

T H E M U S L I M C O U N C I L O F B R I T A I N

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*Response to the Commission
on Vulnerable Employment
established by the TUC*

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1. Introduction

The MCB is pleased to respond to the invitation from the General Secretary of the TUC, Mr Brendan Barber to submit evidence to the Commission on Vulnerable Employment.

The definition provided by the TUC of vulnerable workers, of those “whose participation in the labour market places them at risk of ongoing and often extreme suffering, uncertainty and injustice resulting from an imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship” is a useful one, and particularly timely for Muslim communities in Britain given issues of Islamophobia and racism. Muslims in vulnerable employment might be reasonably considered to be amongst most ‘vulnerable’ of the ‘vulnerable’.

This submission comprises:

- a brief ‘snapshot’ of Muslims in the Labour market in the light of migration and settlement patterns
- a note on racism and Islamophobia
- interview findings
- conclusions

2. Muslims in the Labour Market

The situation of Muslims in vulnerable, low-paid, low-skilled labour is closely bound up in the patterns of post-war, post-imperial immigration. In the 1950’s and 1960’s Muslims arrived in their thousands from very particular rural regions of the Indian subcontinent in search of ‘wages for labouring jobs in Britain...over 30 times those offered for similar jobs in Pakistan’ (Shaw A :1988). These initial waves of immigration were almost uniquely a male phenomenon undertaken primarily as part of the support network for large extended families back home: the 1961 census which shows that of the 3,376 Pakistanis living in Bradford only 81 were women. Thereafter, most South Asian Muslim communities (who make up c.75-80% of the British Muslim population) developed through a four phase pattern of migration – ‘chain migration’ (Lewis 1992):

- the pioneers
- single male relatives.
- wives and children.
- the first British-born generation.

Four knock-on factors inherent in the process of migration have had a variably contributory effect on the contemporary situation of Muslim workers.

- (i) A culture of unskilled labour developed amongst the initial migrant workforce of South Asian Muslims many of whom had little incentive to become skilled since their unskilled labour was at the time in demand and

relatively (compared to wages back home) well-rewarded. Of course, by the late 1980's this high demand for unskilled industrial labour was waning drastically but this culture persisted amongst many working Muslims.

(ii) The vast majority of migrant Muslims who came from rural areas of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh did not bring with them cultures that either admired or aspired to the values of literate, state-designed learning and education. Indeed, there may at times even have been culture clashes between the type of literate learning valued in English schools and the oral, Islamic learning culture of Muslim homes (Lewis 1992), although the idea that second generation Muslims have found it hard to negotiate two cultures or have experienced culture split has been hotly disputed if not totally discredited (Archer 2003).

Modood (1992) importantly notes that disparities in educational achievement between Asians of different religious groups ought not be attributed causally to religion at all, since middle-class Hindu migrants and rural Muslims brought with them to the British education system entirely different types of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973) and educational expectations. Therefore their educational achievements ought to be analysed primarily in terms in class and wealth rather than religion.

(iii) This impacted on the educational aspirations of many first generation British Muslims, and especially women who often did not command basic English even after a lifetime in the country, partly because in many communities they were never expected to leave the home beyond the requirements of basic domestic duties.

(iv) This in turn impacted on Muslims' higher educational and employment opportunities so that by the 1990's Muslims still found themselves in casual and unskilled manual labour in disproportionate numbers. In 1997 67% of the total Pakistani Muslim workforce was in either skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual labour compared with 55% of the white British population. Even more extraordinarily 60% of the Bangladeshi work-force was in the catering (restaurants) industry on a semi-skilled (and often casual) basis compared with 2% of the white British population.

Of course, the 1980's and 1990's have thrown up fresh migrations of Muslims fleeing the catastrophes of Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia and so on. These workers have in turn become amongst the UK labour-force's most disposable and vulnerable workers; made more 'vulnerable' through 'invisibility' due to the relative absence of research into their particular un-Asian situation.

The identification of this apparently inevitable cycle of educational under-achievement and low-skilled labour emphatically does not mean that Muslims born in Britain are inevitably 'destined' either for low educational achievement

and vulnerable employment. Muslims across the UK punch above their weight in a number of key professions, most notably in medicine. Moreover, notable Muslim lawyers, academics, businessmen and teachers are beginning to come to the fore in their fields. Nevertheless, Muslims are still more likely than any other cultural/religious group to find themselves in industries prone to vulnerability – catering, security, cleaning amongst them.

3. Racism and Islamophobia

Muslims in the workplace have had to contend with levels of ‘otherness’ with their white, British peers and colleagues that surpass even those that the African-Caribbean workers have had to manage. Muslims are usually, if not always, identifiably different from white Britons in ethnicity, culture and personal customs, mother tongue and religion. The experience of Muslims in the 70’s and 80’s shows that discrimination of all types in the workplace was rampant (Daniel 1986; Smith 1977) even after it was outlawed. Even by the 1990’s when many Muslims were getting ‘better’, higher status employment, they were still doing so to a lesser extent than white Britons and Britons from other ethnicities with the same qualifications (Modood 1997).

The 1990’s - after the Rushdie Affair- and early 2000’s saw the rise of acute and directed Islamophobia – a new type of discrimination lamented by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as deeply retrograde step for civilisation. According to the Islamic Human Rights Commission 52% of Britons who are identifiably Muslim have been subject to abuse since the attacks of 9/11 – 12% of those on a daily basis - and, since many Muslims only either interface with non-Muslims on transport or in the workplace, it is fair to assume that much of this abuse is experienced at work. Hopkins (2004) has also observed in Scotland that post-9/11 and post - 7/7 obvious signifiers of Muslim-ness (e.g. the beard, hijab etc.) have taken on a heightened negative value in eliciting abuse, both street-racism and violence and institutional racism.

A recently published study on trends in British public opinion notes that “Islamophobic views in Britain would appear easily to outstrip anti-Semitic sentiments in terms of frequency (more than double the size of the hard core), intensity and overtness (Field, 2007).

The Mayor of London’s report ‘Muslims in London’ observes, “Islamophobia can be direct or indirect and manifests itself in many ways. As such, Muslims experience discrimination in service provision and employment, stereotypical negative media reporting, harassment and violence. Incidents in Britain include physical and verbal assault, property damage, attacks on mosques, desecration of cemeteries and Islamophobic messages posted on the Internet and sent via emails (GLA, 2006).

The Trade Union Congress in 2006 passed a motion that will be a landmark event for Muslims in Britain on 'Islamophobia and racism': "Congress is anxious to counter the growing culture of Islamophobia as another manifestation of racism....Congress therefore calls upon the General Council to encourage affiliated unions to share and promote good practices aimed at countering Islamophobia in the workplace, as part of their anti-racist strategies" (Motion 18).

New legislation that came into force in December 2003 – the Employment Equality Regulations – have served to outlaw discrimination in employment and vocational training on grounds that include religion or belief. However the MCB remains acutely concerned with the ploy adopted by extreme right wing groups to adopt an anti-Islamic rhetoric so as to skirt round laws which criminalise incitement to racial hatred. In November 2006, the leader of the BNP, Griffin, was found not guilty of inciting racial hatred when calling Islam a "wicked, vicious faith". After the trial, Griffin said that he had been vindicated - he was not racist but "against Islam"! Though new legislation in the form of an amendment to the Public Order Act has come into effect, the use of abusing or insulting words or behaviour relating to Islam (and hence affecting attitudes to Muslims) remains unpunishable. There should be no doubt that extreme language against Islam exists in the public domain motivated both by the desire to attack the religion itself 'head-on' and as an insidious camouflage for persistent racism.

4. Interview Findings

In preparation for this submission, the MCB commissioned a limited, qualitative study based on interviews with Muslims to explore their concerns at the workplace.

These have confirmed that obvious signifiers of Islam such as beards or the hijab (head scarf *not* the 'veil') were often the source of overt discrimination in the workplace or less obviously contributed to the creation of an undercurrent of suspicion that led to the perception on the part of the Muslim worker of increased vulnerability.

The statements from the interviewees are presented verbatim because they offer powerful testimony of life experiences of a cross-section of Muslims in London from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

- *Abdulkarim, a male Muslim of Moroccan origin of retirement age, who has lived in the UK and worked in catering since 1967.*
- *Amina, a female Muslim of Turkish-Armenian origin in her thirties who recently acquired British citizenship. Amina is a convert to Islam and has worked in education, the social services and the NHS.*
- *Charlotte, a female English Muslim in her forties. Charlotte is a convert to Islam*

and a trained IT project manager whose most recent work has been for the NHS.

- *David, a male English Muslim in his thirties who converted to Islam eight years ago. David has worked in publishing and in NHS administration.*
- *Muhammad, a male British Muslim of Pakistani origin in his twenties who is a trainee nurse.*
- *Paul, a male English Muslim in his thirties who is a qualified teacher and converted to Islam fourteen years ago.*

A number of things about this sample of workers may strike the reader as surprising:

1. That 4 of the 6 are converts to Islam.
2. That 3 of the 6 are ethnically English.
3. Only 1 of the 6 is in what has traditionally been classed as 'vulnerable' employment e.g. security, catering, agency work.

It might be claimed, therefore, that this sampling is not representative of the situation of Muslims in Britain as a whole, c.75% of whom are of South Asian origin and only 4% of whom are white British converts. However, for this small-scale study over-representative selection of white British converts performs two important and telling functions.

1. It serves to isolate discriminatory factors and experiences that are connected with religious practice from those connected to racial prejudice. Since the study pertains to Muslim and not Asian vulnerability this is important.

In this regard Modood (1992) has observed the religion-blindness of much policy research and that this works to the detriment of Muslims, many of whose primary identification is with their faith rather than their nationality or ethnicity.

2. White British converts to Islam provide telling 'before' and 'after' Islam data that serves to throw impact of the professing of Islam on themselves and others into sharp relief.
3. The fact that all the respondents had experienced vulnerability and discrimination in the workplace shows that for Muslims the experience of 'vulnerability in employment' is spread throughout the professions and in all manner of non-casual, formally contractual employment not just in casual catering, security and cleaning work.

Vulnerability

A distinction can be made between two types of 'vulnerability':

Vulnerability at work refers to when workers are made to feel vulnerable to abuse, discrimination or exclusion from promotion or training at work whilst their job is itself not directly under threat through an 'imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship'.

Vulnerability from work refers to when workers have been unfairly dismissed from work due to an imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship or when their chances of gaining access to employment have been 'unnaturally' diminished at, for example, the interview stage.

While these are not discreet, independent categories and an excess of one may easily lead to the other, the categorisation provides a helpful conceptual device by which to understand different vulnerabilities experienced by Muslims in connection with

This section presents findings on

- Vulnerability at work
- Vulnerability from work
- Impact of the hijab
- Obligatory prayer

4.1 Vulnerability at Work

Four out of the six respondents were convinced that to varying degrees and at different times they had been made to feel vulnerable at work directly in connection with their practice of Islam.

Amina's experience

For Amina, the initial reaction of her colleagues in the Social Services to her Islam was very supportive since

....my decision [to convert to Islam] was made while I was working in that place. In one of the team meetings. I just explained to my colleagues and my manager that from next week ... I will be fully practising and covering [my hair]...

As Amina continues to explain this supportive reception to her Islam was due in part to her 'management of it within the context of team meetings.

A: *I declared [that I would be practising Islam] in advance.*

I: *So in a sense you warned them that this change would happen.*

A: *Yes.*

I: And how was the response from your colleagues?

A: they actually laughed and said "you know we knew it was coming" basically.

I: So they were quite in touch with you, your colleagues?

A: They were, in fact in my first scarf was given by a colleague of mine ...

By communication and the establishment of trust Amina's non-Muslim friend became the willing donor of Amina's first hijab.

However, in her next job as an NHS Administrator for a London PCT, she noticed that after the 9/11 attacks, her relationships with her colleagues became colder and she described herself as

...a double victim...

that is to say that she was as likely as anyone else to be a victim of terrorism on the Underground network and yet she also had to bear the brunt of off-hand treatment and colleague-mistrust as a visible, hijab-wearing Muslim at work.

David's experience

Similarly, when David was 'outed' – language that in itself redolent of mistrust and of taboo - in a publishing job by a fellow Muslim colleague he saw the opportunities for constructive dialogue with some colleagues open up, because there existed

... a general mood in the nation at the time.

However, a different type of exchange became more typical at the same place of work after 9/11 attacks and in the context of his questioning the legality and necessity of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

...One time the production manager sent me an email which detailed the account of someone who had to escape from the World Trade Centre, and she said to me, ' This might help you understand'...

Thereafter he became aware that he was working in an environment charged with negative assumptions in particular surrounding the imagined Muslim mistreatment of women.

There was a case I had explained to one of my colleagues that following the terrorist attacks I had asked my wife not to go out for fear that she might be attacked - there are people who would be angry about it because she wears a headscarf. And having mentioned this to my colleagues there were then comments about "I hope you treat your wife well" all this kind of thing. "I hope

you're good to her" those kind of comments. But I didn't respond to them [...] It was assumptions [...] I could've confronted them and said, "No actually I don't."

Such was the impact of this atmosphere of negative assumptions that at his next formal place of work as an administrator at an NHS Trust, David was determined to

...basically...really hide my faith

which entailed amongst other things a journey home to perform the obligatory prayer during the lunch hour.

Despite this he was once again 'outed' in revealing circumstances.

Being unaware of his Islam, organisers of the Christmas dinner were mocking a female Muslim colleague who had expressed a desire not to attend the dinner because alcohol would be served in his presence.

David continues

The director that I was working with made a joke and said, "Who's been on the Quality and Diversity Training, we should watch what we do" rather mockingly and everyone laughed at that.

But I did notice that my manager [ed. who alone knew he was Muslim] who was sitting across the desk kind of going red in the face and was looking a bit irritable because they were making ...remarks they wouldn't have made if there had been a Muslim in the room or if they had known there was a Muslim in the room by mocking this lady[...] So it was at that point that just as they got to the crescendo of mockery my manager said, "We really should've thought about this because that lady upstairs isn't the only person who is affected by this matter." And everyone looked at each other and asked what does she mean, who does she mean? [...]

So everyone looked around fumbled as to who it could be. And I was kind of sinking in my chair because I knew exactly who she meant. So at that point I said, "I think she means me" and at that point my manager replied, "Yes he's a Muslim" and at that point everyone went silent. A few of my colleagues stared at me with a look of disbelief. A few of them went bright red because they realised what they had been saying in the previous five minutes. And it was at that kind of point that it was announced to the organisation that, yes, David was a Muslim and amongst us and ... I'd been outed.

David continues to observe how the NHS Equality and Diversity training far from dissipating negative stereotypes actually contributed to their persistence.

I went on it [Equality and Diversity Training] myself and it just descended into a racist farce. There were role plays to explore stereotypes, and it just descended into racial stereotyping and that kind of thing. And I've seen the training mocked openly in the organisation. People ... it basically is a mandatory thing the NHS say it's something that all staff must do. So all staff attend it but it's not embedded in the organisation because people obviously, they don't ... I reckon I would have a better understanding of people's real appreciation of this training in the organisation because I'm an unseen minority. I sit there as a Muslim, with my Muslim point of view, and that's how I view the world as well as being an Englishman. But I think if there was a Pakistani man sitting there in the department they wouldn't say half the things that they are able to say.

David's insights as an 'invisible' Muslim observer of the ineffectiveness of the Equality and Diversity Training to combat prejudice highlight the Islamophobic attitudes and low-level Islamophobic behaviour that exists beneath the acceptable multicultural veneer of even the most diverse public institutions such as the NHS.

4.2 Vulnerability from Work

Whilst vulnerability to the negative attitudes, opinions and remarks of colleagues at work can make the working lives of Muslims uncomfortable, unpleasant and demoralising, vulnerability from work can threaten their livelihoods and reduce Muslim workers' life-chances in radical and destructive ways.

In the experience of my respondents this type of vulnerability is usually 'channelled' through managers. Both Abdulkarim and Amina had the experience of being harassed, hounded and even in Abdulkarim's case physically abused by managers in ways that were both job-threatening and health-threatening. Both experiences were in the workers' opinion related to their Islamic faith.

Abdulkarim's Experiences

Abdulkarim's experiences of bullying and harassment began when he was working as a chef at an Inner London Hospital on the occasion that he joined a Union.

...that's the time when I feel I was actually treated very badly because to join the Trade Union is not very easy and it is not very welcome for the management because sometimes the management [...] didn't like it at all because as soon as you join the Trade Union you will start learning that your entitlements ...

This 'hard time' initially took on the form of excessive managerial monitoring and pressure to complete an enormous volume of work almost without assistance.

they are keeping an eye on me and very very often, you cannot move from your section otherwise you are watched what you doing, what you are not doing, ah, if you go to say for your break, you are watched, what time you leaving what time you are returning. You are watched, if you go off sick that is often watched and warned about it. You are watched if you attend to the meeting at of the Trade Union you are watched and much pressure can be put and very difficult.

I: What type of pressure do you mean?

AK: The pressure actually, they can give you more hard work, very difficult work and they can shout, and give you a verbal warning without specific reasons. I think that's really very, very hard indeed...

In the hospital especially section when I was based on the pastry section, for instance there were four cooks and the kitchen porter when they started reducing the staff and most of the time they can leave me just by myself and the porter and that gave me an idea, it is a pressure, that they were expecting me to prepare four or five courses for the patients for lunch and for dinner.

Abdulkarim's manager later became physically abusive when Abdulkarim resisted the pressure that he interpreted as the desire to force him out of his job.

AK: On one occasions actually, one of the head chefs, he did attack me, and he grabbed me and he was trying to strangle me, he got me in the office he pushed me.

I: The head chef did this?

AK: Yes and he was strong and he closed the door for no one to see and I had to report that and another time I had the office Trade Union he used to come, took a box of eggs at my office, the door was closed the window open and he came throw the eggs at me...

Abdulkarim was convinced that his being identifiably Muslim and as well language issues had contributed to this managerial campaign to oust him which also affected his home life and health in a very adverse way. He was felt made to feel like 'a second class citizen.'

AK: [...] It affected me personally because ah I feel just as, and as a Muslim, I felt like the pressure was[...] because I was Muslim. Secondly I feel ah the language. I didn't have actually the proper language to communicate well to put my points across, I, I felt because I'm a second class citizen if you like.

Abdulkarim's job was saved by union-intervention although he eventually lost it in more general restructuring.

Parallels between AbdulKarim's and Amina's experiences

Amina's experiences of vulnerability due to managerial harassment bear striking parallels to those reported by Abdulkarim. She started to feel her NHS administrator's job was under threat when her every move was excessively, even obsessively monitored by her manager.

A: he asked me to log everything I do... how many minutes I spent on the telephone calls that are coming in and going out, how many minutes I spent on my prayer times, how many minutes I go for a break [...] excessive monitoring and [ed. I was given] the harder jobs structure and I was finding out from other colleagues that they are not asked the same things but somehow I'm asked to log everything I do, how many minutes I go to toilet, how many minutes I spend my time praying.

I: How many minutes you go to the toilet?

A: Yeah everything.

I: Your whole day?

A: The whole day at work, eight hours.

Shortly, afterwards during 'restructuring', Amina was informed that her job no longer existed despite the fact that her old tasks were being undertaken by agency workers. She was transferred to a different department initially on a lower salary band, until she threatened to take the Trust to tribunal.

I was told that my job was not required anymore. When I queried why there was no straight answer and they were saying that it's just the organisation, it's just going to restructuring and we don't need this role. But on the other hand, there were a number of members within the same department were increasing. So they were increasing the members of staff meaning the work was there and somehow my role was no longer there anymore. The role was there in the beginning, before I came to the post, but after I came to the post,, my role wasn't there anymore.

Her suspicions about her 'vanishing' post were confirmed when under investigation her former manager resigned and when later a recently-appointed manager who was unaware of her case history asked her to advise a new employee on what her old job had entailed on the strength of her good reputation.

This new manager didn't know I used to work in that place, but not necessarily knew that I was forced out. He said I know you are a very helpful person and you knew the job and this person is doing your job now, could you show her where the files are and how you used to do the job. And I was just shocked. My colleagues just stopped doing their jobs and they just looked at us.

Although the Trust's chief executive later apologised to her for the treatment that she had received, this was not before her health was adversely affected and she ran into mortgage problems due to initial the salary drop.

Since her manager never complained about her productivity or efficiency at work and never gave her any coherent explanation as to why her post was being removed, the only reason she could give for episode was that her manager took exception to her as the only visibly Muslim women in the department.

A: *I don't know. I never know the structural reasons but my ... my feeling is that...in the Trust, at that time, I was the only visible Muslim lady with the hijab [...] I had very good reference.*

I: *So what, what is it about, do you think about being a visible Muslim which*

...

A: *I mean in my opinion I think it was my faith. I think it was ...me being, practising.*

I: *what is it about that which do you think people find, they must have found it threatening or something, what, why, what is it do you think?*

A: *Well...I still don't know that. They wouldn't tell me of course [...] Yes. I don't truly know. ...of course they wouldn't tell me because of my religion because it would be against the law. But there was no other reason.*

4.3 Impact of the hijab

The hijab – the Muslim woman's headscarf that covers the hair and neck – was identified by Amina and Charlotte as the most obvious signifier of their Islam and in connection with this as the most common and identifiable source of negative perception and discrimination both at work and when applying for work.

Both women noted that at interview the appearance of a woman in hijab went down very badly with the interviewers or at meetings with managers. Both women noted that it had a sort of 'jaw-dropping' effect on potential employers and colleagues.

Charlotte's experience

Charlotte described meeting a new manager on an IT Project and immediately finding it 'really noticeable' that she was a 'light-weight' in his eyes.

...And it was to me, really noticeable that when I walked in, as someone with the hijab, the kind of expectations of me, plummeted. And they had someI don't know, sense that I was ...kind of a light-weight and I was spoken to in a way that obviously I wasn't that capable or that smart. It was just really noticeable because obviously I've been in lots of situations where you are the project manager and you get a new manager. So to me... well it was clear to me that there was something very different and I really felt if I wasn't wearing the hijab I

wouldn't have noticed it. And also I attend lots of other meetings where walking in with the hijab it really does feel like 'Oh well we won't take her so seriously.'

Charlotte also mentioned that her Muslim friends who work in the City feel that wearing the hijab would destroy their chances of being respected by non-Muslim (male) colleagues and that to wear it would present a real 'handicap'. She thought this was because the hijab is associated with 'foreignness' and speaking English as a second language, as well as not understanding native British culture.

And I have friends that work in the City and that converted to Islam and they just feel they can't wear the hijab, that they would never be taken seriously. Frankly I... my husband, financially looks after me but if I wasn't in that situation and I had to financially look after myself and get [serious employment]... I really would think twice about wearing the hijab because truly it can feel like a handicap. I really do think it is a handicap in the eyes of many people.

Amina's experience

Tellingly, Amina had also noticed interviewees to 'go quiet a little' when she entered the room.

although [...] he offered the job, I think he wasn't expected that I was Muslim lady with a headscarf and [...] my surname doesn't give me away, because but when they see me they just go quiet a little.

4.4 Obligatory prayer

Paul's experience

Paul: I'd been short-listed for an English teaching job at four major public schools, that's to say I'd reached the final 3 or 4 candidates. In one interview, the interviewer, who knew I was Muslim, began the interview by asking what I thought about the furore surrounding the Danish Cartoon episode which I thought was quite strange and totally unconnected with the English-teaching job that I'd applied for. At another interview I was asked, 'D'you think that you could adapt to a school like this?' when my CV made it clear that I'd been educated at a school 'like this' myself, so what was he trying to suggest? Although I hadn't intended it to, in all the interviews my being Muslim came out and, let's say, I don't think that this information improved my chances at all.

David's enquiry at interview as to whether the employer accommodated the prayer at work similarly dented his interview chances.

David: ...So I went to quite a few interviews which seemed to be going very well, and then at the end when they asked, "Do you have any other questions?" I

would ask would there be anywhere for me to pray as a Muslim? At which point the interview would tend to go rather sour and they would tell me no. And I would not get the job.

I: They would tell you an outright no?

D: One company told me outright no. At another major publishing company people there in the interview looked at each other with raised eyebrows and the interview sort of faded out at that point.

In the cases of both men the declaration of Islam and an expressed desire to pray markedly increased their vulnerability 'from work'.

Muhammad's experience - the success of clear communication

In the study only Muhammad, a trainee nurse, had had a truly positive experience of an employer's attitude to the Prayer.

Muhammad: I've always been impressed how [ed.my employer] provided Prayer facilities in the hospital. The only thing was that I felt that my manager thought that I was bunking off when I went to do the Prayer. So I brought in the timetable to show him when the Prayer times were and after that he was fine.

Clearly, this provides an example of the need for Muslims to manage their managers and not to assume that colleagues and employers know about the Prayer and its obligatory nature and for the paramount need for communication.

4. Conclusions

The MCB's submission provides real-life and practical examples of the vulnerable status of Muslims in the work place. Interestingly, a number of the interviewees also referred to the positive role of trade unions in resolving their workplace problems. The MCB believes the wider engagement of Muslims with the Trade Union movement will be a potent means of ensuring fairness and equity at the workplace. The MCB looks forward to supporting the TUC's initiatives for social justice, both for vulnerable workers and in other spheres. A number of specific suggestions have emerged in the course of the preparation of this submission, which the MCB hopes to develop further and discuss with the Commission when appropriate.

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