together by facilitating integration and social cohesion through civic solidarity, interfaith social action and crisis response. Faith based charities are, in our view, the “Fourth Emergency Service”. And their services are becoming vital as public service cuts and wage freezes force more and more people to rely on charity, such as food banks, to get by.

Muslim charities engage in such charity work without regard for the age, gender, racial, religious or ethnic background of the beneficiaries. They do so with a poignant focus on responding to need. As the CEO of Penny Appeal, Aamer Naeem put it, British Muslims are stepping up to support communities “not because of who they are, but rather because of who we are; people driven to serve others.”

Another aspect that is also unknown and largely overlooked, but which deserves much wider attention, is the specific functions Muslim charities undertake during winter and in the Christmas season. It is at this time, when we are reminded of peace of earth and goodwill to all, that Muslim charities come into their own. From ‘Winter Warmer’ packs distributed to the homeless and destitute to soup kitchens, pop up kitchens and mobile food vans

serving hot food to the homeless, Muslim charitable activities are providing some of the most basic needs to their fellow citizens: warmth, food and friendship.

There are silly stories which circulate around this time of year about Muslims wanting to ‘ban Christmas’ or replace Christmas festivities with ‘Winterval’. These are fanciful ideas. The actual story, as we present here in our preliminary findings, is that British Muslims are actually embracing the spirit of the season to spread good cheer among those in need. We believe this

“The only reason we do this is because our faith commands us to look after our neighbours”

is information which should be widely shared. We felt compelled to produce this summary report before the onset of the Christmas holidays because the evidence we heard and the submissions we received heightened our awareness of the amazing work that Muslim communities are doing, and will be doing, around the country over Christmas and the New Year. We wanted to take this opportunity to share news of a ‘very Merry Muslim Christmas’. To share information about all the fantastic initiatives and cross community collaborations which are manifest demonstrations of community spirit, goodwill and humanity during these festivities.

New Year, Clean Streets, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

On New Year’s Day 2017, hundreds of young Muslims were engaged in street cleaning operations in 28 locations, across 15 regions of the country. Through January 1 and 2, over 2,000 man hours of voluntary service were undertaken by members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association as they set about cleaning up streets following New Year celebrations.

As part of their winter campaign, members of the youth association engaged in food donations, visits to elderly care homes, clothes donations in the colder months and providing meals. Over the month of December 2016, 1,650 people were fed, 336kg of food was donated, 1,567 people were visited and 74kg of clothes were donated.

British Muslims we spoke to were keen to exude Islam's true teachings through their charitable works. They want the British public to recognise them for who they really are: British Muslims. Their Islamic faith and their British identity increasingly motivates them to respond to crises and social problems on their doorstep, from flooding to homelessness, domestic violence and prisoner rehabilitation.

As the inquiry into the horror of the Grenfell Tower fire gets underway, one of the case studies we wish to highlight as exemplary of Muslim charitable contributions in the UK is the Grenfell Muslim Response Unit.

We have included other case studies covering a range of projects by a wide variety of charity organisations. But it is not just organisations who lead in this work, although much of the evidence we have heard has come from established charities. There are unaffiliated individuals who are mobilising through social media to create initiatives like 'Children of Adam'.

This particular project may be small and staffed only by volunteers, a pop up kitchen in Lincoln's Inn Fields where volunteers gather with folding

tables and food, but for the 150 people who are provided a free hot meal every Sunday, such small acts of kindness are magnified. Moreover, their impact is multiplied through the co-operation of restaurant chains like EAT who contribute sandwiches and fruit at the end of the week for distribution by the volunteers at Children of Adam.

There are other relevant examples of charity work pertinent to this season, when cold weather and the cost of heating reminds us of some of the choices forced upon those who simply cannot afford to keep warm. The Manchester based charity Human Appeal provided beds in seven churches in Greater Manchester to serve 24 rough sleepers every night. Beneficiaries were provided with clean clothes and washing facilities and a meal together with volunteers every evening. Furthermore, to ensure the churches stayed warm for the guests, the charity paid the utility bills during the winter months.

Another project run by Human Appeal, 'Wrap Up Manchester', saw 1,500 winter coats and other winter clothing collected and donated to homeless shelters, women's refuges, refugee shelters and to children in Greater Manchester.



This is social conscience, community spirit and civic engagement working together at its best.

This is only a short summary of some of the findings from the evidence sessions held by the APPG in Parliament in November and the written submissions presented to the group by British Muslim charities as part of our call for evidence. This report showcases our preliminary findings. It is merely indicative of some of the impact made by Muslim charities. It is in no way exhaustive of their contributions to British society.

A complete list of charities participating in the evidence sessions and sending in written submissions will be published alongside our full report, 'Faith as the Fourth Emergency Service', in the New Year.

As Christmas approaches, this is an opportune time to address the distorted perceptions about British Muslims. These preliminary findings will, we hope, move us to look again at a community of less than three million people who, through their charitable activities, punch far above their weight.



'Muslim Mitzvah', Sadaqah Day

Building on the success of Mitzvah Day, a day of social action by British Jewish communities, a planned day of Muslim social action was born: Sadaqah Day. Muslim and Jewish individuals, communities and organisations have been coming together to foster interfaith relationships built on joint social action projects. Among highlights of the last year was Leeds Grand Mosque and Leeds Jewish Welfare Board supporting South Leeds food bank and Pafras (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers).

Sadaqah Day aims to encourage charity spending in the UK and puts emphasis on Sadaqah (voluntary charity), as being about more than just giving money. It is about volunteering time, expertise and the offer of friendship. Interfaith social action projects which have been supported through Sadaqah Day include food banks, soup kitchens and visits to care homes.

'Winter Warmer' packs and Sufra Kitchen, Al Mizan Charitable Trust

During the cold winter months, Al Mizan Charitable Trust have distributed 'Winter Warmer' packs to rough sleepers and those who are statutory homeless. The packs are given out in partnership with local organisations working with homeless people, such as Children of Adam (London), SIFA Fireside (Birmingham), and the Booth Centre (Manchester). Each pack contains a sleeping bag, a coat, a jumper, a hat, a scarf, a pair of gloves, thermal socks, toiletries, first aid items and emergency snacks.

To date, Al Mizan have distributed 1,300 Winter Warmer packs, each one worth £50.

In 2013, Al Mizan formed a partnership with Beta Charitable Trust, Islamic Unity Society, and the Salaam Centre to form Sufra NW London, a community food bank and kitchen based in Brent. The four charities invested a combined total of £100,000 over three years helping Sufra NW London to become a sustainable organisation. Over the last four years, Sufra NW London has provided emergency food aid to over 14,800 people.



The Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June killed 71 residents. Amidst the horror unfolding before them, Muslim charities mobilised community groups and volunteers who rapidly organised themselves in response to the tragedy. The Grenfell Muslim Response Unit (GMRU) brought together 22 organisations, including a whole array of Muslim support services and faith organisations, and a groundswell of hundreds of volunteers. In a concerted effort to meet the needs of the survivors and their families, GMRU responded with speed and with compassion.

The GMRU was crucial in bridging the gaps in local services and provision at a time when victims and their families were most vulnerable and in desperate need. Within 48 hours of the tragedy, the GMRU had set up the first dedicated Emergency Helpline giving vital information and support to survivors who did not know where to turn for relief. The GMRU ensured that the emergency housing needs of affected families were met with provision of safe and comfortable housing. A platform for professional support workers based at the local Al-Manar Mosque was set up disbursing immediate cash

for those who had lost all their material belongings.

GMRU provided meals through the Ramadan Tent Project and received £2,000 worth of food vouchers to distribute to families. Worth £40 each, 22 vouchers have been issued so far. GMRU provided legal assistance and arranged the funerals and burials of those who had lost their lives, assisting families in giving their loved ones a dignified end.

In the aftermath of the crisis, the charities that made up the GMRU were quick to listen with sympathy to the victims, and treat them with dignity, care and concern.

From kitchen table to mobile catering van, InTouch Foundation

InTouch Foundation is the brainchild of Osman Gondal who began his charity work by cooking food at home and distributing it to the homeless in his car. His initiative expanded to a burger trailer and then a van which was converted for use as a mobile catering van. Rather than expect the needy to come to the food, the mobile delivery van takes the food to those in need.

To date, the charity have distributed over 200,000 meals, ½ million drinks as well as emergency items such as toiletries and sleeping bags.

95% of InTouch Foundation's work is in local communities in the UK.



