F.A.I.T.H

Federation of Accredited Imams, Teachers and Holistic Support

Serving the Ummah

The State of the UK Islamic Institutional Workforce
An Evidence Review

Imams • Islamic teachers • Holistic support workers • Muslim chaplains • Scholars • Volunteers

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This report was prepared for F.A.I.T.H by Nathan Nagel and Atia Lokhat

F.A.I.T.H: Summary

Federation of Accredited Imams, Teachers and Holistic Support

The problem

The people who serve our communities (imams, teachers, ʿālimahs, support workers and volunteers) have no national home. There are no national pay scales, so pay varies widely with no shared benchmark. There are no agreed conditions, so hours, leave and contracts differ from one institution to the next. There is no clear career path, so training and experience are rarely recognised. And much of the sector runs on the unpaid goodwill of volunteers who too often go unseen.

Good training and support already exist, but they are scattered across many organisations. Meanwhile, mosques, madrasas and Islamic centres lack simple tools to manage their staff, volunteers and governance.

The problem we are solving

F.A.I.T.H exists to give this workforce a national home: one place that brings together standards, fair pay, verified training and wellbeing support, so that serving the community becomes a valued, recognised and sustainable career, and so that institutions have what they need to look after the people who serve them.

Our vision

Every mosque, madrasa and Islamic centre served by a valued, accredited and well-supported workforce.

Our mission

To unite, accredit and support the people behind Islamic education and community care, through national standards, fair pay, verified training and wellbeing support, working hand in hand with the organisations already serving our communities.

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How we will do this: the digital F.A.I.T.H platform

F.A.I.T.H will build a national digital platform at faithuk.org that brings standards, pay guidance, verified training and resources for the UK's mosque and madrasa workforce into one place. Individuals get a personal portal to track their qualifications and career progression. Institutions get tools to manage their workforce, apply national pay guidance and strengthen governance and compliance.

Crucially, F.A.I.T.H is not here to duplicate or replace the excellent work already happening. We are here to collaborate and build bridges. The platform is designed so that existing organisations, training providers and resources can be incorporated into the structure we build: brought together, signposted and strengthened, rather than competed with. By connecting what already exists, we can close the gaps between organisations and make support easier to find and use for every institution and every worker.

Our five pillars

1. **Fair Pay & Conditions**: Advocate for fair pay and improved working conditions across all roles, for both genders.
2. **Professional Development**: Promote professional development through accessible training and incentives.
3. **National Standards**: Raise national standards of Islamic education and community services.
4. **Job Opportunities**: Create pathways to upgrade skills and qualifications, open to educators and coaches of all faiths.
5. **Interfaith Collaboration**: Encourage meaningful interfaith collaboration to strengthen leadership and community impact.

“The believers are like one body; when one part aches, the whole body responds.” (Hadith, Bukhari & Muslim)

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.” (Surah Āl ʿImrān 3:103)

Terminology

"Workforce" in this report means everyone who serves Islamic institutions, paid or unpaid: Imams, Islamic teachers (including Alimahs, Huffaz and Qurra), holistic support workers, Muslim chaplains, scholars, administrators, trustees and volunteers. "Madrasa" is used for supplementary Islamic education outside full-time school, also known as maktab or madrassah.

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Executive summary

For trustees, the immediate questions are practical: what hours are staff expected to work, what support is available when someone asks an Imam for help, and can women use the facilities and expertise their mosque says it offers? This review distinguishes what published studies show from what each institution needs to check locally.

Twelve findings from the evidence

1. **A large, young community.** 3,868,133 people in England and Wales identified as Muslim in 2021 (6.5% of the population) (3), up from 4.9% in 2011 (4). The median age of Muslims was 27, compared with 40 for the population as a whole (5).
2. **High social and economic pressure.** 32.7% of Muslims lived in overcrowded homes, against 8.4% overall, and 51.4% of Muslims aged 16 to 64 were in employment, against 70.9% overall (6). In a 2026 survey of 4,800 British Muslims, 46.6% said their finances had harmed their mental wellbeing (7).
3. **High mental health need, high stigma.** 45% of British Muslims surveyed reported mental health struggles in the previous 12 months, and 71% agreed it can be difficult to admit to mental health issues in their community (8, 9).
4. **The mosque is not yet visible as a source of mental health support.** In a survey of 1,274 British Muslims, only 8% were aware that their local mosque provided mental health support; 44% did not know (10).
5. **Faith leaders are already acting as front-line counsellors.** In a study of 41 UK Muslim faith leaders, 63% counselled people with mental health problems every week, but only 42% felt their training was adequate to recognise mental illness (11).
6. **Workers fill gaps in public services with little supervision.** In FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey, 35 of 58 respondents (60%) said they provided support that replaced or filled gaps in services such as the NHS and social services, but only 8 of 55 (15%) received regular supervision for that kind of casework (2).
7. **Volunteers sustain the mosques studied.** Of 20,420 people recorded in the charity mosque study, 2,814 were employees (12). Volunteers and trustees together accounted for about 86% (13). This is not an estimate for every Islamic institution.
8. **Pay and contracts are insecure.** Cardiff's study mapped 2,001 Imams; its interviews raised concerns about pay, workload and unclear or absent contracts (14, 15). In FAITH's survey, 33 of 56 respondents (59%) had taken second or third jobs to cope with living costs (2). Neither study establishes a national rate.
9. **Women report barriers to mosque access and religious guidance.** In a 2022 online survey of 1,200 Muslim women in the UK, 20% reported having been denied entry to a mosque, and 65% identified easy access to women scholars as a need (16).
10. **Assets do not establish ability to pay.** Britain's mosques were estimated to hold at least £1.5 billion in assets (12); the 1,179 charity mosques analysed recorded £271 million of income in 2023 (13). Neither measure shows how much unrestricted money an individual mosque has for payroll.
11. **Safeguarding expectations are rising.** The national child abuse inquiry found that religious organisations are not legally required to follow statutory safeguarding guidance, and warned of "disguised compliance" (17). The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 gives local authorities new powers to require information from some out-of-school education providers (18).
12. **Respondents worry about recruitment.** In FAITH's survey, 39 of 54 (72%) believed the next generation would not be drawn to these careers under current conditions; 31 of 55 (56%) had considered leaving their own role (2). Neither measure is an observed departure rate.

Priority recommendations

Chapter 15 sets out full recommendations for consultation. The priorities are:

- Check actual hours and pay against the applicable statutory minimum. Give workers the written particulars required in the relevant jurisdiction (19). Cost any move to the voluntary real Living Wage separately.
- Every institution working with children should appoint a safeguarding lead and ensure staff and volunteers receive regular training, as Charity Commission guidance expects of charities working with children or adults at risk (20); it should also hold a written safeguarding and child protection policy, as the Muslim Council of Britain's guide recommends (21).
- FAITH should develop a national, community-led accreditation framework for Imams, teachers and support workers, with core competencies in safeguarding, mental health awareness and referral, and first aid.
- Every mosque and madrasa should display mental health signposting, linked to trained staff and to NHS and community services.
- The sector should build a shared national dataset on the workforce, starting with the FAITH Workforce & Standards Survey and repeated at regular intervals.

1. Introduction

1.1 Why this report is needed

There is no official count of the people who work in UK Islamic institutions, and no official count of the institutions themselves. The Office for National Statistics does not count mosques or other places of worship (22). Published estimates of the number of mosques range from about 1,200 to more than 2,000, depending on what is counted (Chapter 3).

Without national data, it is difficult to describe the workforce, to argue for fair pay or better training, or to plan services. FAITH's founder has made the same point: "Without national data, it's hard to advocate for meaningful change." (1)

1.2 About FAITH

FAITH is building a national platform to improve pay, working conditions, professional development and standards for Imams, Islamic teachers and holistic support workers, whether paid staff or volunteers (1). Its stated mission rests on the five pillars set out at the front of this report (1).

FAITH also sets out training themes covering professional development; collaboration and national initiatives; safeguarding and holistic support; mental health and family support; legal, financial and civic knowledge; public health and first aid; leadership and non-profit management; digital literacy, AI and technology; education, youth work and community development; and interfaith relations and cultural competence.

1.3 The FAITH Workforce & Standards Survey

FAITH’s survey covers paid staff and volunteers working in and around UK mosques, madrasas, Islamic centres and chaplaincies. The recruitment target is 500 (1). The November report records 59 self-selected participants recruited through FAITH’s networks using an online form. Its 52 chart questions are reported as at 19 November 2026 (2).

Table 1 uses the November report because it gives counts for each question. The denominator includes everyone who answered that item, including ‘not applicable’ where offered. The FAITH

website displays different interim percentages without item counts (1); the two sources should not be pooled or read as a trend. Neither gives representative national rates.

Table 1. Selected findings from FAITH's November workforce survey (2)

Response reported	Of those answering
Had taken a second or third job to cope with UK living costs	33/56 (59%)
Worked unpaid hours outside their official role each week	36/56 (64%)
Provided support that replaced or filled gaps in UK public services	35/58 (60%)
Received regular supervision for cases normally handled by the NHS or social services	8/55 (15%)
Had considered leaving because of pay, workload or living costs	31/55 (56%)
Believed the next generation would not be attracted to these careers under current conditions	39/54 (72%)

2. The communities served

2.1 Population

In the 2021 Census, 3,868,133 people in England and Wales identified as Muslim (6.5% of the population) (3), up from 4.9% (2.7 million) in 2011 (4).

Scotland recorded 119,872 Muslims in its 2022 census and Northern Ireland 10,870 in 2021, suggesting a UK total of about 4 million (22). The religion question is voluntary in all UK censuses, so all figures carry some uncertainty (22).

Table 2. Muslim population by UK nation

Nation	Census year	Muslim population	Share of population
England	2021	3,801,186	6.7%
Wales	2021	66,947	2.2%
England and Wales	2021	3,868,133	6.5%
Scotland	2022	119,872	Not stated in source
Northern Ireland	2021	10,870	Not stated in source

Sources for Table 2: England and Wales (3); Scotland and Northern Ireland (22).

2.2 A young community

The Muslim population is the youngest of the main religious groups. Its median age in 2021 was 27, 13 years younger than the overall median of 40. Of those identifying as Muslim, 84.5% were under 50, compared with 62.0% of the whole population (5).

For institutions, this means a high and growing demand for children's education, youth work, marriage and family support, and services for young adults. It also means that the workforce of the future is, in large part, growing up in UK mosques and madrasas now.

2.3 Social and economic pressures

Census 2021 shows worse outcomes for Muslims in England and Wales than for the overall population on several measures (6).

Table 3. Selected social and economic indicators

Measure (Census 2021, England and Wales)	Muslim	Overall population
In employment (aged 16 to 64)	51.4%	70.9%
Economically inactive (aged 16 to 64)	41.9%	24.7%
Unemployed (aged 16 to 64)	6.7%	4.4%
Looking after home or family (aged 16 to 64)	16.1%	5.8%
No qualifications (aged 16 and over)	25.3%	18.2%
Level 4 qualification or above (aged 16 and over)	32.3%	33.8%
Living in overcrowded homes	32.7%	8.4%

Source for Table 3 (6).

A 2026 survey of 4,800 British Muslims by Muslim Census, with Islamic Relief UK and the National Zakat Foundation, found that 29.4% had struggled to afford at least one household bill in the past year, 43% had relied on borrowing to cover everyday costs (compared with a UK average of 17%), and 1 in 12 had missed meals because of financial difficulty (7). The same survey found that 46.6% said their finances had negatively affected their mental wellbeing, rising to 57% among 18- to 24-year-olds and 84% among those struggling with bills (7).

2.4 Belonging and hostility

The Muslim Census survey found that 51.9% of British Muslims said they strongly felt they belonged in the UK, compared with 93% in a 2016 Ipsos MORI survey. 59.3% felt negative about their future in the UK; 7.8% felt positive (7).

Police-recorded religious hate crimes targeting Muslims in England and Wales rose by 15%, from 4,479 in the year ending March 2025 to 5,132 in the year ending March 2026. Muslims were the target in 46% of religious hate crimes, according to the Home Office (23). The Home Office notes that Metropolitan Police data after February 2024 are not directly comparable with earlier years because of a change in recording systems (23).

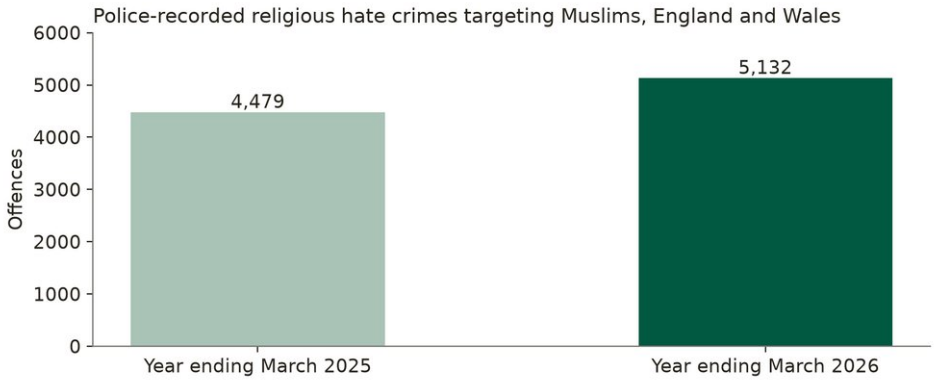


Figure 1. Police-recorded religious hate crimes targeting Muslims, England and Wales. Source: (23)

Mosques and madrasas operate in this context. Their staff and volunteers support communities affected by hardship and hostility, and must also manage the security and reputational risks that hostility creates for their own institutions.

3. The institutional landscape

3.1 How many mosques are there?

There is no official count. The main published estimates are shown below. They differ because they count different things: some include prayer rooms, hired halls and chaplaincies, others count only established mosques, and some cover only charity-registered mosques.

Table 4. Published estimates of the number of mosques

Source and date	Estimate	What is counted
UK government, 2018	1,500	Mosques and prayer halls in England (22)
Muslim Council of Britain, 2020	About 1,200	Mosques in Britain (22)
Ayaan Institute, 2025	1,884	Estimated mosques in Britain, of which 1,179 (reported as 62.5%) were identified as registered charities (12)
Muslims in Britain, February 2026	About 1,700 "actual mosques"; 1,850 including prayer rooms and shared places	UK and Ireland (22)
Muslims in Britain, 2026 data	2,166	Active masjid and prayer room landmarks (24)

Full Fact concludes that the number of mosques is more likely to be between 1,200 and 1,700 than over 3,000 (22). The Ayaan Institute reports that mosques make up 4% of UK places of worship, while Muslims make up 6.5% of the population (12).

3.2 Madrasas and supplementary education

Madrasas, maktabs and other supplementary Islamic classes fall within the Department for Education's description of "out-of-school settings" (OOSS), which lists supplementary schools and religious organisations offering education in their own faith as typical examples. These settings are not regulated under education or childcare law and are not required to meet a single, consistent set of statutory safeguarding standards (25). DfE safeguarding guidance for providers explicitly covers supplementary schools set up for religious purposes (26).

There is no current official count of madrasas or of the children who attend them. This report has not found a recent, verifiable national figure and does not use older estimates. This is itself an important gap (Chapter 13).

3.3 Other institutions

- **Chaplaincies** in hospitals, prisons, universities and other public institutions (Chapter 11).
- **Seminaries and colleges** that train scholars and Imams. For example, Cambridge Muslim College has trained scholars, produced academic research and developed educational programmes since 2009 (27).

- **Community organisations and charities** providing emotional support, youth support and helplines, such as the Muslim Youth Helpline, whose core service is a free and confidential emotional support service available nationally by telephone, email, web chat and letter (28).

3.4 The scale of the mosque sector

The Ayaan Institute's study, reported in August 2025 (13), describes itself as providing the most comprehensive dataset to date on the financial, personnel and legal status of UK mosques, and analysed 1,179 registered charity mosques (29). Reported findings include:

Table 5. Financial scale of the UK mosque sector (Ayaan Institute, 2025)

Measure	Finding
Estimated asset value of mosques	£1.5 billion as a conservative estimate, "probably nearer £2 billion" (12)
Income of the 1,179 charity mosques analysed	£195 million in 2020, rising to £271 million in 2023 (13)
Total income, 2020 to 2023	£943 million, an estimated 39% increase over the period (12)
Projected annual income and expenditure, all mosques	Projected income £450 million; projected expenditure £343 million (12)
Share of income from government	Less than 2% (12); Hyphen reports 2%, just under £5 million, from government grants and income (13)

3.5 Women's access

Research by the My British Mosque project found that 72% of mosques reported having space for women’s worship (30). That is a measure of provision reported by institutions, not of whether women can reliably use that space.

Muslim Census and Ta Collective surveyed 1,200 Muslim women in the UK online between 12 June and 25 July 2022, and held four online focus groups with 24 participants. The survey was in English, recruited mainly online and weighted by age and ethnicity, so its percentages describe respondents, not national prevalence (16).

In that survey, 25% said they rarely visited a mosque and 17% said they never did; one quarter reported having a local mosque with facilities for women. Among respondents who had access and had visited, 42% rated the quality of women’s space and services as good. Overall, 20% reported ever having been denied entry; nearly one in five of that group said a women’s prayer space existed but was blocked off or in use by men (16).

Limited mosque access was reported to harm spirituality and the relationship with faith by 61% of respondents. Easy access to women scholars was identified as a need by 65%, and classes designed for women by 54%. The study also found that 19% had given feedback to their local mosque; of those who had not, 44% did not know how. For mosque leaders, these findings suggest checking how spaces, programmes and feedback channels work in practice, not just whether they exist (16).

4. Who serves: the workforce

4.1 The size and make-up of the mosque workforce

The Ayaan Institute identified 20,420 people involved in the charity mosques it analysed: 6,337 trustees, 11,269 volunteers and 2,814 employees (12). Hyphen's report of the same study gives the

volunteer share as 55% of mosque staff, rising to 86% when trustees are included (13). The report values volunteers' time at £54.87 million (12).

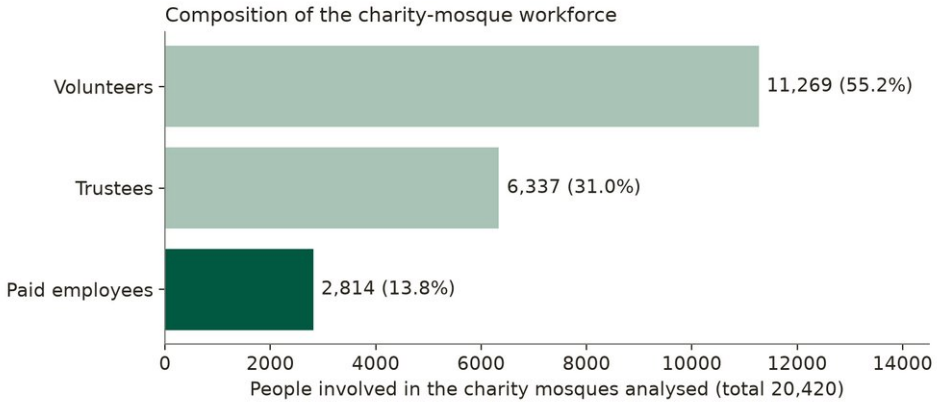


Figure 2. Composition of the workforce in the charity mosques analysed. Percentages calculated from the published counts. Source: (12)

In other words, about one in seven people involved in running these mosques is paid (2,814 of 20,420, or 13.8%, calculated from the published counts). The workforce is concentrated in some large institutions: East London Mosque had 142 employees and Faizan-e-Madina in Bradford had an estimated 600 (12).

The study's lead author, Jahangir Mohammed, said reliance on unpaid labour means many mosques lack trained Imams, teachers and counsellors, and that counselling, safeguarding and youth work require skills volunteers cannot always provide (13).

4.2 Imams

Cardiff University's Understanding British Imams project, led by Dr Riyaz Timol, combines mosque mapping, in-depth interviews and a separate community survey. The research bulletin reports biographical records for 2,001 appointed prayer leaders and 40 in-depth interviews with Imams. Cardiff reports data from more than 1,200 British mosques and 587 responses to its separate online survey of the British Muslim community (15, 31).

The project defines an Imam as a person appointed to lead mosque prayers, usually in a paid capacity, as distinct from the wider body of trained Islamic scholars, including women. Its records and interviews do not provide national rates for pay or contract conditions (15).

Table 6. Key findings on British Imams (Cardiff University)

Finding	Detail
UK-born Imams	48% were UK-born in the Cardiff findings reported by Hyphen; the article does not give the denominator for this percentage (14)
Change since 2008	Hyphen reports 8% UK-born in a 2008 study of around 300 Imams. This is a comparison across separate studies (14)
Wider Muslim population	51% of Muslims in England and Wales were British-born in 2021, compared with 47% in 2011 (14)
Working conditions	Timol describes low pay, long hours and absent or unclear contracts. Hyphen reports some cases of pay below the national minimum wage (14, 15)

Finding	Detail
Pastoral work	Timol describes Imams acting as de facto marriage counsellors and offering pastoral support beyond their prayer-leading duties (15)
Training	Interviewees described gaps between seminary training and the demands of supporting people. Timol reports strong interest in continuing professional development but limited funding or flexibility to attend training (15)

4.3 Who responded to FAITH's survey

The FAITH Workforce and Standards Survey (November 2026) was led by Atia Lokhat, Founder and Director of FAITH, Founder of Zubeda Welcome and Educational Advisor for Foster Care Link. Of 58 respondents, 39 (67%) selected the UK as their country of birth (2). This is not directly comparable with Cardiff's 48% for Imams (14). FAITH surveyed several occupations: of 57 answering the role question, 19 selected teacher and five selected Imam. Of 58 answering on employment status, 16 were employed full time, 22 part time and 10 were volunteers. Of 58 answering the regional question, 20 selected London and 11 Yorkshire and the Humber (2). The sample is therefore weighted towards teachers, part-time workers and London.

4.4 Women in the workforce

Neither study provides a national count of women serving as Alimahs, Islamic teachers, chaplains or support workers, or a benchmark for their pay. Cardiff's study focuses on appointed mosque prayer leaders; Ta Collective and Muslim Census document demand for women scholars and teachers from the perspective of service users (15, 16). In FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey, 24 of 57 respondents answering the gender question (42%) were women, and five selected Alimah as their role (2). This shows that women are part of the workforce FAITH reaches, but it is not a count of women in the sector. The final report should show women's paid and unpaid roles, hours, pay and access to professional development separately where numbers allow.

5. Pay and conditions

5.1 What is known about pay

This review did not identify a representative UK pay dataset covering Imams, Islamic teachers and support workers. The evidence below documents problems worth investigating; it does not establish a national average wage or the proportion underpaid.

- Timol's interview-based findings describe overwork, low pay and missing or unclear contracts. Hyphen separately reports cases of pay below the national minimum wage. Neither source provides the share of British Imams paid below the legal minimum (14, 15).
- In 2017, Imams Online launched a Fair Wage Campaign. It argued that Imams in its network earned below the national minimum wage and around 30% less per year than most British rabbis and priests (32).
- Interviews reported by Hyphen describe concerns about zero-hours arrangements and unpaid additional duties (32). A zero-hours contract does not itself remove a worker's right to statutory annual leave or the applicable minimum wage (33).
- One teacher told Hyphen he was paid £6 an hour for Qur'an teaching at a mosque in Oldham. When he asked for a 20 pence rise to bring his pay in line with the minimum wage at the time, the mosque refused and replaced him with a committee member (32). The article does not state the year.

- In FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey, 33 of 56 (59%) had taken second or third jobs to cope with living costs. Of 58 answering a separate question, 31 (53%) said pay was out of line with comparable work in the NHS, social services or education. These are respondents' assessments, not a like-for-like wage comparison. In addition, 14 of 56 (25%) said they had to remind their employer to pay them (2), which points to payroll practice as well as pay levels.

5.2 Benchmarks

Table 7 distinguishes the statutory floor from two voluntary, cost-of-living rates and two clergy stipends. Annual wage equivalents use 37.5 paid hours a week for 52 weeks (1,950 hours). They are benchmarks, not observed Imam salaries.

Table 7. Pay benchmarks, 2026

Benchmark	Rate	Annual full-time equivalent (calculated)
National Living Wage, age 21+, April 2026 (subject to apprentice rules) (34)	£12.71 per hour	£24,784.50
Real Living Wage, outside London, 2026/27 (voluntary) (35)	£14.10 per hour	£27,495.00
London Living Wage, 2026/27 (voluntary) (35)	£15.45 per hour	£30,127.50
Church of England National Minimum Stipend, 2026/27 (36)	£33,350 per year	£33,350
Church of England National Stipends Benchmark, 2026/27 (36)	£34,950 per year	£34,950

The Foundation announced its 2026/27 voluntary rates on 15 October 2026. Accredited employers should implement them by 1 May 2027 (35). The statutory rate for most workers aged 21 or over is £12.71 until 31 March 2027 and £13.21 from 1 April 2027; check the apprentice rules where relevant (34).

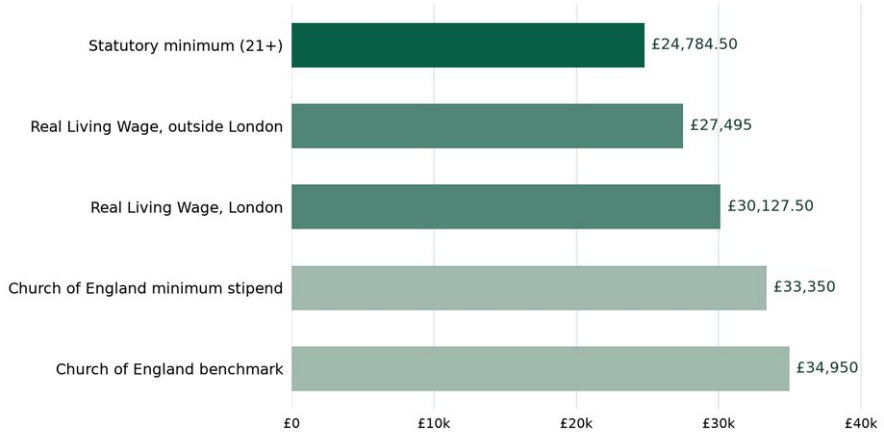


Figure 3. Annual pay benchmarks for a full-time role, 2026. Hourly rates converted at 37.5 hours a week for 52 weeks. Source: (34, 35, 36)

The Church of England's national minimum stipend rose from £30,110 in 2025/26 to £33,350 in 2026/27 (36, 37). It applies to full-time stipendiary office holders (38). It is a benchmark from another faith community, not a recommended Imam salary or a like-for-like comparison of total remuneration.

5.3 Costing a pay increase at one mosque

Take one employee outside London paid £12.71 an hour for 37.5 hours a week throughout the year. Moving to £14.10 would add £1.39 per paid hour, or £2,710.50 a year (£1.39 × 37.5 × 52). At the London rate of £15.45, the increase on the same assumptions would be £5,343 a year (£2.74 × 37.5 × 52). These are gross wage differences at November 2026 rates, not a forecast across the April 2027 rate change (34, 35).

For a local budget, apply the positive difference between the target and each person's actual hourly rate to their paid hours. Add any resulting employer National Insurance and pension costs, then compare the total with recurring unrestricted funds. Property values and sector-wide income do not establish that an individual mosque can afford an increase.

6. Training and professional development

6.1 The training gap

The evidence shows a consistent gap between what the workforce is trained for and what the role demands:

- Timol describes a gap between seminary training and the pastoral demands of the Imam's role, including marital support. The interviews show strong interest in continuing professional development, with funding and time to attend among the barriers described (15).
- In the study of 41 UK Muslim faith leaders, 73% had received some training in counselling or mental illness, but only 42% felt it was adequate to recognise mental illness; 34% said it was not adequate and 24% were unsure. Only 15% had clinical pastoral training and 17% had consultation or supervision with a mental health professional (11).
- In FAITH's survey, 28 of 58 (48%) reported receiving UK-appropriate safeguarding and mental health training. Separately, 20 of 57 (35%) said they were expected to provide pastoral or safeguarding support beyond their training (2).
- The Ayaan Institute recommends that the sector shift its focus from investing in buildings to becoming more professional, and develop more skilled human resources, including Imams, educators and administrators (12).

6.2 Existing provision to build on

A range of organisations already provide training. FAITH's framework should recognise and build on them rather than duplicate them.

Table 8. Examples of existing training and standards provision

Provider	Provision (as published)
Beacon Mosque	Training, leadership development and staffing support for mosques; its lead has trained more than 5,000 leaders in governance (13)
Inspirited Minds	First mental health training programme for Imams in July 2017, a three-day pilot with Mind (39); it has since advertised CPD-accredited Muslim Mental Health and Wellbeing First Aid training for Imams and community leaders in Reading (40)
British Board of Scholars & Imams (BBSI)	Certificate Islamic Professional Chaplain (CIPC) course, addressing demand for Muslim chaplains in further and higher education, the NHS, prisons, police, armed forces and industry (41)
Cambridge Muslim College	Training scholars, research and educational programmes since 2009 (27)

Provider	Provision (as published)
Muslim Council of Britain	Safeguarding guide for mosques and madrasas (21)
Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)	Charitable objects include building mosque capacity, assisting with governance and spreading best practice through standards (42); core standards cover governance, personnel, participation of women and youth, and civic responsibility (43)

6.3 Recognition

Traditional Islamic qualifications (such as Alim/Alimah, Hifz and Ijazah) reflect years of study. This review did not find any published mapping of them to a UK qualification framework, or any national professional accreditation for Imams or madrasa teachers equivalent to the framework used in healthcare chaplaincy (Chapter 11). This is a gap a FAITH framework could fill by recognising traditional learning and adding accredited professional competencies alongside it.

7. Mental health: the front line

7.1 The level of need

A poll of 815 British Muslim adults by Whitestone Insight for the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL), carried out between 20 November and 1 December 2024 and weighted to Census 2021, found that 45% had struggled with their mental health in the previous 12 months (9). For comparison, the report cites Mind's estimate that nearly 25% of adults in England experience mental health struggles each year (8).

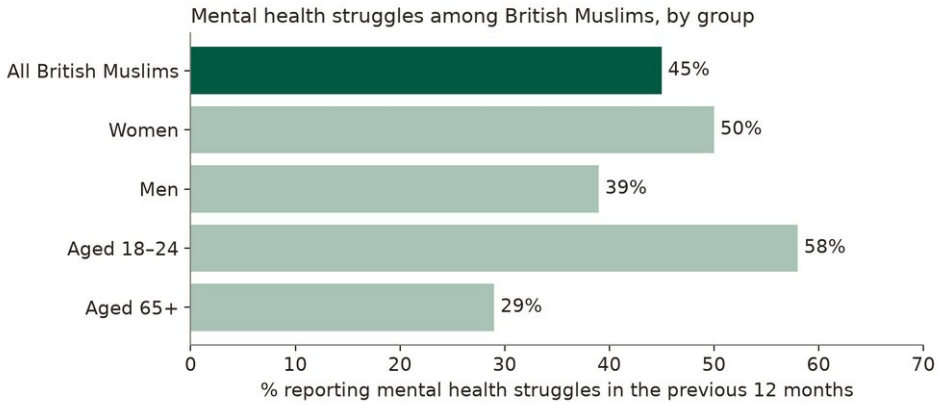


Figure 4. British Muslims reporting mental health struggles in the previous 12 months, by group (n = 815). Source: (8)

Young people are most affected: 58% of 18- to 24-year-olds reported struggles, compared with 29% of those aged 65 and over. Women (50%) reported higher rates than men (39%) (8).

A March 2026 report by Equi, based on polling of 1,200 young people aged 16 to 24 (600 Muslims and 600 members of the wider public), states that over one third of those who had experienced poor mental health did not seek professional help (44), and that four in five respondents used faith-based, spiritual or reflective practices to cope with stress (44).

7.2 Stigma and help-seeking

Table 9. Stigma and attitudes to help-seeking

Finding	Value	Source and sample
Agree it can be difficult to admit to mental health issues in their community	71%	IIFL, n = 815 (8)
Would know where to get mental health help or counselling	70%	IIFL, n = 815 (8)
Say it would matter that a counsellor shared their faith	42% (53% of 18- to 24-year-olds)	IIFL, n = 815 (8)
Agree mental health is a taboo topic in their community	78%	Muslim Sports Foundation and Mind, n = 1,274 (10)
Agree mental illness is an illness like any other	83%	Muslim Sports Foundation and Mind, n = 1,274 (10)
Believe Islam encourages seeking help	62%	Muslim Sports Foundation and Mind, n = 1,274 (10)

The Muslim Sports Foundation and Mind survey was an anonymous online questionnaire promoted through social media, community networks and websites (10). Although large, it is not a random sample and may not represent all British Muslims.

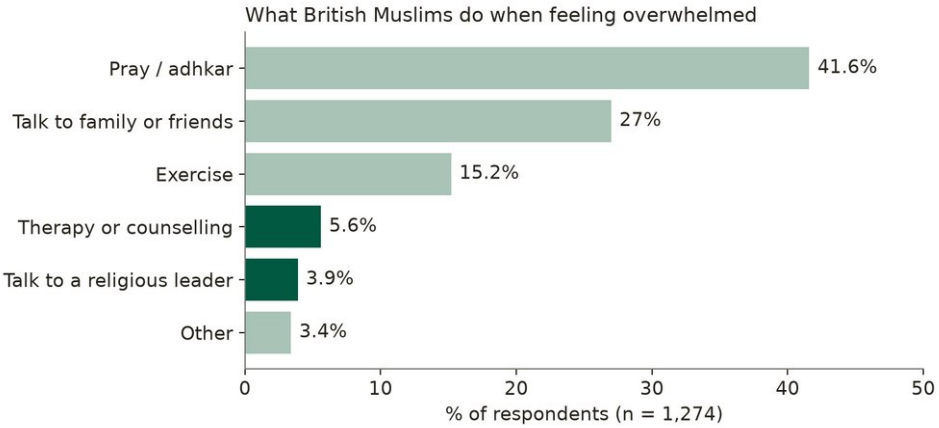


Figure 5. What British Muslims do when feeling overwhelmed (n = 1,274). Source: (10)

Only 5.6% turned to therapy or counselling when overwhelmed, and 3.9% to a religious leader, while 41.6% turned to prayer and 27% to family or friends (10).

7.3 The mosque gap

Only 8% of respondents were aware of their local mosque providing mental health support; 48% said it did not, and 44% did not know (10). Asked what support would be most helpful in the Muslim community, respondents chose faith-based counselling (36.1%), workshops (22.7%), peer support groups (14.7%) and support from mosques (14.7%) (10).

The survey report recommends working with mosques to set up accessible, private mental health advisory services and to signpost existing services, running annual mental health awareness weeks with mosques, and equipping community leaders with basic mental health awareness skills (10).

7.4 Faith leaders as de facto counsellors

Meran and Mason surveyed 41 UK-based Muslim faith leaders, including Imams, shaykhs and male and female graduates of religious leadership courses (11). They found that:

- 63% counselled people with mental health problems every week; 51% spent 1 to 5 hours a week doing so, 7% spent 6 to 20 hours and 5% more than 20 hours (11).
- 85% had referred people to a mix of services in the past year, most often to a GP (63%) or a psychiatrist or psychologist (56%) (11).
- Only 42% felt their training was adequate to recognise mental illness (11).

The authors describe Muslim faith leaders as potential allies in improving mental health outcomes by challenging stigma and working with mental health professionals (11). Cardiff's separate interviews show how pastoral responsibilities extend beyond leading prayer, including de facto marriage counselling. They do not measure how often Imams provide mental health support or whether that support improves clinical outcomes (15).

FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey points the same way across a wider set of roles. Of 55 answering, 34 (62%) said they were expected to handle youth safeguarding and radicalisation concerns. Of 56 answering, 26 (46%) said Da'wah made up a quarter or less of their role, with the rest taken up by wider community support (2). These are self-reports from a self-selected sample, not measures of caseload.

7.5 Outcomes in NHS services

In England in 2022/23, NHS Talking Therapies recorded 51,397 referrals in the Muslim category. The published improvement and recovery rates for that group were 62% and 42%, compared with 69% and 54% in the Christian category and 67% and 49% for people reporting no religion. The 51,397 figure counts referrals, not the denominator for recovery; outcomes relate to eligible completed courses (45).

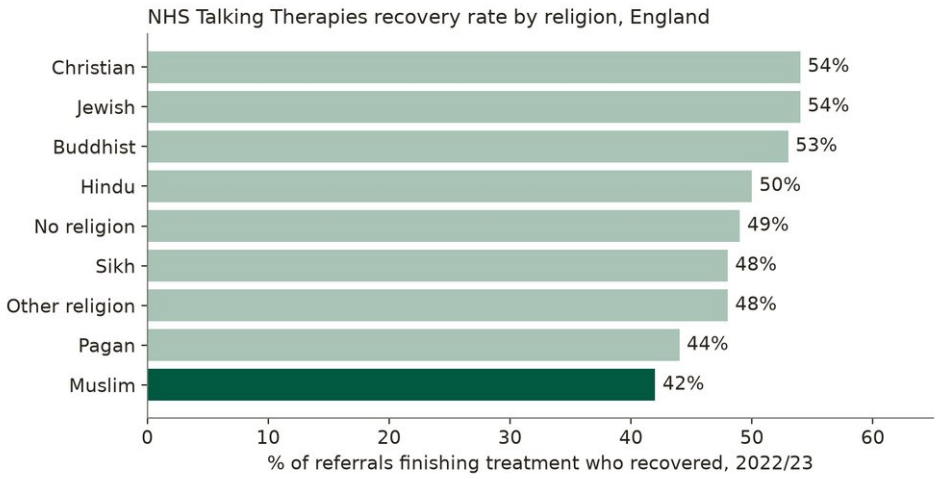


Figure 6. NHS Talking Therapies recovery rate by religion, England, 2022/23. Source: (45)

These figures do not explain why outcomes differ or show where people sought help afterwards. A practical response is for mosque pastoral leads and local NHS services to agree a referral contact, explain what happens after referral and make clear when urgent clinical help is needed. Pastoral support should complement, not replace, treatment.

7.6 Models that work in community settings

- **Mental health first aid for faith leaders:** CPD-accredited training for Imams and community leaders has been advertised by Inspirited Minds (Chapter 6) (40).

- **Social prescribing through mosques:** Cambridge Central Mosque has developed a Health Hub delivering events and workshops with national organisations and healthcare providers, covering diabetes management, first aid training and mental health awareness (46).
- **National helplines:** the Muslim Youth Helpline provides free, confidential emotional support by phone, email, web chat and letter (28).

Implications for FAITH

- Mental health awareness and referral should be a core competency for every role that has pastoral contact.
- Every institution should display clear mental health signposting. Only 8% of survey respondents were aware of their local mosque providing mental health support (10).
- Faith leaders should be supported to work alongside, not instead of, clinical services, with clear guidance on when and how to refer.

8. Caring for the carers

8.1 What is known

This review did not identify a representative measure of wellbeing across the UK Islamic institutional workforce. Studies of working conditions nevertheless identify pressures that a workforce survey could investigate:

- Long hours and on-call work (14). In FAITH's survey, 42 of 58 respondents (72%) reported out-of-hours emergency contact; 32 of 58 (55%) reported regularly doing unpaid administrative work (2).
- Low pay and insecure contracts (14). In FAITH's survey, 31 of 56 (55%) reported being unable to save regularly after essential expenses (2).
- Spending a large share of time on other people's crises, including marriage breakdowns, mental health concerns and family crises (14).
- Limited supervision: 8 of 55 (15%) in FAITH's survey reported regular supervision for cases normally handled by the NHS or social services (2). A separate study found 17% of faith leaders received consultation or supervision from a mental health professional (11). The questions and populations differ.

8.2 Supervision as standard practice in comparable roles

In NHS chaplaincy, regular supervision is an expected part of practice. NHS England guidance says chaplains at Band 6 and above should have regular clinical supervision from a suitably qualified person, preferably outside their own department and line management, and that in mental health settings supervision separate from line management should always be in place (47). There is no equivalent expectation for Imams or madrasa teachers.

8.3 Retention and the next generation

In FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey, 30 of 56 (54%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their work, yet 31 of 55 (56%) had considered leaving because of pay, workload or living costs. On burnout, 24 of 54 (44%) felt at risk because of workload and emotional demands (2). The findings describe different questions, not necessarily the same individuals; perceived risk is not a clinical diagnosis.

Implications for FAITH

- The FAITH survey should include a validated wellbeing measure so that the workforce's wellbeing can be compared with national norms.
- FAITH should develop a confidential peer-support and supervision offer for members with pastoral responsibilities.
- Institutions should be encouraged to set limits on hours spent on call and to provide paid time off.

9. Safeguarding and regulation

9.1 The national inquiry

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) examined evidence from 38 religious organisations in England and Wales (17). Its findings relevant to mosques and madrasas include:

- Child sexual abuse occurs in a broad range of religious settings. The Inquiry recorded a case in which four children were sexually abused at about nine years old while being taught the Qur'an by a teacher in a mosque; the perpetrator was convicted in 2017 and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment (17).
- Religious organisations are not legally required to follow the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (17).
- Organisations varied widely in whether they had adequate child protection policies and how well they followed them. The Inquiry warned of "disguised compliance", where a policy exists on paper but implementation is half-hearted or non-existent (17).
- The legal definition of "regulated activity", which decides eligibility for the highest level of DBS check, is complex and hard for religious and voluntary organisations to apply. Many religious organisations do not consistently carry out DBS checks on people who have contact with children (17).
- There was wide variation in safeguarding training, and limited use of training offered by local authorities (17).

The Inquiry recommended that all religious organisations have a child protection policy and supporting procedures, and that the government change the definition of full-time education so that any setting that is a pupil's primary place of education falls within the scope of a registered school (17).

9.2 Out-of-school settings

Out-of-school settings, which include supplementary and religious education, are defined by the DfE to exclude schools, colleges and providers registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency. They are not regulated under education or childcare law (25). The DfE's safeguarding guidance for providers is non-statutory (48). The GOV.UK guidance page was last updated on 9 February 2026, and the guidance covers four areas: health and safety; safeguarding and child protection; safe and suitable people; and governance (26).

In June 2025 the DfE was running a call for evidence on out-of-school settings, which set out three possible approaches: registration and/or regulation; accreditation and partnerships; and an information-based approach such as improved guidance (49).

9.3 The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

Section 38 of the Act inserts new sections into the Education Act 1996, including a duty on local authorities to keep registers of children not in school (section 436B). Under the new section 436E, a local authority may by notice require a person it reasonably believes is providing out-of-school education to a child for more than the prescribed amount of time, without any parent actively involved, to give the child's name, date of birth and home address, the total time the education is provided and the time it is provided without a parent actively involved. The person must have at least 15 days to comply (18).

The "prescribed amount of time" and any exceptions will be set in regulations. A local authority may impose a monetary penalty for failing to comply or for giving incorrect information, but not for notices served in the first three months after section 38 comes into force (18). How far the duty reaches madrasas will depend on those regulations; institutions should take legal advice once they are published.

Ofsted states that the Act will strengthen its ability to investigate and close unregistered schools (50). In 2025/26 Ofsted's unregistered schools team opened 260 investigations, carried out 130 inspections of suspected unregistered schools and issued 23 warning notices to 20 settings (50).

9.4 Charity law expectations

Charity Commission guidance for faith charities states that safeguarding should be a governance priority. Where a charity works with children or adults at risk, trustees should appoint a safeguarding lead and ensure staff and volunteers receive regular training. Roles in faith centres will often be eligible for an enhanced DBS check or an enhanced check with a barred list check, and where a role is eligible for a higher-level check the person should receive it (20).

The Muslim Council of Britain's safeguarding guide for mosques and madrasas sets out practical requirements, including an effective safeguarding and child protection policy, a staff behaviour policy, a designated safeguarding lead with appropriate training, a named contact for parents, knowledge of the local referral route into children's social care, and reporting allegations to the local authority designated officer (LADO) and the police (21).

9.5 What happens when safeguarding fails

In October 2024 the Charity Commission published the findings of its inquiry into Dar ul Uloom Islamia Rizwia (Bralawai) in Birmingham. When a safeguarding incident occurred at its education centre in 2019, the charity had no safeguarding policies in place, which the Commission found to be a serious breach of duty. The centre later reopened without appropriate safeguarding measures. The Commission found misconduct and/or mismanagement, appointed an Interim Manager and made an Order directing the trustees to act (51).

Implications for FAITH

- The Inquiry found wide variation in safeguarding training (17). In FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey, 23 of 55 (42%) said they were asked to carry out tasks for which they were not trained or qualified (2).
- An accreditation and partnerships approach is one of those the government has considered for out-of-school settings, including endorsing existing accreditation schemes and membership bodies (49). A FAITH scheme could be put forward as one such scheme.
- FAITH standards should require safeguarding to work in practice, not only on paper. The Inquiry described "disguised compliance" as having a policy that is implemented half-heartedly or not at all (17).

10. Governance and finance

10.1 Trustee duties

An organisation in England or Wales with charitable purposes for the public benefit must register with the Charity Commission if its income from all sources is over £5,000, subject to stated exceptions; a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) must register whatever its income (20). Trustees must comply with the governing document and the law, manage resources responsibly, act in the charity's best interests, manage conflicts of interest and report serious incidents to the Commission (20).

10.2 Governance disputes

In January 2026 the Charity Commission used its legal powers to merge two charities connected with a mosque in Dudley. The existence and complicated structures of the two charities had fuelled confusion and a dispute over who was responsible for the mosque. The Commission created a new governing document and set out a framework for elections, appointing trustees and admitting members (52).

The Birmingham case (Chapter 9) also involved failures to file accounts for two financial years and to manage social media risk (51). Good governance and a well-supported workforce are linked: trustees who understand their duties are better placed to employ staff fairly and keep people safe.

10.3 Funding the workforce

The sector's income is mainly raised from the community; less than 2% comes from government (12). The Ayaan Institute recommends greater transparency, governance and community engagement, and more collaboration and knowledge-sharing between mosques (12).

Options for FAITH and institutions to explore include dedicated salary funds or endowments for Imams and teachers; sharing posts across groups of smaller mosques; and setting aside a fixed share of income for training. These are proposals; there is no published evidence yet on their use in UK mosques.

11. Professional models: chaplaincy

11.1 Healthcare chaplaincy

NHS England has published guidelines for NHS managers on pastoral, spiritual and religious care. The 2023 guidelines set out (47):

- Expected experience as a leader in one's own religion or belief, experience of spiritual and pastoral care, and usually a degree or professional qualification.
- A banded qualifications framework from the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy (UKBHC), from a degree in healthcare chaplaincy (Band 5) to a master's or PhD for consultant lead chaplains (Band 8). These are desirable rather than statutory, and employers may recognise equivalent experience.
- A voluntary register kept by UKBHC and accredited by the Professional Standards Authority, with a code of conduct that NHS organisations expect all chaplains to follow.
- Regular supervision, including clinical supervision separate from line management.

11.2 Prison chaplaincy

At 31 March 2019, HM Prison and Probation Service employed 118 Muslim chaplains, out of a total of 474 chaplains (53).

11.3 Lessons for FAITH

Chaplaincy shows that a faith-based role can have a recognised professional framework without losing its religious basis. Its key features are a tiered qualifications structure, a voluntary register with a code of conduct, required supervision and recognition of equivalent experience. All of these could be adapted for Imams, teachers and support workers serving Muslim communities.

12. Comparisons with other faiths and countries

12.1 The Church of England

Full-time stipendiary Church of England clergy are entitled to a stipend of not less than the National Minimum Stipend, which the Archbishops' Council sets each year; it is also used to calculate the clergy pension (38). For 2026/27 the minimum is £33,350 and the recommended benchmark is £34,950, after an announced 10.7% rise (36).

12.2 Germany

The Islamkolleg Deutschland in Osnabrück was set up to offer Imam training from April 2021, with the federal Interior Ministry providing almost €1 million a year in start-up funding (54). It was the first academic institution in Germany to offer such training, delivered in German (55).

12.3 The Netherlands

The Training Imams in the Netherlands (TIN) programme is a collaboration between the Contactorgaan Moslims in Nederland (CMO) and the Universiteit voor Humanistiek (UvH) (56).

12.4 Lessons for FAITH

These examples show different ways of supporting a professional faith workforce: national pay minimums set by the faith body itself (Church of England), state-supported training institutions (Germany), and partnerships between Muslim bodies and universities (Netherlands). A UK model led by the community could take elements from each while keeping independence from the state.

13. What is not known: evidence gaps

This review has found significant gaps in the evidence. Stating them clearly is part of the case for FAITH's work.

Table 10. Key evidence gaps

Gap	Why it matters
No official count of mosques, madrasas or madrasa pupils	Planning, safeguarding and investment cannot be targeted without it

Gap	Why it matters
No representative UK pay distribution identified	Pay benchmarks by role, hours and region remain uncertain
No national workforce baseline for women in religious roles	The pay and progression of women cannot be measured
No representative workforce wellbeing measure identified	The frequency of burnout and its relationship with retention remain unclear
Limited data on chaplains outside prisons	The professional pathway cannot be fully mapped
No data on the total pay bill or staff costs of mosques	The affordability of fair pay cannot be modelled precisely
Limited evaluation of training for faith leaders	What works cannot yet be shown

An employer survey can measure arrangements such as paid hours and training budgets; a worker survey can record experiences of workload, support and pay. Neither can answer both questions alone. Reporting who took part matters as much as the total response count.

14. A proposed FAITH standards framework

This chapter sets out a framework for consultation. It is a proposal, built on the evidence in this report and on existing models such as NHS chaplaincy and Charity Commission guidance. The need for a professional home is visible in FAITH's Workforce and Standards Survey: 25 of 47 answering (53%) belonged to no other professional membership body or platform, and 28 of 58 (48%) expressed interest in helping to drive FAITH's work (2).

14.1 FAITH Accredited Practitioner

Table 11. Proposed FAITH Accredited Practitioner tiers

Tier	For	Proposed core requirements
Foundation	New staff and volunteers	Safeguarding awareness; mental health awareness and signposting; first aid; code of conduct
Practitioner	Established Imams, teachers and support workers	Foundation, plus designated safeguarding lead training where relevant; mental health first aid; pastoral boundaries and referral; legal and financial basics; continuing professional development each year
Senior	Lead Imams, head teachers, senior support workers	Practitioner, plus leadership and charity governance; supervision of others; partnership working with the NHS, councils and interfaith bodies

Traditional Islamic qualifications would be recognised alongside the professional competencies. NHS chaplaincy guidance offers a precedent: employers may recognise other qualifications and professional experience as equivalent, and endorsement from the candidate's own religion or belief community should be sought where possible (47).

14.2 FAITH Standard for Institutions

Table 12. Proposed minimum standards for institutions

Area	Proposed minimum standard
Employment	Written particulars where required; pay at or above the applicable statutory rate; statutory leave and sick pay according to eligibility
Fair pay goal	A plan to reach the Real Living Wage for all employees
Safeguarding	A written policy, a named lead and contact for families, role-appropriate training and vetting under the relevant UK nation's arrangements
Mental health	Visible signposting to services; at least one trained mental health first aider; a referral protocol
Wellbeing	Limits on on-call hours; access to supervision or peer support for pastoral staff
Development	A training budget and time for continuing professional development
Governance	An up-to-date governing document; accounts filed on time; a conflicts of interest policy
Women's access	Publish actual opening times and routes to women scholars. Agree a feedback contact and review the arrangements with local women.

14.3 Governance of the standard

- An independent standards panel, with members from different schools of thought, both genders and relevant professions.
- A scholarly advisory board to confirm the standards are consistent with Islamic principles.
- Partnership with existing bodies (such as MINAB, BBSI, Beacon Mosque and Inspirited Minds) so that their standards and training are recognised within the framework.
- Regular review, informed by repeated waves of the FAITH survey.

15. Recommendations

These recommendations are offered for consultation with the workforce, institutions and partners.

15.1 For mosques, madrasas and Islamic organisations

1. Check the applicable minimum wage, including age and apprenticeship rules (34). Record actual hours and written particulars (19), and cost any voluntary move to the real Living Wage before putting it in the budget.
2. Appoint a safeguarding lead and ensure regular training for staff and volunteers, as Charity Commission guidance expects of charities working with children or adults at risk (20), and hold a written safeguarding and child protection policy, as the MCB guide recommends (21).
3. Display mental health signposting and train at least one mental health first aider.
4. Agree a training budget and protected attendance time with staff. Record training requested, approved and completed, and review barriers when a request is declined (15).
5. Take part in the FAITH survey and any future employer questionnaire, so that the sector can be measured.
6. Mosque trustees should review women's access with local women, including when prayer and wudu facilities are actually open, how to reach women scholars, what classes are offered, and

how to raise a concern and get a response. Consider funded roles for women scholars and teachers where demand is not met (16).

15.2 For the workforce

1. Take part in the FAITH survey and share it with colleagues.
2. Pursue accredited training in safeguarding, mental health awareness and first aid.
3. Join peer-support and professional networks.

15.3 For funders, zakat and waqf bodies

1. Fund salaries and training as well as buildings, in line with the Ayaan Institute's recommendation that the sector shift its focus from construction to professionalism and skilled human resources (12).
2. Support bursaries for accredited training and pilot salary endowments.

15.4 For the NHS and local services

1. Agree referral arrangements with trained faith leaders and ask patients what would make services easier to use. The 2022/23 recovery gap in England is a reason to investigate access and experience, not evidence that referral through a mosque improves clinical outcomes (45).
2. Make local referral routes known to mosques and madrasas.

15.5 For government and regulators

1. Consider endorsing community-led accreditation schemes, building on the accreditation and partnerships approach in the DfE's 2025 call for evidence (49), as part of future arrangements for out-of-school settings.
2. Consult the Muslim institutional workforce on regulations under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (57), including the prescribed amount of time for out-of-school education.

15.6 For FAITH

1. Survey lead: the November report already gives the number answering each question (2). For the final report, also publish the fieldwork start and end dates, every recruitment channel and the respondent profile, and state explicitly which populations the data cannot represent.
2. Standards lead: invite trustees, Imams, women scholars, teachers and volunteers to test Chapter 14 against a real working week. Record disagreements and revise the draft before seeking adoption.
3. Training lead: ask existing providers to map their courses against the proposed competencies. Identify gaps, likely costs and who would cover staff time before commissioning new courses.
4. Steering group: agree which measures to repeat, who owns them and when to review them. Keep a dated record of what changed after the pilot, including decisions not to proceed.

Appendix: Glossary

Table A1. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Alim / Alimah	A male or female scholar who has completed a course of traditional Islamic study
Hafiz (pl. Huffaz)	A person who has memorised the Qur'an

Term	Meaning
Ijazah	A licence or certification to teach or transmit a text or discipline
Maktab / madrasa	In this report, supplementary Islamic education for children, usually after school or at weekends. "Madrasa" can also refer to an Islamic school or college more generally
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service; criminal record and barred list checks
DSL	Designated safeguarding lead
LADO	Local authority designated officer, who handles allegations against people working with children
OOSS	Out-of-school settings
National Living Wage	The legal minimum hourly wage for workers aged 21 and over
Real Living Wage	A voluntary hourly rate calculated by the Living Wage Foundation
UKBHC	UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy
Waqf	An Islamic charitable endowment

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