



ISSUE 3

In this issue

- Welcome and thank-you
- Why goodbye?
- Achievements of the unit
- Case Study – Registering with the Commission
- Work with other faith groups
- Resources



Faith in Focus

The newsletter from the Faith & Social Cohesion Unit

Welcome and thank-you

Welcome to the third issue of Faith in Focus. This will be our final update, as the work of the Commission's Faith and Social Cohesion Unit (FSCU) comes to a close in August.

Since its inception three years ago, the FSCU has been working with faith-based charities to promote high standards of governance and accountability, and to encourage charities to embrace the benefits of registration with the Commission.

Some of the unit's many achievements are explained in this newsletter, and I would like to thank the many faith-based groups with which we have worked over the past three years. Thanks to your commitment and approach the

FSCU has been able to enhance the Commission's relationship with faith-based charities, and especially Muslim charities, across England and Wales.

I would also like to add a personal thank-you to the FSCU team itself. The team, led by Ghulam Rasool, has worked tirelessly to achieve the results and successes outlined in this newsletter.

It is a testament to the unit's achievements that many of its activities are now embedded in other areas of the Commission's work. We are also delighted that the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB), with which the unit has developed strong links over the past three

years, will continue to encourage Muslim charities to register with the Commission. I encourage you to turn to their newsletter, Faith & Unity, for updates about MINAB's work.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to stay in touch with the Commission. We are keen to maintain the close relationship we have developed with faith groups, and hope that you will continue to view the Commission as a partner, critical friend, and as a source of information, advice and guidance.

Sina Leatter

Chair of the Charity Commission

Why goodbye?

The work of the Charity Commission's FSCU is coming to an end after a busy and fulfilling three years.

The FSCU was established in 2007 with two main goals. One was to engage with faith-based charities already registered with the Commission, to help them achieve high standards of governance by providing tailored guidance, advice, information and support. The other was to raise awareness of the regulatory framework among those faith charities not, at the time, registered with the Commission.

Originally, we envisaged beginning our work with Muslim charities, before moving on to include charities from a wider range of faiths.

As the funding the Commission received from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has now come to an end, the unit will not continue in its present form.

However, the Commission remains committed to working with all faith-based charities on our register. There's more information about that work in this newsletter.

Also, our advice and guidance is available online – the Commission's aim is to be fully online by 2012 – and you can find a list of relevant information in the resources section of this newsletter.

The Commission would like to thank CLG for the support it has shown over the past three years.



Achievements of the unit



The Commission has made over 500 outreach visits

The unit has helped many Muslim charities contribute more effectively to their communities. There are now 622 charities on our register identified as mosques – that's up from 331 identified registered mosques in 2007. This significant increase is partly due to mosques newly registering as charities – such as the example of the Oldham Central Masjid featured in this newsletter.

Other important achievements include conducting the first ever nationwide

survey of mosques, which revealed a wealth of information about the role mosques play in their communities – such as the fact that 94% of those asked deliver educational programmes for children and young people.

The unit has also developed online resources, aimed at helping faith-based charities develop solid structures. Our publication 'Faith in Good Governance', for instance, sets out the elements of the legal and good practice framework which are most likely to be relevant to faith-based charities. You can find a list of helpful information in the 'resources' part of this newsletter. The unit's media and PR campaigns, meanwhile, have included a successful advert produced for Ramadan, which encouraged Muslim charities to engage with the Commission. The video is still available on the web.

This work has kept the team on its feet, almost literally. We have made over 500 outreach visits and held workshops at mosques and Muslim charities across the UK, spreading the word about the benefits of registration and engagement with the Commission. Further to that, we have established contact with over 1300 Muslim charities and worked with 60 umbrella bodies including 24 mosque representative bodies.

The unit's efforts have helped the Commission establish strong relationships with Muslim representative bodies, which look set to last. The Mosques and Imam Advisory Board (MINAB), profiled in the last newsletter, has shown such commitment to helping and encouraging Muslim charities engage with the Commission. MINAB's leadership will help secure a lasting legacy for the achievements of the unit.

We would like to thank MINAB, and all the Muslim charities we have worked with for their openness and cooperation. Without your enthusiasm for engaging with the Commission and for embracing the benefits of

registration with the Commission, it would not have been possible for us to achieve our goals.

While the FSCU's work is coming to an end, the Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to

working with all faith-based charities. We hope that you will continue to come to the Commission for support in leading and managing your charities.

Case Study – Registering with the Commission

The screenshot shows the Charity Commission's online register. At the top, there is a search bar for charities and a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'About us', 'Our regulatory activity', 'Manage your charity', 'Start up a charity', and 'Charity requirements and guidance'. The main content area displays the details for charity number 1133257, 'OLDHAM CENTRAL MASJID & ISLAMIC CENTRE', which is marked as 'NEWLY REGISTERED'. The details include:

- Other names:** OCMIC (WORKING NAME)
- Governing document:** CONSTITUTION ADOPTED 03 DECEMBER 1995
- Area of benefit:** UNDEFINED. IN PRACTICE, LOCAL.
- Charitable objects:**
 - A TO PROVIDE RELIGIOUS FACILITIES FOR THE FOLLOWERS OF THE ISLAMIC FAITH
 - B TO ESTABLISH, MANAGE AND MAINTAIN THE CENTRAL MASAJID IN ACCORDANCE WITH ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES
 - C TO OFFER PROVISION FOR ISLAMIC TEACHING AND WIDER COMMUNITY FACILITIES WHERE NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE
- Date registered:** 11 DECEMBER 2009
- Classification:** RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES
- Who:** CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE, ELDERLY / OLD PEOPLE, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, PEOPLE OF A PARTICULAR ETHNIC OR RACIAL ORIGIN, OTHER CHARITIES / VOLUNTARY BODIES, GENERAL PUBLIC / MANKIND
- How:** PROVIDES BUILDINGS / FACILITIES / OPEN SPACE

The Oldham Central Masjid and Islamic Centre is entered on the Charity Commission's Online Register of Charities

Since 2007, the FSCU has helped many mosques register as charities. Abdul Karim, the Secretary of Oldham Central Masjid and Islamic Centre, talks to us about his experience of registration.

Oldham Central Masjid and Islamic Centre provides religious facilities for followers of the Islamic faith, and offers education and facilities to the whole community. The charity is building a purpose-built mosque in Oldham, which will include prayer halls for men and women, classrooms and a mortuary.

In November 2009, the Mosque applied to register as a charity with the Commission.

Abdul Karim, Secretary of the Mosque, says "We applied online for charity registration and found the whole process relatively straightforward.

I phoned the Charity Commission's Contact Centre to ask for some clarification of the details we needed to include for the trustees, and they were very helpful. The case officer kept us informed of the progress of our application."

The process took about a month altogether. Since then, Oldham Central Masjid have been happy to spread the word about charity registration – they hosted a Faith and Social Cohesion (FSCU) workshop in February to encourage other mosques in the area to find out more about registration and good governance.

Abdul Karim adds "One of the main benefits of registration as a charity is that we have proper governance and the right procedures in place. This increases people's trust in us as an organisation."

Work with other faith groups



The Commission works with charities from a wide range of faiths

While the Faith and Social Cohesion Unit has focused on developing relationships with Muslim charities, departments across the Commission have continued to work closely with all faith-based groups.

We have been busy supporting religious charities in meeting the new public benefit requirement introduced by the 2006 Charities Act. This requires all registered charities to be able to demonstrate how their objects benefit

the wider public. In March 2010, we held a seminar for faith-based charities, raising awareness of the new requirement and explaining how it might apply to particular charities.

We also developed a sample Annual Report for trustees of Christian and Muslim charities, which include model public benefit reports.

We have been working with the Roman Catholic Church in England to help its Dioceses explore their options when listed buildings or heritage sites they own become difficult to manage.

We have updated our guidance on equity sharing between charities and individuals. This often occurs where a minister jointly owns property with the church employing him or her.

Since late 2008, the Commission has also been working with the larger Christian denominations to register those who were previously excepted from registration. Early additions to the register included Church of England Parochial Church Councils, the Baptist Union and Churches, the Methodist Connexion and its Districts, Circuits and Churches, the Religious Society of Friends Area Meetings, Church in Wales Parochial Church Councils and higher income churches from other denominations.

So far, this work has added over 2800 new charities to the Register and the Commission looks forward to working more closely with them in future.

Resources

All the below resources can be found on the faith-based charities pages of the Charity Commission website

- **Faith in Good Governance**
Guidance on aspects of charity law and good practice framework most likely to be of relevance to faith-based charities
- **Registering as a faith-based charity**
Guidance explaining the benefits of registering as a charity
- **Survey of mosques**
Independent research into mosques and their activities
- **Model Trustee reports and accounts**
Includes examples for Christian and Muslim charities
- **Developing your Governing Document**
Guidance for faith-based charities drawing up or amending their Governing Document
- **Search our register**
You can use the Charity Commission's online register to search for faith-based charities. The 'advanced search' function allows you to search the register by key-words or by geographical area.