



Social Mobility  
Commission

# The Social Mobility Challenges Faced by Young Muslims

**September 2017**

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## About the Commission

The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the UK and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of four commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

The Commission board comprises:

- The Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn (Chair).
- The Rt. Hon. Baroness Gillian Shephard (Deputy Chair).
- Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath.
- David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation.

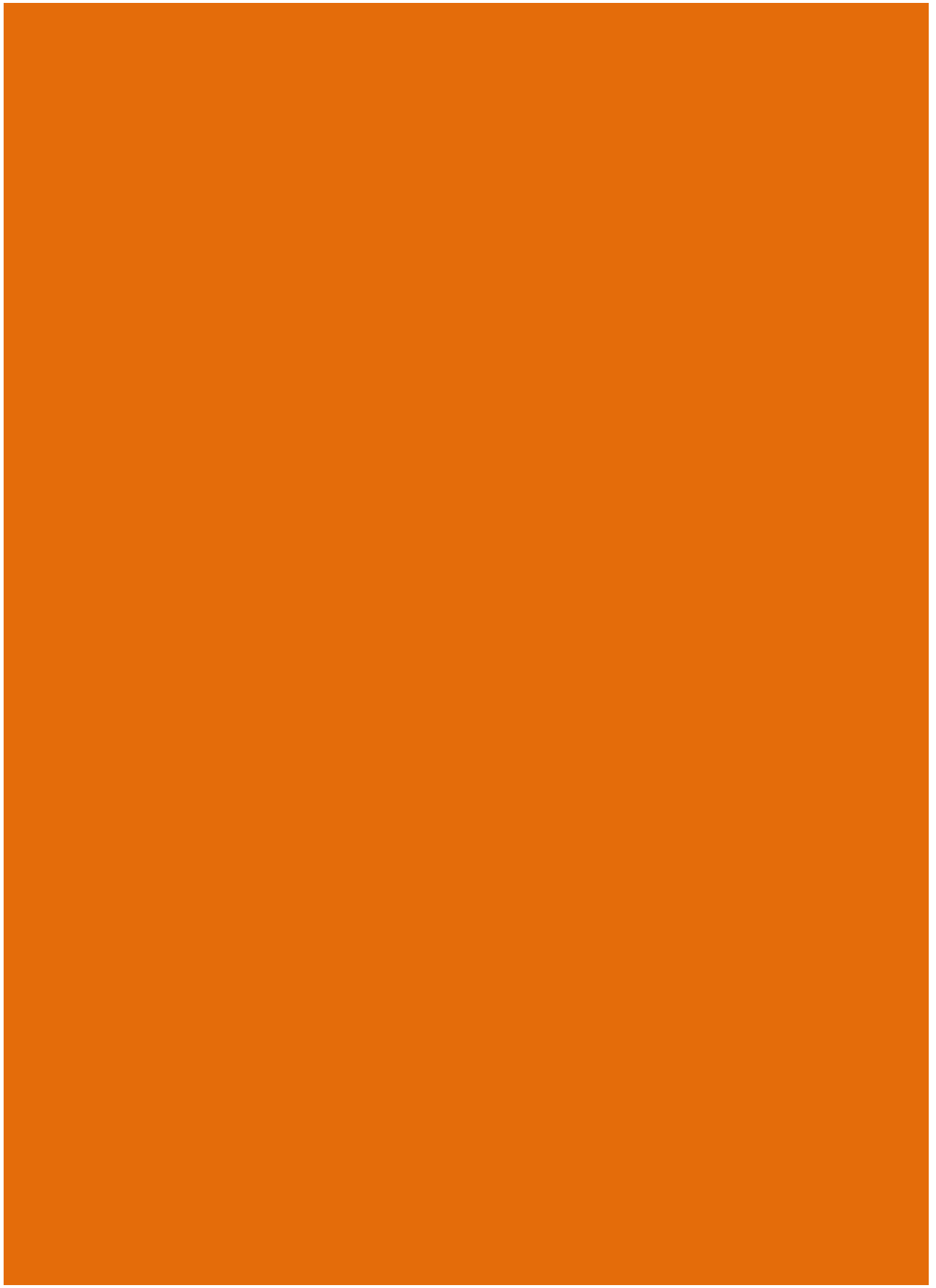
The functions of the Commission include:

- Monitoring progress on improving social mobility.
- Providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility.
- Undertaking social mobility advocacy.

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## Executive Summary

In 2016, research by the Social Mobility Commission<sup>1</sup> analysed the impact of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status on outcomes in the education system and in the labour market. The analysis found that young people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds are more likely than ever to succeed in education and go on to university than other groups - particularly girls. Despite their successes, however, Muslims experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society. They are more likely than non-Muslims to experience neighbourhood deprivation, housing, educational and health disadvantage, and unemployment. The report concluded that there was a 'broken social mobility promise' for young Muslims where educational success did not translate into good labour market outcomes.

This qualitative report explores the attitudes and reasons behind this situation. It offers an account of young Muslims' perceptions of growing up and seeking work in the UK. The report is designed to contribute to a better understanding of the causes of low social mobility for young Muslims.

Drawing on the perceptions of young Muslims (through focus groups and interviews) and of key stakeholders (through a three-stage Delphi survey) the research sought evidence on:

- The barriers young Muslims see to social mobility in the UK – in particular, why educational gains are not translating into employment gains for young Muslims.
- How these perceptions differ depending on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and different forms of educational participation.

Young Muslims in the UK come from a wide range of backgrounds and life situations; despite this diversity, our work has highlighted a number of common threads:

- Young Muslims from poorer backgrounds experience lack of access to networks, contacts and resources.
- This is exacerbated by their parents' experiences of higher levels of underemployment and unemployment, particularly where their qualifications were not recognised in the UK, which limited or denied financial stability and security.
- On top of this, they feel they have to work 'ten times harder' than their counterparts due to cultural differences and discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity, Gender and Social Mobility, Shaw, Menzies, Bernardes, Baars, Nye and Allen, December 2016.

- Many feel this has shaped a strong work ethic and sense of resilience, often drawn from their parents' experiences.
- However, some individuals spoke of resilience as a coping mechanism for dealing with harassment, racism or Islamophobia.
- Some felt a sense of duty and obligation to repay the sacrifice made by their parents and this was the main motive for wanting to succeed academically and in the workplace.
- Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism is ever present and pervasive, experienced in both direct and indirect forms and was experienced by the participants from schools through to work.

In each section of this report, we present key findings and recommendations for policy and practice interventions. Our key findings include:

## Education

The research suggests that **young Muslims already encounter significant barriers in the education system itself**. Young Muslims feel that:

- Teachers have either stereotypical or overly low expectations of young Muslims.
- There are insufficient Muslim teachers or other role models in schools and non-Muslim teachers are reluctant to engage with them.
- They are placed in middle or lower sets and where this happens teachers fail to listen to requests to move up to higher sets.
- There is insufficient and inadequate individual tailored support, guidance and encouragement in schools.

Young Muslim are scared of raising these issues or seeking help because they fear that this will emphasise their difference and may make them targets for bullying or harassment.

As they moved up the school system, young Muslims said they lacked the support necessary to succeed.

Parents, particularly if they were educated in a different system, were less able to support them in their studies and they **lacked requisite capital, knowledge or access to social networks to help their children make informed choices**.

Young Muslims felt that **schools did a poor job of filling this gap**. In their view, there is insufficient and inadequate individual tailored support, guidance and encouragement for young Muslims to take specific or challenging subjects, take part in extra-curricular activities, or explore alternative pathways to education or employment.

The young Muslims interviewed said they were made to feel responsible for their difficulties in getting on and this led some of them to want to give up on trying to be successful. There was a recognition that cultural factors could limit the choices open to young Muslims. In particular, it was acknowledged that more **traditional views of girls' roles were sometimes reinforced by teachers within private Islamic schools.**

## Higher Education

Young Muslims have a relatively high level of participation in higher education, but their choices tended to be more constrained than those of some other ethnic groups. The Muslims interviewed in this research complained of **inequitable access to high status universities as a result of geographical provision, discrimination at the point of entry, or self-limiting choices reflecting fears of being in a minority.**

They highlighted the following points:

- Young Muslims may choose to live at home for both cultural reasons and family pressures, limiting their choice of institution to those that are available within commuting distance.
- Incidences of Islamophobia or racism, a failure to recognise Muslim identity, lack of support for isolated minority students or to promote peer integration all affect young Muslims' self-esteem and self-confidence.
- The policies and practices of higher education do not take sufficient account of either the academic or the social needs of young Muslims.
- These factors mean that young Muslims are more likely to drop out early or to gain fewer 'good degrees' (1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) than their non-Muslim peers.

## Getting a Job

Young Muslims feel **their transition into the labour market is hampered by insufficient careers advice, lack of access to informal networks and discrimination in the recruitment process:**

- Those from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack access to informal networks and financial, social, cultural resources or soft skills, including lack access to paid internships and/or work experience.
- Amongst the participants, negative discrimination was expected, even where qualifications and abilities were equal. For example, participants believed that applicants with ethnic-sounding names were less likely to get interviews.
- Discrimination and Islamophobia were also perceived to be more of a threat further from home, thus restricting their opportunities and job searches to their local area even though that meant reduced choices and pay.
- The restrictions on Muslim women were often greater, since being close to family and community was seen as an even greater priority. Traditional



attitudes towards the role and place of women within the family can also have a negative effect on the social mobility of Muslim women, particularly concerning their employment opportunities.

As a consequence, **young Muslims are more likely to be unemployed, under-employed, in insecure employment and/or in receipt of low pay.**

## **Career Progression**

**Racism, discrimination and lack of cultural awareness in the workplace impacts on career development and progression.** In particular:

- Misconceptions and stereotypical assumptions about Islam or assumptions made about gender expectations can make it difficult for Muslims to integrate in the workplace.
- Young Muslims feel obliged to defend their faith in the face of negative discourses in the media; this also acts to inhibit integration.
- Over time this can work to limit aspiration and prevent young Muslims from aiming high and fulfilling their potential.
- Failures to accommodate religious norms or develop understanding of Muslims' needs impact on young Muslims' sense of belonging at work, compounding feelings of isolation and limiting aspiration.
- Some individuals had sought self-employment as an empowering response to these difficulties, offering new opportunities and safer choices that enabled them to feel more positive. For others, however, it was imposed on them due to problems in the workplace.

**The research suggested that many of these issues were worse for women.** Muslim women felt that wearing the headscarf at work was an additional visual marker of difference that was perceived and experienced as leading to further discrimination.

Overall, the research suggests that **young Muslims feel a real challenge in maintaining their identity while seeking to succeed in Britain.** They felt worried about being different and unsure about whether getting on was compatible with their identity as Muslims. Some responded by asserting their Muslim identity, although in some cases this constrained the career choices they made. Others felt there was a pressure to hide their Muslim identity and so avoid the issue that way.

## Section 1: Introduction

### Social Mobility in the UK

In their 2016 *State of the Nation* Annual Report, the Social Mobility Commission found that social mobility is getting worse, not better. Those faring the worst are young people, for whom upward social mobility is becoming harder. The link between social demography and educational destiny has not been broken. Compared to their more advantaged peers, those from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to attend inadequate schools, less likely to take the A-levels needed to study at a top university, and more likely to drop out of post-16 education. The number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) has barely fallen in 20 years and young people's wages have fallen by 16% since 2008.

Against this background, it is unsurprising that attention has been given to the low educational attainment of young people from low socio-economic backgrounds. In 2016, analysis commissioned by the Social Mobility Commission (Shaw, Menzies, Bernardes, Baars, Nye and Allen, 2016) found that different parts of the system (education and employment) are failing different groups, depending on their gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. For young Asian Muslims, despite an increase in educational attainment, these outcomes were not translating to labour market outcomes.

This finding was of a particular concern. As described in the *State of the Nation* Report (Social Mobility Commission, 2016a), "low levels of social mobility infringe Britain's implicit social contract: that those who work hard will have a fair chance to get on". For young Asian Muslims, the evidence was showing that this was not the reality - hence a 'broken social mobility promise'. As such, it appeared that young Muslims in the UK were experiencing an additional disadvantage in their ability to be upwardly socially mobile.

In response to such findings, the Social Mobility Commission commissioned research to explore in detail why educational gains are not translating into employment gains for young Muslims and to help understand how expectations about employment compare with realities of the labour market. This research, therefore, aims to contribute to a better understanding of the causes of the 'broken social mobility promise'.

### Muslims and Social Mobility

Muslims experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society. Analysis of the 2011 census (Nomis/Office for National Statistics, 2013a)

shows that within the economically active population (age 16-74 years) only one in five (19.8%) of the Muslim population is in full-time employment, compared to more than one in three (34.9%) of the overall population (in England & Wales). Muslim women in the UK are more likely than all other women to be economically inactive because of household obligations; 18% of Muslim women aged 16 to 74 were recorded as “looking after home and family”, compared with 6% in the overall population (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015).

Of more significance for social mobility, only 6% of Muslims are in 'higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations' compared to 10% of the overall population. In contrast, 24% of Muslims are classified as having 'Never worked/long-term unemployed' compared to just 6% for the overall population (Nomis/Office for National Statistics, 2013a).

Muslims also have slightly lower levels of qualifications, with approximately a quarter of Muslims over the age of 16 having 'Level 4 and above' (i.e. degree and above) qualifications (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015). As a consequence, Muslims, as a whole, are the most disadvantaged faith group in the UK labour market.

Moreover, 46% of the Muslim population live in the 10% of the most deprived local authority districts. This has implications for access to resources, school attainment, progression to higher education and the availability of jobs, including those at postgraduate or managerial levels. These inequalities vary by region, with the Midlands experiencing the largest margin of inequality and the South the smallest (Jivraj and Khan, 2013). Some groups are more likely to live in particular types of deprived neighbourhood however. As Jivraj and Khan note (2013), those of Bangladeshi ethnicity are the most likely to live in neighbourhoods deprived because of low income and barriers to housing and services whilst those of Pakistani ethnicity are the most likely to live in neighbourhoods deprived because of living environment, education, health or employment. There is also a high percentage of Muslim children of school age in inner city wards (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015) which may also have the poorest performing schools. These multiple impacts of social and geographic disadvantage and inequality were evident across our data collection.

These outcomes are not related solely to ethnicity: rather, research consistently shows that Muslims experience disadvantage above their ethnic penalty in the labour market (Khattab and Johnston, 2014; CSAMI, 2014; Heath and Cheung, 2006) whilst Muslim women face a double disadvantage (gender and ethnicity) with those from low socio-economic backgrounds facing a triple disadvantage (Berthoud and Blekesaune, 2007; Friedman, Laurison and Macmillan 2017). Our study has tested these factors with young Muslims and found that socio-economic position and gender both came ahead of ethnic identity in terms of affecting life chances.

Poorer outcomes for Muslims have also been reported in terms of level of work attained and pay rates, even after the characteristics of the ethnic groups, such as age profiles and levels of education, are taken into account (Clarke and Drinkwater, 2009). The impact of these employment disadvantages is reflected in low pay and thus the very high incidence of household poverty which reaches 50% for Muslim households compared to 18% for the population overall (Heath and Li, 2015). The patterns of labour market disadvantage vary across different cultural and ethnic groups of Muslims, however, with Somalis being particularly disadvantaged (CSAMI, 2014; Khattab and Modood, 2015).

The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2016) found the reasons for such disadvantage to be varied and complex but noted that they included:

*discrimination and Islamophobia, stereotyping, pressure from traditional families, a lack of tailored advice around higher education choices, and insufficient role models across education and employment.*

Such concerns are compounded by the more broadly limited labour market opportunities for Muslims, notably for Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, as well as those broader groups who under-attain at school, as evidenced in the Casey Review (Casey, 2016). They are further compounded by the racism, discrimination and bias faced by those from BME backgrounds at all stages of their careers - including transitioning from education to employment at every stage, as evidenced recently by McGregor-Smith (2017). In summary, Muslims are excluded, discriminated against, or failed, at all stages of their transition from education to employment (or underemployment/unemployment). Taken together, these contributory factors have profound implications for social mobility.

## **Muslims in the UK**

The British Muslim community is not a single homogeneous group and the ethnic diversity of the Muslim community is a microcosm of the diversity of British society. The 2011 Census indicates that 68% of Muslims in Britain are of Asian or Asian British descent (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi), 10% are from Black ethnic groups, 8% from White ethnic groups and 6% from Arab ethnic groups. These statistics, however, provide a very simplified representation of ethnic groups which fails to recognise the diversity within each of these groups (e.g. Black as a single category). Non-census studies also estimate that larger numbers for some ethnic groups are not captured due to the possible non-uniform use of the 'Other' tick boxes on the census forms. There are also important differences in the affiliation of religious sects, the most obvious being Sunnis and the Shi'as, but with other subgroups including (for example) the Barelwi, the Deobandi/Tablighi Jama'at, and the Jama'at-i Islami (Lewis, 1994).

There are also differences between Muslims in terms of religious practice and commitment, although 74% of Muslims say their religion is “very important” to them (Modood, Berthoud, Lakey, Nazroo, Smith, Virdee, and Beishon, 1997). A distinction between “practising” and “non-practising” Muslims is, however, problematic, for practice is always a matter of definition and degree, and there are different ways in which the religion can be practised.

There are also differences in where Muslims live. Although Muslims form 4.8% of the population in England and Wales, 76% of Muslims in the UK live in Greater London, the West Midlands, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside<sup>2</sup>. As the majority of Muslims (76%) live in the inner city conurbations of Greater London, West Midlands, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015) we elected to draw on responses from young Muslims both within and outside of those areas.

We have therefore tried where possible to reflect the diversity of Muslim experiences in the UK and the data offer diversity in relation to social and economic background (including familial experiences and migration histories), Muslim sect, age, gender, geography, employment status and levels of educational attainment. However we recognise that the full spectrum of diversity is not represented in this report. For example, no White British or White European Muslims participated in the research. We also recognise that 'Muslim' as used in this report can be a reductionist term in that it homogenises a highly diverse group into a single category; we have tried to reflect diversity where possible.

We also recognise the frustration felt by young Muslims that they are often excluded from debates about them. We have therefore tried to include as many young Muslims as possible in the design, conduct, analysis and dissemination of this research. However, the data contained in this report reflect only the experiences of those who participated and, again, there will be those whose experiences are not represented. Moreover, as noted above, the approach was deliberately qualitative and thus participant numbers are small. This allowed for a detailed exploration of individual experiences, but such an approach does not, of course, lend itself to statistical generalisability.

## **Methodology**

The quantitative evidence contained in the Social Mobility Commission’s 2016 report (Shaw et al, 2016) had highlighted the broken promise of social mobility for British

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<sup>2</sup> All figures taken from The Muslim Council for Britain's (2015) analysis of the 2011 census data.

Muslims. This project set out to answer the question 'why'. The specific research questions were:

1. What do young Muslims<sup>3</sup> see as the barriers to social mobility (in moving from education to employment)?
2. How do these perceptions differ in relation to gender, ethnicity, different Islamic beliefs, socio-economic background, region and experiences of going into both further and higher education and the labour market, including apprenticeships?
3. To what extent do these perceptions fit with, add to or undermine evidence from the literature and from key stakeholders?
4. What may account for these differences?
5. What recommendations can be made to help inform policy and practice?

A qualitative approach to the evaluation was adopted throughout in order to gather the perspectives and perceptions of key stakeholders, enhance understanding of young Muslims' experiences, draw out the complexities and intricacies of their experiences, and address the research questions. It should be noted, therefore, that the qualitative data on which this report is based is drawn from the subjective responses of those who participated in the research.

In advance of data being collected, ethical approval was gained from Sheffield Hallam University. The data collection took place in six stages between April and July 2017. Appendix 4 cross references the data collection stages against the research questions. The six stages of data collection are summarised below.

1. A short synthesis of the existent policy and academic literature was conducted and which informed the subsequent Delphi study and deductive focus groups. Findings from the synthesis have been integrated into this report.
2. A three-stage Delphi study was used to draw out perceptions in relation to key causes of low social mobility across several themes, as well as to help identify and prioritise policy goals, and help arrive at an 'expert' consensus. The Delphi survey methods are described below and in more detail in Section 8.
3. Six inductive focus groups were undertaken, designed to help explore participants' perceptions of the barriers to social mobility rather than testing out existing explanations. The groups took place in High Wycombe, Liverpool, London, Oxford, Leeds and Sheffield involving a total of 22 participants. See Appendix 1 for the inductive focus group questions.
4. Five deductive focus groups were conducted using questions developed from the synthesis, Delphi findings (from stage 1) and inductive focus groups in

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<sup>3</sup> We have largely categorised 'young' as being 18-30 although a number of participants were in their early 30s.

order to test out new theory and revise emerging theories. The groups took place in Liverpool, Leeds (three groups), Oxford, and Sheffield, and involved 31 participants. See Appendix 2 for the deductive focus group questions.

5. Six one-to-one interviews were conducted with participants unable to attend focus groups, as well as to add further male voices to the data. These drew on a mixture of inductive and deductive focus group questions depending on context.
6. A one-day Summit event was held to present the draft findings to 43 stakeholder participants from higher and further education settings, voluntary and community organisations as well as individual Muslims. The purpose of the event was to share early quantitative and qualitative findings from the research whilst also collecting the reflections and perspectives of key stakeholders. In addition, a Respondents' Jury, comprised of six young Muslims, listened to the evidence presented and gave feedback based on their personal experiences.

The Delphi surveys collected perceptions on possible explanations for the broken promise and on the emerging recommendations presented at the Summit event on 10 July 2017. In this way, the Delphi survey technique *quantified* the relevance and importance of what were essentially *qualitative* themes and statements. The focus groups provided more opportunities to explore experiences, perceptions and ideas in depth. The quantitative and qualitative strands drew on each other during the research project. The focus groups lasted for between 55 minutes and two hours each and the interviews between 20 and 45 minutes each. They were recorded and fully transcribed.

**Table 1: Summary of data collected**

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Delphi round 1	19
Inductive focus groups	22
Delphi round 2	38
Deductive focus groups	31
Individual interviews	6
Contributors to Summit event	43
Delphi round 3	24

The time period for data collection coincided with Ramadan (end of May to end of June 2017) which, we were informed by potential participants, inhibited participation in the focus groups. The data collection also coincided with a number of terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. In response to these attacks there was a spike in

religiously motivated hate crime with 273 hate crime incidents two days after the attacks in Manchester and 319 after the London Bridge attacks, a rise of 50% and 34% respectively compared to the same week in 2016 (National Police Chiefs Council, 2017). These two factors together may have hindered participation in the research. Indeed, a level of nervousness about commenting on issues to do with the experience of being Muslim in the UK at a time of heightened tension was noted by a number of our focus group participants.

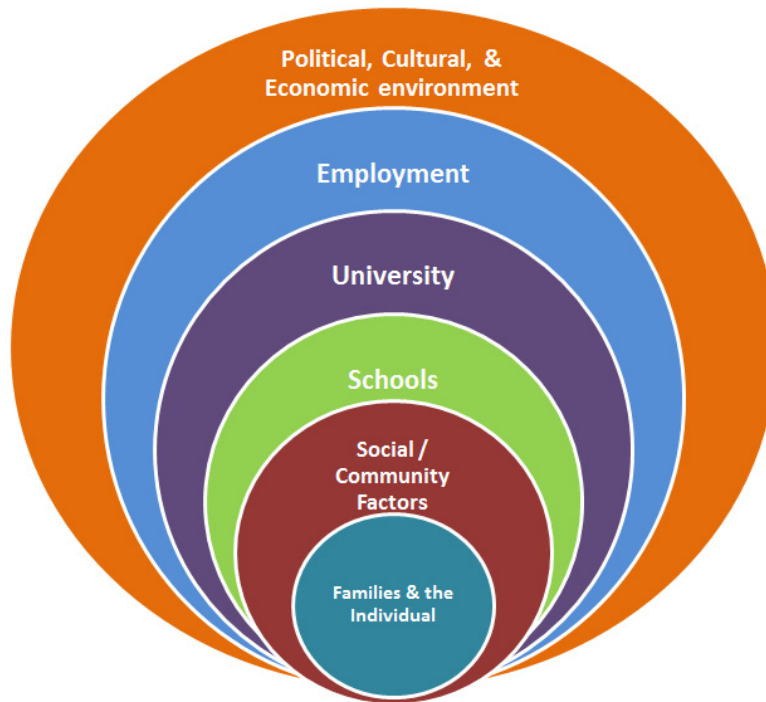
Focus groups and interviews were undertaken with young Muslims from different ethnic groups, ages, genders, geographical locations, and settings (post-16 settings and those in different degrees and levels of work). Overall, 40 female and 18 male young Muslims participated, ranging in age from 18 to 35. Thirteen were of Pakistani heritage with others of Nigerian, Somali, Yemeni, Iraqi, Iranian, Bangladeshi, Guinean, Sudanese, Moroccan, East African, or Mixed heritage. The majority were second or third generation with a small number of more recent immigrants. Twenty-four were employed full-time and seven part-time; 14 were solely full-time students (FE or HE) with eight combining study with work; four were unemployed and one was a volunteer worker. Their qualifications ranged from no formal qualifications to postgraduate degree level qualifications. See Appendix 3 for a summary of the combined focus group and interview participant demographic data.

The Delphi round 1 questionnaire drew on findings from the literature synthesis and was structured into six themed sections adapted from the social model of health (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991). These six themes were used to develop broad areas of focus for the inductive focus groups, specific areas of exploration for the Delphi round 2 and 3 questionnaires and for the deductive focus groups and interviews. They also provided the framework for analysis and for the presentation of findings. The six themes are:

1. Families & the Individual
2. Social/Community Factors
3. Schools
4. Higher Education/University
5. Employment
6. Political, Cultural & Economic Environment



**Figure 1: The six themed areas**



Data from the inductive focus groups, interview responses and qualitative responses from the Delphi rounds were subjected to rigorous thematic analysis. In doing so, we utilised a general inductive approach which allowed the analysis to better describe the grounded reality of young Muslims' experiences and to be contextualised by external factors such as the Manchester and London terrorist attacks. The combined data formed the basis of presentations at the Summit event where the perceptions of stakeholders and the Jury respondents were used to check the emerging findings against broader perceptions and understandings.

A final note: we have referred to those who took part in the focus groups or interviews as research participants and those who took part in the Delphi surveys or the Summit event as respondents.

## Section 2: Families & the Individual<sup>4</sup>

### Parental/family educational aspirations

From ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences to significant variations in their migration histories and patterns, Muslims in the UK comprise a multi-diverse group of communities. It is therefore impossible to make generic claims about the parental expectations, aspirations and attitudes of the Muslim community as a whole. However, as supported by earlier studies indicating higher educational aspirations amongst BME parents (Strand, 2007), our data showed consistent patterns of strong support amongst Muslim parents in relation to their children's education and employment outcomes. Using the term 'ethnic capital' to describe the strong emphasis placed by British Pakistani parents on higher education and high career aspirations, Shah (2007) argues that these attitudes are embedded within parents' own experiences of the labour market, with higher education being viewed as a route to upward social mobility. Our data reflected this argument, with the racism and discrimination faced by some parents within the labour market shaping and influencing the strong work ethic and sense of resilience transmitted to their children:

*I remember at a very young age, my dad – so I'm half African, half Indian, but full Muslim. I remember at a very young age my dad sitting me and my sisters down and he said there's one thing you need to remember. So I was quite young at the time. And he said if you want to get anywhere in life, you will need to work ten times as hard as your counterpart to get there. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

*In the same way [my father] said to me and my sisters, I never wanted the three of you to ever claim off the system. We said, OK, but we're born and bred so we're entitled to if we chose to. He said never. So when I got made redundant and people around me said you're entitled to have... I wouldn't do it. I went to work nights in the factory to prove that I will never be the person that somebody could turn around with to say it's people like you who claimed off our system. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

### Gendered expectations

From the data it is clear that some young Muslims felt that within some communities, parents held high but different expectations for boys and girls concerning their educational and employment outcomes, with boys seen to be afforded more freedom. While these differences were perceived as being well-intentioned, they

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<sup>4</sup> Author: Farhana Ghaffar

were also viewed as a barrier by some female interviewees who felt restricted in their ability to pursue their aspirations to study and work abroad:

*Being a boy in a Muslim family or a Pakistani family, is like ... it's like totally fine. You can go abroad. Can you tell me a day before you go to Morocco, that's fine. But you know with girls it's a lot harder. Like you know, because parents feel the pressures of society a lot more for girls. They feel like oh you know we have to protect our daughters, they're vulnerable. Which I do agree with, I do think yes, but then I also think there's protecting and then there's obstructing as well. (Oxford FG 3: female)*

Although boys were perceived to have more independence than girls, these different expectations were, however, also seen to create disadvantage by increasing their exposure to negative influences:

*But boys, they're allowed out quite freely, they get a lot more freedom than girls do in our community. So they kind of like take everything that they can get. So it's harder for them to reverse that when they actually want to do something with their lives. Or they're just so engrossed in a certain lifestyle that they've got, that it's hard for them to reverse that. (High Wycombe FG: male)*

There was also an explicit recognition that within some communities, women are encouraged to focus on marriage and motherhood rather than gain employment, and this finding is consistent with earlier studies into the aspirations of Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents for their daughters (Bhavnani, 2006, cited in Hutchinson, Rolfe and Moore, 2011):

*If you're a girl, just stay at home, you know. Just get married, have kids, just be a stay-at-home mum. Or like for pretty much boys I think they've got it easy to be honest. They have to work, they're a boy. (Oxford Interview: Female)*

These traditional attitudes towards the role and place of women within the family can have a negative effect on the social mobility of Muslim women, particularly concerning their employment opportunities, and this is consistent with the 2011 Census data cited above that Muslim women in the UK are more likely than all other women to be economically inactive because they have responsibilities to look after the home or family.

However, our data also revealed that in some cases, despite encouragement from their immediate families to pursue a career, the conservative views and gendered expectations of some teachers within private religious schools can limit the aspirations of young Muslim girls:

*My mum and dad they said choose the career that's best for you, what you want to do and you should be independent. But the school they were teaching us, it was a private school, an Islamic school but they were also teaching us the same as a normal secondary school. I don't know, it was just like a few teachers, but other teachers were normal about it, they just said 'Do the jobs that you want to do.' but certain teachers were just like 'No, you should be a housewife, you shouldn't go and get jobs.' (Sheffield, Interview)*

According to attitudinal data analysed by the thinktank Demos (Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015), 50% of Muslims aged 55 or older agreed with the following statement: “a husband’s job is to earn money, a wife’s job is to look after the home and family”. Less than 17% disagreed (Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015). There is, however, a striking cultural change emerging in the attitudes of young Muslims towards the role of women within the home and family. When the above statement was put to Muslim women aged 16 to 24, more than half of them disagreed with it and less than 24% agreed (Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015). This generational shift in attitudes and the resulting tension between the aspirations of the individual and those of their families can be seen within our data:

*That's a big problem with Asian parents. They put everything towards their kids. There's life outside of your children! They just think there's no life beyond their children. And I think, like obviously, you know, fine, love your children, invest in your children, but there is life beyond your child as well. Like you can do things yourself and you can work your way up and have children at the same time, and be a successful mother and a successful person. (Oxford FG: Female)*

Despite such changing attitudes (and indeed our data evidenced high levels of aspiration amongst many young female Muslims) only 29% of Muslim women aged 16-24 are in employment, compared to 49% of the general population (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015). The figure for Muslim women aged 25-49 is 56.7%, compared to 80.3% for all women; only the figure for those aged 50 and over is similar - at 32.3% and 39.6% respectively. In part this may reflect attitudes towards the role of women in the home (Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015). It is likely however that wider societal issues such as discrimination and racism are also at play. This suggestion will be explored later in this report.

## **Individual educational aspirations**

Many young Muslims consider that they have high levels of agency and choice and have a strong career goal focus and high levels of ambition. Despite high individual educational aspirations and encouragement from the family, there are reports of low expectations from teachers and figures of authority within the education system.

Such experiences can have a profoundly negative effect on the self-esteem of young Muslims, creating a destructive cycle of low expectation whereby self-limiting beliefs result in self-limiting behaviours such as not working to attain their full academic potential.

*I was quite young... and she said, what do you want to do? And I said, Miss, I want to change the world. She said you're not clever enough and you're not smart enough to ever change the world. So that just reinforced my view that actually if I wanted those things then I had to be ten times as good as my counterpart, I was never going to make it. So actually in my head there was no point in trying and therefore I sort of gave up even before I started. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

Amongst the participants, a sense of duty and obligation to repay the sacrifice made by parents was seen as the main motive for succeeding academically and beyond.

*To be honest, the motive for I think most ethnic minority or Muslims is the parents. It's not about school. It's not about school, because of school, how the school was, we became who we are. It's not. You've got a duty to your parents coming to educate you, sacrificing a lot of their life for you, so we take that responsibility on to say well my mum and dad did all this for me, worked so hard, got me here, and everything. That's a motive. And you're thinking, despite what I go through, I'm going to get through. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Older siblings were also perceived as having a positive influence on shaping the high educational and employment aspirations of the participants. This was particularly significant in the case of girls whose older sisters were the first in their families to go to university or live away during their studies and who were seen as role models or pioneers. This finding reflects previous research (Bagguley and Hussain, 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2007).

*My sisters have been the first ones to do a lot of things in our family, so kind of just breaking through the barriers and then making it easier for the other... my younger sister. My older sister was like the first one in our family to ever get married out of the family. Then it just kind of opened up doors for me and my other sisters and stuff. It's kind of like... somebody has to be the one to just break through first and then make it easier for everyone. (Oxford FG: female)*

While this demonstrates the importance of local and relatable role models, a wider range of role models within the community and society is also needed, as explored later in the report.

## Familial knowledge and networks

In spite of holding high educational and employment aspirations for their children, parents may lack sufficient knowledge or social and cultural capital needed to successfully translate these expectations into reality. This was attributed to a range of different factors, including parents' migration history, their educational background and whether they had been educated in the UK or abroad, as well as their English language skills, and in particular, their confidence and assertiveness to communicate with schools and teachers.

However, many parents recognised the limitations to their ability to provide academic support, and actively sought to address this gap by hiring private tutors in order to positively influence their children's educational achievement:

*She got to a point where she realised she couldn't help me and that's when the tutoring kicked in. That was maths, English and science when I was doing my 11+ and my first two years I think of secondary school. So that's kind of the support she gave me. She thought OK if I can't do it, I'll pay for someone else to support me. (High Wycombe FG: male)*

As previous research has shown, the ability to successfully mobilise economic capital is dependent on parents' socio-economic status; those parents with middle-class occupations and orientations are better able to access and navigate the 'educational market' (Shah, Dwyer, and Modood, 2010). Our data, however, showed that even amongst families with limited financial means, some parents employed private tuition for their children, demonstrating the high importance and investment placed in education by Muslim parents:

*Me and all of my siblings had private tuitions, even though our parents were on benefits, so all of their money was going towards private tuition for all of us so that we could excel in our education. (Respondents' Jury: female)*

In the absence of sufficient parental support and knowledge of the education system, a common strategy employed by individuals was to seek academic advice and support from older siblings. By attending parents' evenings, providing help with homework and supporting applications to university, older siblings often took on the role of proxy parents.

*My dad can speak quite good English but mum can't. So, like, his English is not too good either, so I'd just go to [my sister] and she'd contact the school. And she'd come to the school. (Oxford, FG 1: female)*

*My brother was seven years older so he was teaching me a lot. (London, FG: female)*

As noted in Shah's study of ethnic capital within Pakistani families (Shah, Dwyer and Modood, 2010), older siblings are able to use their own educational experience to generate cultural and social capital for themselves, their parents and siblings. In taking on this role, siblings may, however, limit their own attainment and possibilities, and may not always be able to provide the appropriate support and guidance needed.

Our data also showed that particular family expectations and demands may run contrary to the aspirations of the individual. According to the National Survey of Parents and Children, BME parents are far more likely to prioritise the goal that their child obtain good qualifications over the pursuit of a career their child would be happy in (Gilby, Hamlyn, Hanson, Romanou Mackey, Clark, Triikka and Harrison, 2008). Among Muslim families, there is a strong preference for children, and girls in particular, to gain employment that is seen to enhance family honour and reputation, with an emphasis on medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, accountancy, teaching and law (Ahmad et al, 2003; Benn, 2003; Mohammad, 2005; Gillat-Ray, 2010). Our data illuminates the way in which parents' narrow focus on particular career paths, combined with a lack of access to high-level knowledge, advice and guidance regarding university and employment choices, can create tensions between the aspirations of the individual and those of their families:

*If they had a lot more understanding of what their kids were studying at uni, or what their after job was going to be like, if they had that, I think then they would be able to accept the fact that you don't just have to be a doctor, and you don't just have to be an accountant [...] Obviously those jobs are great, but there are other jobs, and they're doing just as great. I just think if they had a lot more like understanding of what people are being taught or why are they doing it, then I think they would sort of let their guards down a bit and just let the kids do what actually interests them. (Oxford, Interview: female)*

As noted in Bagguley and Hussain's (2007) study of South Asian women in Higher Education, however, if individuals study subjects at university that they have little enthusiasm for, they run the risk of lower levels of degree attainment. This conflict between the aspirations of the individual and the expectations of their family may also be one reason why Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to regret their university choice; a recent study reports that relative to White students, Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates were 14% more likely to choose a completely different degree, in hindsight (HEFCE, 2016a).

However, not all parents are directional about their children's educational and career paths and not all push in the same direction:

*My dad was really quite liberal too, so part of me kind of wishes to an extent... if he'd been proper traditional and said 'go and be a doctor and study!'. He was like, do whatever you want love, whatever makes you happy, you go with that. I was like, I could have been so much better if he'd been a bit stricter and forced me to study! But, Al-hamdilliah, it's what it is. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

## Household/family poverty

The correlations between neighbourhood deprivation, low household income and educational under-achievement have been well-established (Stafford and Marmot, 2002). Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation measure, 46% or 1.22 million of the Muslim population live in the 10% most deprived local authority districts (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015). Recurrent across the data was the opinion that upward social mobility for young Muslims was highly dependent on socio-economic capital and financial security:

*This society acknowledges the person who has money. Leave religion, leave race, leave them. If you have the money, you will have access, you will live in better areas, you're going to have access to better schools, you can get private education, you can go to university as easily as possible... There's a lot of unequal opportunities, and so on and so on. So this is the reality. (Sheffield FG1: female)*

*I think a lot of it has to do with access, which is where I think class plays a role as well. I mean, my family is not necessarily wealthy but we are financially stable and have been for a while. So, especially going to private school for instance, you've kind of got an in-road. You've made it into that world, in a sense. [...] I think that the reason why I had it a bit easier than a lot of other Muslims is because of that family background and that ease of access, which a lot of people don't have. (London Interview: male)*

However, amongst our interviews with young first-generation Muslims, it was felt that families were denied or limited access to financial security and stability due to the underemployment or unemployment of their parents whose educational qualifications were not recognised within the UK labour market.

*My mum trying to get a job, quite often it was such a hassle to prove, I guess, the qualifications from Pakistan. She was a lecturer and she had a masters, but actually being able to prove that and have it validated here with the education system... She found it quite hard and quite often she was offered jobs that I think she wouldn't have done if she was in Pakistan. (London FG: female)*

*I look at my dad and [think] you're so clever! Like he's always... people always say to him you should have been a professor or something but he's*



*here being a taxi driver and he's like, but that's what we were given, we came here, we didn't have any money, we had to do the first job that was provided to us. (Oxford FG: female)*

For refugees and those who had migrated as children to the UK with limited English, the intersection of poor resourcing for teaching ESOL to vulnerable people (funding from the Skill Funding Agency's adult skills budget fell from £203m to £90m between 2012-13 and 2015-16; Halfon, 2017) and social perceptions that immigrants do not want to learn English or integrate, was seen as a barrier to their social mobility.

### **Conclusions: Families & the Individual**

1. Cultural norms and values about the role of women within the family and home may play a part in limiting social mobility if and when communities prioritise marriage and motherhood over a young woman's pursuit of a career.
2. More traditional views of girls' roles may be reinforced by teachers within private Islamic schools, thereby limiting female aspirations.
3. Parents may lack the social and cultural capital needed to help their children translate their aspirations into educational or employment realities. Middle-class families are better able to successfully navigate and afford the support needed to improve their children's achievements and enhance their potential for social mobility.
4. Neighbourhood poverty, poor resourcing for ESOL teaching, and a lack of recognition of parents' qualifications all contribute to low household income. Such poverty in turn limits the support (financial, linguistic or social) that parents are able to offer to their children, which reinforces their social immobility.

## Section 3: Social/Community Factors<sup>5</sup>

### Area deprivation and poverty

There were sharp geographical differences among the research participants with many commenting that they felt safer, better integrated, or less visibly different in areas with high number of Muslims despite the material disadvantages of living in such communities.

*In Blackburn. All the taxi drivers were Asian. The supermarket I went to was Asian. The hotel that I stayed at – the receptionist was Asian. It's such an Asian part of the country. My entire office was white. All the engineers were white. All the admin girls were white. I didn't get treated badly – they treated me fine, but I didn't like being their token brown person. It wasn't the same funny thing that it is here. That's what – five or six years ago that I did all of that? But I think it differs where you go. We have it very easy here [High Wycombe] but it's definitely not the same all around us. That's just my opinion. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

However, there was concern expressed within the focus groups that remaining within Muslim communities could limit aspirations and that navigating wider non-Muslim society was imperative in order to succeed in relation to education or employment, although they recognised that this opportunity was not available to all.

*...bring in those people who are different and minorities, cultures, dress, whatever that might be, so young people can be exposed to it. Because unless they get that exposure in a real authentic way, how can they ever learn, if actually they're basing their assumptions and their opinion based on what their parents might say at home, what the media tells them or what they might see and hear in their communities. So I think schools, especially in areas like Northamptonshire where I live, they absolutely need to be bringing British values to life and they need to be teaching young people, because they're too exposed to negative media that isn't accurate, and that's not their fault, because they need to have another input. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

The importance of integration was stressed in a number of the focus group discussions, with young Muslims claiming that better integration with non-Muslims may help dispel myths and challenge misconceptions. However, they also talked about the need to maintain an identity, as well as the role of other Muslims in supporting and enabling them to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, echoing

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<sup>5</sup> Author: Muna Abdi

other research (Ansari, 2004). One young Muslim, for example, shared her reflections on the importance of representation in establishing an identity:

*Actually, I watched this documentary once about all these people who were terrorist sympathisers. And what they noticed about them all was that they all thought they didn't have an identity, didn't know how they fit in. And I thought that was quite important. It is important that we keep our identity and it shouldn't wash down. And the next generation – I feel like they will start to lose theirs. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Some of the participants talked about one of the key benefits of integration being the opportunity for positive conversations about difference in order to challenge misconceptions. The issue of social gatherings involving alcohol was identified as a something that actively excludes Muslims and makes it difficult for there to be meaningful interactions.

*By the time that I got to like year 11, year 10 or year 11, I started to shift towards like Muslim friends in a way because as you grow up they start to talk about things that would not be appropriate to us in a way, like going out and drinking and stuff, so you just felt 'Well I can't relate with you anymore, there's nothing I can talk to'. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*

Research by Ali (2013) found that 'Britishness' and 'Belonging to Britain' had two key meanings for British Muslims: firstly, a 'cultural' feeling (at ease) and secondly, an 'affective' feeling (feeling attached). The participants in our research defined belonging in different ways with some associating it with culture and reflecting on the ways in which culture changes over time.

*I think because we've been diluted. So, for example our generation – they're very cultural. And then us coming here, we became half-cultural. And then what we're giving to our children is like quarter-cultural. And that is getting diluted. And I think that could be a big problem. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Others defined belonging as something that needs to be reciprocated, stating that it is difficult to feel a sense of belonging if you are not made to feel welcome. Participants talked about belonging taking time and stated that the challenge is that at times the process is one-sided.

*They see something in you. They think oh, she's unique, I want to be friends with her. And then they have to fit into your world, whereas you were trying to fit into their world. That's how they understand Islam. But it takes them such a long time to finally accept us a person, but it has to start somewhere. So when I start accepting myself, accepting that I'll never be like them, I'm a Muslim, I'm black, they're white. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

## Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism

Many of the young Muslims described the effects both of racism and of social, ethnic and religious prejudice, even when living in areas their parents consider safe. For the participants in this research, Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism is ever present and pervasive, and experienced in both direct and indirect forms. Most worryingly however it is often (seemingly) casual.

*I interview people and I've been in a very white environment, people make comments – “he looked very Muslim”, “she’s, ooh look at her, she’s got a scarf on”, “she looks very Muslim”, ooh, like slight concern. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

Because of this pervasiveness, discrimination is often perpetuated and so largely goes unchecked and is rarely challenged.

*For example if a white person goes into school, they won't know if they... I don't know, I feel like they don't know if maybe they'll get bullied. But, generally, what comes into your head straight away when you're a minority... you would be considered a target. (Liverpool FG1: female)*

The visibility of being Muslim is also an issue that was identified very clearly by focus group participants who shared concerns about wearing the veil and other markers of difference in the workplace, with a number of older participants seeking to hide the fact they were Muslim.

*I do tend to now not say that I'm Muslim because I'm worried that they might think that I'm bad. And I'm worried for [son] as well, because as a child, he just says anything and I'm trying to get him not to say it [being Muslim], which is sad, because I don't want them to think that he is and then they will pick on him. I haven't said directly 'Don't say it' but the other time he was telling me about birthdays or halal food and I just said to him, I said, 'Just be careful at school not to talk too much about it to your friends.'... even to choose [son's] name was quite hard for me because I thought it's a name that I really, really like but then I thought I'll put this name on taking a risk because with that name, what kind of future is he going to have? (Leeds FG: female)*

*I feel like, as well, especially with the name thing, when you're in school you get, when you're a kid, you don't concentrate on that so much. And now people are like [cites Muslim name], it's like they see you for you.... all they have is your name and your appearance... Yeah, but even my dad was saying 'change your name', you know, to get a job. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Some participants attributed the racism or Islamophobia they experienced as arising from a lack of understanding of the Muslim culture by non-Muslims. Religious education in school was highlighted as a key area that needed further development, with many stating that they felt White students had poor knowledge/education about other religions and that teachers' (including religious education teachers') lack of knowledge and insight meant that students failed to make clear distinctions between religious and cultural practices.

*Other races [are] not really educated on Islam in schools more. It's more focused on Christianity, even in religious studies. I learnt more of Christianity than I did in Islam. When it came to Islam, it wasn't really good comments. So then that's how I got seen as a bad person in school. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

The young Muslims also talked about the pressure to take on the role of the expert or authority on Islam and the negative impact of this.

*You have to act in a certain way, the way they want you to act, but then also you feel under so much pressure that you have to answer, you have to stand up. Do you see where I'm coming [from]? Sometimes you don't have that knowledge. Then you're thinking twice about going to school the next day. You're thinking, I haven't got the answer for that. What if the RE teacher opens this topic? And you're not even concentrating on school and fun and so on. You're literally focusing on that pressure. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

## Support and social networks

In the face of such challenges, it is unsurprising that many of our research participants talked about the importance of their faith to them, and described how they draw on their religious values and principles to guide the choices that they make.

*I am a person of principles. I will not be cheap to try other ways to get what I want. This is something, as a Muslim, I think really restricts us from getting other ways to receive what we want. I think this is a very big part of our ideology – that there is another person in this equation. It's not only us and them – see? (Sheffield FG 1: female)*

As well as talking about the importance of living by religious principles, participants discussed the importance of family as both a support and a protective network. Their assertions that family support operated as a form of safeguarding echoes Ansari's (2004) research which found that Muslims were left vulnerable and exposed to prejudice and discrimination in the face of inadequate anti-discrimination laws, and

thus drew on family and community to offer alternative forms of support (Ansari, 2004).

### **Conclusions: Social/Community Factors**

1. Misconceptions and stereotypical assumptions about Islam, the dominance of social spaces in which alcohol is served, and assumptions made about gender expectations can make it difficult for Muslims to engage in meaningful interactions with non-Muslims and/or to effectively integrate. This in turn can shape where young Muslims feel safe and thus has implications for their geographic mobility and, in turn, their social immobility.
2. Familial safeguarding, designed to prevent young Muslims from exposure to prejudice or discrimination, can result in many young Muslims being educated or working only within their local communities. Geographical differences in the availability of, for example, high status universities, or postgraduate level employment, may therefore have profound implications for young Muslims' social mobility.

## Section 4: Schools and Early Education<sup>6</sup>

### Integration

Research by The Open Society Institute (2005) highlights the role of education in both integration and social cohesion. The school system is the earliest mainstream social institution which young people come into contact with, and the extent to which schools respect and accommodate diversity sends out strong signals about the value and importance placed on diversity by society as a whole. What emerged from our data, however, is that Muslim students lacked interpersonal engagement with and understanding by teachers, and that religious norms were often not accommodated or supported by teachers and schools. This poor understanding, combined with the lack of religious education teachers' efforts (or capacity) to provide information to non-Muslim students about the lives of ordinary Muslims, made it more challenging for Muslim students to deal with peer pressures fuelled by misunderstanding and stereotyping.

*Real Muslims, the average Muslim. Like, real Muslims - what they believe, their actual feelings about things. Not like whenever you want to teach an RE lesson – brilliant. A video of the hardships of Muslims and how terrible all the things that they're going through are... You're teaching a bunch of kids. That's the way they're going to think of Muslims for the rest of their lives now. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

For the young Muslims in our study, cultural values and norms are very much woven into their lives from a very young age, reflecting findings from other research (Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2015). However these cultural norms did not always reflect those of non-Muslims - indeed our research participants talked at length about the difference between their own social activities and the 'drinking and going out' culture experienced by many other young people. These disparities affected conversation opportunities with non-Muslim peers in school, thus impacting on integration and exacerbating feelings of not being able to relate. This finding also reflects a review by Gilby et al (Gilby, Ormston, Parfremment and Payne, 2011) where there was evidence that although Muslim students have friends who are not Muslim, there are barriers to further mixing, such as alcohol being the focus of the students' socialising activities.

*We were never brought up with English TV, it was always Arabic. At lunch times and other times there was hardly anything you could talk about. So by the time I was [in] Year 10, I started to shift towards Muslim friends in a*

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<sup>6</sup> Author: Shaima Hassan

*way because as you grow up they start to talk about things that would not be appropriate to us in a way, like going out and drinking. So you just felt I can't relate with them anymore, there is nothing I can talk about. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*

Our research participants also believed that schools were providing insufficient opportunities for students to develop bonds and friendships with other students from different ethnic and faith groups, and this finding reflects research by the Open Society Institute (2005). In particular, many participants believed that schools should do more to help challenge negative perceptions and stereotyping of Muslims, by integrating into class activities stories and dialogue which illuminate the lives of ordinary Muslim people in ordinary modern communities. This would open up space for meaningful conversation and understanding between pupils and hopefully reduce the degree to which Muslim pupils are 'othered' by their classmates or indeed their teachers.

*He put up a video of - what are these people called - the White Helmets that are helping people in Syria. And these were like... and the video involved a lot about these White Helmets...and do you know like, that opened the eyes of so many people in my school. Things they would never have said to me before, they were saying it to me. Like one of them said something like "oh my god I thought all Muslims were like these barbaric people, but now I see that ... like, their countries are just like normal modern countries". And I was like, but didn't you know that already!? (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

## Teacher preparedness

For the Muslim students in our study, teachers were perceived to have (often) not made enough effort to promote peer integration. For example, there were reports of teachers failing to make simple positive interventions in class to ensure pair/group interaction. This left some students feeling isolated, vulnerable to bullying, and lacking in confidence to take part in class discussions or to ask for help when needed.

*I've seen teachers – they'll literally see bullying and they will say nothing about it. As long as it doesn't get physical or something serious, they just pretend they're ignoring it, whereas it's just more about saying no, you know what... even just using terms like 'we're all human', you know, 'we're all here to come to study', 'we're all here for one purpose'. We might have differences. Like we do in my job now, like group rules say for example - respecting one another and so on. Maybe them rules should be mentioned every now and again in the classroom or a form room, but they don't do that at all. And the polite ones stay quiet and the ones that are sitting alone*



*stay sitting alone and the ones that get bullied stay sitting getting bullied.  
(Liverpool FG 1: female)*

The young Muslims in our research also reported that a lack of cultural/religious training for teachers and the lack of diversity among teachers - and in particular the lack of Muslim teachers - posed a barrier for schools in understanding or accommodating Muslim students' needs. This was particularly noticeable in areas of low Muslim population densities but was reported across all the focus groups:

*Coming from an education background, being a teacher, I would say that what also adds to that is that we're not represented enough in primary schools. There needs to be more Muslim teachers in primary schools, because there's so many incidents that I've dealt with as a Muslim, for the Muslim children in my school, that if I wasn't there, sometimes I think what would happen to that child? How would they get labelled if I wasn't there to speak to them and just help everybody else understand what this child is going through? (High Wycombe FG: male)*

In addition, our research participants reported that teachers were often unprepared, unable or unwilling to challenge overt or more casual racism or Islamophobia. Other barriers cited included a lack of Muslim teachers able to act as role models in school, a lack of recognition of their Muslim identity and in particular the low expectations that some teachers had of them. It was also felt that teachers had higher standards of behaviour for Muslims, in particular for girls, but alongside low academic expectations.

*I don't think that they expected more of Muslim students in terms of education but they would always refer back to you being a Muslim when they wanted me to 'behave yourself'. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*

There was a particular perception that the middle set was the highest possible set accorded to Muslim students regardless of their actual abilities.

*I used to beg the teacher that I don't fit in in here, because the people, the level in that set... I know how capable I am. This is not my level. And because I'm Muslim and all that, they just threw me in there. And the people were really like... they were teaching them basic, basic stuff and to me that was a shock. I was like this is not me. They did not listen to me at all. I used to cry, I used to cry after every session. I'd go home crying to my mum and dad. I had to literally get my dad into school to speak to the teacher in order for them to at least move me up one set higher. They just literally... Muslim, headscarf, you know you're in there. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

There were also reports of students being discouraged by teachers from taking challenging subjects. These two factors had a negative impact on the confidence of the young Muslims in this study.

*I'm at that point, where I'm traumatised by education. I don't want to pursue it anymore. I just want to pursue other options, like other paths. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

*I used to beg the teacher that I don't fit in in here, because the people, the level in that set... I know how capable I am. This is not my level. And because I'm Muslim and all that, they just threw me in there. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

The key educational issues of concern to Muslim parents are: the continuing poor academic results of Muslim children; the need to eradicate institutional racism and racist and Islamophobic bullying; the lack of recognition or support for their children's faith identity; and the inadequacy of spiritual and moral education that schools provide (The Open Society, 2015). Echoing these concerns, the parents of the young Muslims in our study were frequently involved in challenging the barriers that impacted on their children's educational achievements, whilst the young Muslims themselves sought the support of their parents to appeal or challenge decisions, for example that the lower or middle sets were not fair reflections of their academic ability.

*You always see Muslim parents sitting at the office, you never see other parents having to come in to school all the time. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

*What I disagree with, in their teaching system is that they always put ethnic minorities in the lower set. I was put in a lower set, which was understandable because OK maybe I wasn't like the smartest, but as I tried to better myself I would always go to the teacher and say I don't belong in this set, I belong in the upper set, where my white friends are. I had to bring my father in to school for this. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

## **Conclusions: Schools and Early Education**

The diversity of educational experiences as well as differential outcomes was evident across all of our research.

1. Incidences of Islamophobia or racism, a failure to recognise Muslim identity, support isolated minority students or promote peer integration affects young Muslims' self-esteem and self-confidence which in turn impacts on their aspiration and ultimately their attainment.
2. The failure to accommodate religious norms, develop understanding of Muslims' needs, or provide information about the lives of ordinary Muslims

directly impacts on young Muslims' sense of belonging which compounds feelings of isolation and can limit their aspirations.

3. Perceptions that they will be targets for overt bullying/harassment based on their appearance, beliefs and their overall 'difference' means that young Muslims may avoid asking for help in classes at school which can affect their academic attainment.
4. Low expectations by some teachers, including placing Muslims students in lower or middle sets, and a lack of encouragement to take challenging subjects, have a negative impact on the confidence of young Muslims which in turn limits their educational aspirations and attainment.
5. A lack of interpersonal engagement by teachers, the failure of teachers to listen to appeals, and the emphasis on Muslims' own failings for their lack of success all have a negative impact on confidence which results in young Muslims 'giving up'.
6. A lack of individual tailored support, guidance and encouragement for young Muslims to take specific subjects, take part in extra-curricular activities, or explore alternative pathways to education or employment limits young Muslims' post-compulsory education choices and in turn affects their possibilities for social mobility.
7. The lack of Muslim role models in school, including Muslim teachers, further compounds the poor experiences of many young Muslims and can contribute to their low aspirations or under-attainment. In contrast, where Muslim teachers are present in schools this is perceived to have a direct impact on young Muslims' confidence, self-esteem, aspiration and educational and post-educational attainment.

## Section 5: Higher Education / University<sup>7</sup>

### Accessing different types of university

The data on the number of religious students in UK Higher Education is not robust. However, most data show an over-representation of Muslim students in UK HE (Equality Challenge Unit, 2011; Gilby, Ormston, Parfremment and Payne, 2011; Shaw, et al, 2016). Once we delve into this top-line finding, we learn that Muslim representation is not uniform: 60% of BME students study in the post-1992 sector (the former polytechnics) (Elevations Network Trust, 2012). Although the data on Muslim students are limited, research into Muslim students studying in HE business schools found that 77% of Muslim students attended post-1992 universities, 4% attended Russell Group institutions and 19% attended other pre-1992 universities (Dean and Probert, 2011).

Evidence suggests that, overall, BME students are much more likely than White students to live at home whilst studying. Data from the 2011/12 Student Income and Expenditure Survey (Pollard, Hunt, Hillage, Drever, Chanfreau, Coutinho and Poole, 2013) showed that 61% of Asian and Asian British students lived at home, compared with 19% of White students. Our data indicate that young Muslims, in particular female Muslims, may choose to live at home for both cultural reasons and family pressures, reflecting broader findings (Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015). This affects their choice of institution as they are limited to what is available within commuting distance.

*It was so limited because you could only go to Liverpool or the nearest cities. So like when I first applied for university it was always looking in to what is the closest by, in a way, and I always felt that was a barrier to me. I could be in like a better university in a way, so until today I believe what limited my education, I feel like it affected where I wanted to be because I had to stay here. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*

It is important to note, however, that the representation of Muslims in the HE sector may also be a result of discrimination at the point of application (Boliver, 2013, 2106; Noden, Shiner and Modood, 2014) and a small number of our research participants commented that they had chosen not to apply to particular universities because there was 'no point' applying there. Such perceptions had arisen as a result of their own beliefs about the likelihood of success, as well as the experiences of peers. This is however true of other groups, not just Muslim students, with those from low socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds likely to make choices based on factors such as whether they will get in or fit in (see for example Ball, Reay and David,

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<sup>7</sup> Author: Jacqueline Stevenson

2002). However there was some concern expressed amongst participants that teachers and advisors at school also had very low expectations of them and that teachers were limiting what might be possible for them to achieve despite their own personal aspirations:

*I was quite young... and she said, what do you want to do? And I said, Miss, I want to change the world. She said you're not clever enough and you're not smart enough to ever change the world. So that just reinforced my view that actually if I wanted those things then I had to be ten times as good as my counterpart, I was never going to make it. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

Moreover, there was concern expressed by some that schools were not always giving the correct advice, not just because they were trying to lower aspirations but also because they simply lacked the requisite information to enable young Muslims (and others) to make properly informed decisions:

*I felt that most students weren't always told what they needed to get to the universities. So at GCSE we were told, five A-Cs, just get yourself into an A-Level programme. But actually people didn't often realise that GCSEs matter when you're applying for Higher Education, but actually they also matter when you're applying to jobs. They still look at what you got in your maths and English. I was fortunate in that I had an older brother who was already going through the university application process. I had a family who were a lot more educated, so we researched around it. I was aware, but generally people weren't. (London FG: female)*

Moreover, the students commented that the stereotypical perspectives held about young Muslims meant that advisors - where they were available - either assumed that young Muslims only wanted to study very traditional subjects (such as medicine, dentistry and accounting) or would not be 'allowed' to move away to study, or, in the case of girls, might only be studying until they married and had children:

*I had to really fight my corner to study history because I just don't think he [advisor] could get his head around that; I could almost see him thinking 'don't you want to be an accountant?' (Leeds interview: male)*

In contrast, a strong refrain across the data was that a single individual could make a positive difference especially if they were a Muslim teacher.

*I met somebody who literally changed my life, who is my manager now, from British Red Cross. She realised that I could be... I could do so much. It actually takes one person to believe in you. (Sheffield FG 1: female)*

*I had very, very challenging behaviour because of what I perceived as a young person as being mistreated. And what I meant by that was I didn't feel like I was listened to against my peers, so I said something... whether it was right or wrong, I'd been labelled as being a certain way. Therefore, the more I was labelled, the more you live up to that label, essentially. So I went to 11 different schools as a young person, and so I got to my final secondary school and the head said 'no other school in the city will take you so I have to keep you here'. So I did. And luckily for me I had a teacher who did listen and sort of helped me essentially to pass my GCSEs. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

There was concern however that Muslim teachers were few and far between, and that these low numbers were part of the reason for low achievement and progression. Where young Muslims had been taught or advised by Muslim teachers they were invariably positive about the impact this had had on them:

*I actually had an Asian Muslim English teacher who was also my tutor, and she was very supportive because of her background growing up. She knew the challenges that we had, that we were facing and would face in the future as well. So she was very supportive and always encouraging us to keep going. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

However, it was recognised that non-Muslim teachers and schools more broadly could affect change if they had the 'right approach' and attitudes.

As with other findings in this report, the place of parents in enabling their children to aspire and achieve their potential was clearly noted in relation to access to further or higher education. Parents were described as working hard to support the gap in information, advice and guidance available through schools. This had profound implications for those without access to requisite knowledge and social and cultural capital:

*And then also my mum, just because as a woman and growing up – she obviously had to struggle through in Pakistan as a single mum, but then even coming here and trying to help us to get to good universities and trying to get the information, trying to run a household, also have a job and all of that. She was an image of a very strong woman. I think she was a role model for me, like in my personal life. (London FG: female)*

*I didn't have a clue! So I just went on to do business management and it was purely my own decision because I studied business in college as well – like a BTEC – and that's what I enjoyed. I did study law and English Lit. I enjoyed the English Lit but I didn't really see me doing it as a degree because I didn't know where it would lead on to and stuff. But, yeah, business was purely my decision and my choice. Nobody really helped me*

*in picking what I wanted to do and what uni I wanted to go to. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

It is notable therefore that whilst the data on religion are absent, recent evidence (HEFCE, 2016a) suggests that although most graduates are happy with the choices they made when they went to university, students from all ethnic minority groups are significantly less satisfied than their White peers. BME students were more likely than White students to wish they had studied a different subject and/or at a different institution or to have done something completely different.

The students in our research who expressed dissatisfaction with their HE outcome believed strongly that they had wasted time in doing the wrong degree, had not gained the employment outcome they wanted to from their degree, had wasted a lot of money or had not made any other real gain from their studies. Moreover, a number felt that they had had to start all over again and undertake new qualifications or work up from the bottom in a workplace towards a job they were not yet qualified for. As a result they perceived that they were several years behind those peers who had made better informed choices. Unsurprisingly therefore these students reiterated that would have benefited from better support to enable them to make informed decisions, particularly where parents had been unable to support them to do so.

Where parents had been able to advise their children, however, this had caused (for some) a tension between what they wanted to do and what might be expected of them within families or communities. This included which university to attend as well as where to study. It is important to note however that a number of participants also reported that they had free choice about both of these factors, though that was more likely to be reported by young male Muslims than female.

### **Support while at university or college**

The research participants offered a mixed picture in relation to their experiences once in further or higher education. Those who had had difficult schooling experiences may find it easier being at university; higher education in particular (and to a lesser extent further education) can be an enabler of identity development.

*The transition was the best thing that happened because it was a new start. I stayed in the same school for 6th form, so I was staying with the same people who kind of like had that judgement, that Muslim girl, etc. But going to uni, it was like a new start. I can be myself and then whoever meets me will know that this is me and they won't really judge me because they don't really know me before. So it felt like through university that is where I kind of gained my confidence a bit more and just in terms of being myself, being a Muslim girl and being okay about it, like not having to repress anything. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*

## Retention and the student experience

To date, there is no robust evidence on either early attrition from HE or the degree-level attainment of Muslim students. However there are longstanding and substantial differences across all ethnic groups in relation to retention. Retention rates for all non-White groups, except for Chinese, are lower than for White students. Non-continuation rates for Black students have fallen from almost 14% in 2003-4 to less than 11% in 2013-14; for Asian students the fall has been from 8% to just above 7%; for White students the fall is from just over 8% to just below 8% (HEFCE, 2016b). A small but notable number of our participants commented on the difficulties they had transitioning into university (in particular) which arose in part from their negative school experiences and which were compounded by the inadequate information, advice and guidance they had received.

*I reluctantly went to university. Reluctant is a very strong word, but I did anyway and I changed my degree 21 times 'cos I didn't know what I wanted to be. I had no idea what I wanted to do and in the end I chose my degree based on the fact that I love to read and I love to write and that's why I did an English and Creative Writing degree. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

As with other students, the social and cultural life of the Muslim participants in our study was affected by peer friendships (positive or negative), while a sense of belonging was shaped by being a minority student or not. In particular, recognition of their Muslim identity shaped their sense of belonging and fitting in (or otherwise) which in turn had implications for retention:

*I didn't attend university at all in the first year. Never attended tutorials or lectures. I bunked my exams. It's crazy. I don't know where my head was at. I then couldn't go back the following year because I hadn't passed the first year, so I had to repeat the first year, but I wasn't allowed to attend lectures, so I just had to do the exams at the end. (London FG: male)*

Difficulties caused by being in a minority were, however, less marked than at school, although alcohol or being required to socialise in places serving alcohol was an inhibitor to integration:

*I mean even now at university when they're all going out to drink or whatever I'm like 'Yeah, it's alright' and I've explained to them I don't drink and then I don't think that they understand, they're like 'Oh just come, you won't drink, you will just have like a Pepsi or whatever' and they still don't understand, I am like 'No, I don't really feel comfortable going in to a pub/bar' and I think they still don't understand. (Liverpool FG 2: female)*



There was concern amongst the participants however that a level of racism and discrimination remained pervasive, although not all of those who attended university commented on this:

*I think between the students you don't notice any discrimination or anything, but there are some lecturers that discriminate against Muslims. I've known some and I've experienced it. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

*It started even with the mentor at uni, she just said basically when she came and observed me, she said because of my accent that I will find it really hard to find a job, because I have to have a proper English accent to be able to teach the children. (Leeds FG: female)*

### Completing a degree and degree attainment

The ethnic degree attainment gap<sup>8</sup> in the UK is 15.2 percentage points: 75.6% of White qualifiers graduating in the 2013/14 academic year received a first/2:1 compared with 60.4% of Black and Minority ethnic (BME) qualifiers (ECU, 2015). Since Muslim students are, almost exclusively, also BME students, *ipso facto*, both their retention and their attainment will invariably be below that of White students. However, between 2003/04 and 2013/14, the increase in qualifiers receiving a first/2:1 has been largest among Asian students: Bangladeshi qualifiers (19.7 percentage point increase), followed by Asian: Indian (19.3 percentage points) and Pakistani qualifiers (18.1 percentage points) (ECU, 2015). For White qualifiers the proportion receiving a first/2:1 increased by 12.5 percentage points (ECU, 2015).

In itself the attainment gap might not be significant (other than, of course, as an issue of equity and social justice). However, to manage high volumes of applications, top employers screen out lower-performing applicants: over 75% of graduate employers demand at least a 2:1 degree (Media FHE Ltd, 2015). Moreover, these same employers recruit primarily from the Russell Group and research intensive universities: the five universities currently targeted by the largest number of leading graduate employers are Warwick, Manchester, Bristol, Cambridge and Leeds (High Fliers Research, 2017), whereas Muslim students are more likely to study in the post-92 sector. Therefore, Muslim students will invariably, again *ipso facto*, be excluded from direct access to many high-status postgraduate jobs which has implications for social mobility. In addition, most postgraduate courses require students to have gained a 2:1 or above; thus Muslim students are likely to be directly excluded from routes into academia, for example, which typically requires staff to have a doctorate.

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<sup>8</sup> The ethnicity degree attainment gap is calculated: % white first/2:1 - % BME first/2:1.

The causes of the attainment gap are complex; however, for all the participants in this research, the quality of their academic experience was perceived as having a direct link to their attainment. Some recounted excellent and positive relationships with lecturers who offered significant support and who made it possible for them to attain well. Others described their experiences of racism and blamed (at least on some level) such racism for preventing them achieving their potential:

*I had one tutor in particular who was incredibly, incredibly, openly prejudiced, which went through complaint procedures and all sorts of things, about how marking was done and all sorts of things. So uni was tough, but I did enjoy it. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

As with all the experiences recounted in this report, experiences of university or college were highly diverse. A consistent refrain across the data, however, was that students' parents continued to play a strong and supportive role throughout their children's studies, offering where they could financial, emotional and/or academic support. However, many of the participants commented that because of their parents' own lack of employment success (some, not all) they were not always sufficiently prepared for employment. Whilst this may be true of other disadvantaged groups it is likely to be felt more keenly by Muslims as they have the lowest of all employment rates including at postgraduate or managerial level (House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, 2016). As the Social Mobility Commission's research shows (Friedman, Laurison and Macmillan, 2017), this is significant since the odds of an individual with a professional or managerial parent ending up in professional employment themselves are 2.5 times higher than the odds of someone from any other background ending up in professional employment.

Compounding this lack of parental support was the perception that universities and colleges failed to provide young Muslims with sufficient and/or non-stereotypical careers information and guidance, as well as advice on volunteering opportunities, internships, work experience opportunities, mentoring or possible avenues for networking or building up contacts. Again this may be similarly experienced by other disadvantaged groups. However - as evidenced throughout this report - not only do many Muslims experience high levels of deprivation, they may also lack access to the sorts of social networks that can ameliorate other forms of disadvantage.

## **Conclusions: Further and Higher Education**

1. There is a lack of schools-based information, advice and guidance for young Muslims (to help inform decision-making in relation to A-level or equivalent choices, choice of course and/or choice of institution). Parents may also lack the requisite capital, knowledge or access to social networks to help their children make informed choices. This can result in young Muslims making

poor choices about where or what to study and have long-term implications for social mobility.

2. Constraints on where young Muslims, particularly young female Muslims, study (be they cultural, familial or self-imposed constraints in terms of wanting and needing to stay 'safe', or arising from poor information, advice and guidance) affect possibilities for accessing 'high status' institutions.
3. Inequitable access to high status universities, compounded by young Muslims having significantly lower degree attainment than their White non-Muslim peers, inhibits subsequent access to high status employment and thus has direct implications for social mobility.
4. The practices and policies of higher education are at times enacted in ways which feel discriminatory or racist. These practices are often under-challenged or under-addressed which can contribute to young Muslims feeling unsupported or not accessing support. This can, in turn, result in them aiming low, and thus being unable to achieve their potential.

## Section 6: Employment and the Workplace<sup>9</sup>

The drivers for the complex patterns of disadvantage and diversity described in this report include structural injustices such as inequalities determined by poverty and geography which in turn influence educational experience and attainment. In addition, the 'othering' of Muslims by employers and colleagues through Islamophobia, racism, discrimination and harassment in the labour market can further increase this disadvantage (Spalek and McDonal, 2010). Limited social networks, cultural traditions and attitudinal differences (such as women not expected to work) also vary across different Muslim groups and families and can compound the complex interplay of these factors.

All of these aspects of disadvantage were evident across our data, although experienced more significantly by some individuals than others. Those from low socio-economic backgrounds were the most disadvantaged as they lacked social as well as economic capital, the presence of which can work to ameliorate disadvantage.

### Attitudes towards employment

Among the responses, there were generally very high levels of aspiration, motivation and work ethic expressed, but it was perceived by individuals that on a personal level (and for Muslims as a whole) they needed to work harder than their White British/non-Muslim counterparts to make the same progress. Financial independence was an important driver for some, and this had shaped the employment aspirations and determination of both men and women to succeed in the careers they had often studied hard for.

For some women, however, encouragement to do well at school, college and in some cases university, was not always matched by encouragement by families or the desire themselves to pursue paid work that did not fit around family priorities and local opportunities.

*Times have changed and there are more women in education and employment but long term, we still see that no matter how educated she is, we see her role is still in the house. ...It's very, very rare that you'll find both (Yemeni) Muslim parents working and a child-minder looking after the kids. (Sheffield FG2: female)*

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<sup>9</sup> Author: Bernie Stiehl

Although gendered obligations and traditional male 'breadwinner' and female 'homemaker' roles were discussed as factors leading to restricted employment choices of some of the Muslim women, for many others there was an acknowledgment that these traditional family pressures and attitudes towards women were changing. Even within the current generation, it was perceived to be easier for younger siblings to 'break through' these expectations as older siblings succeeded in employment and moved away to university or for work.

*Essentially that's when I left Birmingham, moved to Northamptonshire which was really interesting because in our culture, girls don't do that. You don't leave home, especially if you're not married. You definitely don't go live on your own and be financially independent and all of those sorts of things. And but after my dad's initial 'don't leave home, please!', he had a real... actually this is based on your future, so yes actually, go for it, make it happen. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

Despite changes in some families and cultures around the expectations for Muslim women in the workplace, men were still seen as the main earner and provider for the family - regardless of their educational success.

Not all of those who participated in the research had either gained or been able to remain in full-time employment. A small number of those interviewed had been unemployed for some time. In part, they explained that this was due to a lack of high-level English (those who were first generation) or insufficient qualifications. However there were also perceptions that employers would 'prefer to employ white staff'. Moreover, a number of other young Muslim participants were working part-time. Whilst for some this was a choice (as they were also studying or had caring responsibilities), for others it was the result of not being able to find full-time employment.

*I was part-time for a long time; just working there when they would give me the hours. And even when I was working more hours than someone who was full-time they still said I was part-time. (Leeds FG 2: male)*

There is emerging evidence that Muslims, along with other BME groups, are more likely to be in low-paid, temporary or zero-hours contracted work (TUC, 2017)<sup>10</sup>. Although the causes of these disparities are not yet well researched, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) believes that (TUC, 2017, p. 2):

*race discrimination plays a major role in explaining these inequalities, as does the lack of access to employment opportunities for BAME workers.*

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note here that Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers do not fare as badly as Black workers, who are the most disadvantaged group, however they fare much less well than White workers do (TUC, 2017).

*The growth of insecure work has exacerbated the inequalities that BAME workers already face.*

This is reflected in our findings where a number of participants reported that they believed being from a BME background or being Muslim meant that employers were reluctant to take them on full-time, either because they believed they would need to take time off for religious reasons or because they were overly prejudiced.

*I went for one job and it was near Ramadan and they just said 'no thank you'. I think they thought I wouldn't turn up for weeks. (Leeds interview: male)*

*We speak relatively well. There's other people who don't communicate very well, as in that very Muslim or Pakistani bubble, that find it very tough to get employed. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

This was particularly so for the women in our study:

*I don't think they want us [Muslim] workers but then they get desperate so they have to have us. But they don't really want us. So they give us as few hours as they can and if they have someone who can do the job instead then you just get told 'thank you, not needed'. (Leeds FG2: female)*

## Recruitment

Recruitment processes for young Muslims entering the workplace can be a barrier to success. Within a highly competitive job market, like their majority peers, young Muslims face repeated rejection at application and interview stages, but also face discrimination in addition to these challenges. The widespread evidence of discrimination in the applications process, such as the research by Wood et al (Wood, Hales, Purdon, Sejersen and Oliver, 2009) into employers' responses to applicants with white and ethnic-sounding names, was reflected in the experience of our participants:

*[I wasn't getting interviews and] I couldn't understand why. So me and [the person] who is now my housemate, and who is white British, said, I think we should go for the same job – she doesn't have a degree and I do have a degree. ... the role said that a degree was essential, and [my] level of experience was essential. She said let's just trial it. Let's both apply for this job ...and she was [saying] you should get an interview and I shouldn't. That was the basis, based on what was written on that piece of paper. And I got a rejection letter and she got an interview. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

Even with all the necessary educational qualifications and experience, higher status employment can still remain out of reach. Discrimination can be perceived and experienced as an issue at the interview stage:

*There was a job interview I went to once and they did say what's your religious background? I was like, hmmm, do you really need to know that? – I don't know why you do. And it's one of the questions you have to answer. I don't see how it relates to a role. (Oxford FG 1: female)*

Lack of informal networks and financial, social, cultural resources or soft skills were also identified as making it more difficult to progress in the labour market. As highlighted by some of our participants, immigrant parents often are not in a position to guide their children's access to employment. If the second generation are also in residentially segregated areas, then they too may have limited access to and knowledge of the mainstream social and civic organisations and informal professional networks – issues also cited in the literature (for example Reynolds & Birdwell, 2015).

Often, structural and systemic factors such as discrimination are difficult to identify or prove, so lack of recruitment success was sometimes seen in terms of personal, individual deficits or failures. Self-blaming reasons were cited as to why some Muslims find it more difficult to get through the application and interview process, or sometimes attributed to lack of experience when the reasons for rejections were unknown:

*I've had many interviews for HR - HR admin roles, just like...junior roles, but if the other person has got more experience than you...And I've had that a fair amount. I've almost got the job, but it's just that one person who's got that much more. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

Sometimes perceptions or anticipation of discrimination in some sectors and careers deter Muslims from applying for jobs in the first place:

*I didn't even bother applying to the big graduate recruiters because I didn't want to work for a big organisation which might not have time to look after its staff properly... I was concerned that I might feel exposed there, as a Muslim who needs to pray regularly. (Leeds interview: male)*

A range of factors operating at the recruitment stage therefore mean that many young Muslims do not get their foot in the door for jobs, careers and sectors to start with. This is compounded for young Muslims from low socio-economic backgrounds who commented that they lacked access to the sorts of opportunities which would enable them to gain internships or lacked sufficient resources to undertake unpaid work experience.

*I just couldn't do anything other than work for my family as they needed me there. So all the things other people were doing like travelling abroad to work or moving to London for the summer; that just wasn't possible for me. (Leeds interview: male)*

*So at university we were all encouraged to go and find work experience or get an internship but I just didn't know where to start, I really didn't. In [country of origin] no one does anything like that. (Leeds FG: female)*

Although the number of paid internships is increasing (High Fliers, 2017) accessing these remains highly competitive. Research by Debrett's (2016) evidences that coming from a privileged background, being privately educated and having a network of contacts were the keys to gaining an internship. Of the 3000 young people they surveyed, 72% had used family connections to obtain an internship, whilst those privately educated were twice as likely to get internships in London as children from state schools<sup>11</sup>. It is also worth noting here that the High Fliers Research (2017, p. 23) found that a third of the 'top' employers they surveyed stated that:

*it was either 'not very likely' or 'not at all likely' that a graduate who'd had no previous work experience at all would be successful during their selection process and be made a job offer, irrespective of their academic achievements or the university they had attended.*

## Types and status of employment/occupation

Our sample included Muslim men and women who had varied routes into employment. Some had started entry-level jobs directly from school or college and had since experienced different levels of progression, whilst others had entered graduate-level, professional employment. The choices they made therefore varied accordingly. As noted above, however, the information, advice and guidance the young Muslims in this study had been given in relation to employment was not always helpful (e.g. due to stereotypical ideas of employment possibilities) or was largely absent. There was little evidence that schools saw apprenticeships as a viable route for young Muslims although there was some evidence to the contrary:

*There's a kid right now, like I said, she doesn't do well in exams, but now they've found her an apprenticeship. They've supported her – full support in her application and everything. And now she's going to go off into like... whilst we're going into uni, she's going into an apprenticeship and she's going to be earning like 15 grand a year. That's way more than what we're*

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<sup>11</sup> As reported in the media (e.g. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/30/debretts-poll-privilege-internships-private-school>).



*ever going to earn, like at the moment. And she doesn't have to do any exams or anything like that. But because they supported her so much. That's what needs to be seen in all other schools. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Moreover, there was evidence that their choices of employer or occupation were restricted in different ways. Whilst the private sector was sometimes seen as providing more financial rewards and opportunities, the public sector (particularly 'caring professions') was considered by some Muslim women participants as offering more family-friendly career opportunities. However, this view was also challenged, for example the shift-working and the stress of nursing was reported to offer less flexibility than the retail sector.

Religious values directly influenced the choices made by some Muslims, for example, by avoiding work in bars, clubs, restaurants or outlets that involved selling or consuming alcohol or gambling. Part-time, casual student working opportunities were therefore more restricted as well as long-term choices of careers or sectors. This was an influence on both Muslim men and women in their choices of employers. The restrictions on Muslim women were often greater, with some participants expressing their preference for working in the 'safer' local community that was familiar to them, where family and community were seen as a priority and support. Discrimination and Islamophobia were also perceived to be more of a threat further from home, thus restricting their opportunities and job searches to their local area even though that reduced choices and pay.

*I was born and bred here...went to uni...but I wouldn't allow my daughter to study or work in another city. That is because you've been brought up with those values yourself, not because I don't trust her, I just fear for her. Her safety worries me the most. At the same time I don't want her to lose who she is, her culture. Keeping her closer to me makes me feel more comfortable. At the moment, and that has been going on for the last couple of years, I do fear that my daughter will be attacked at a time, acid thrown at her, something bad happen if she's got her scarf on. If she can be home in 1 hour is different to if she's 3-4 hours away when something happens. (Sheffield FG2: female)*

As Ahmad et al (Ahmad, Modood, and Lissenburgh, 2003) also point out, for women who follow stricter rules relating to travelling distances without a mahram (chaperon), jobs involving commuting or moving to a new location can be too challenging. However although the data on the numbers of women who are required to have a mahram is unknown it is likely to be low. Geographical limitations may also be exacerbated if Muslim women (and men) have immediate or extended family responsibilities and connections that they must continue to attend to. Despite this, many of our participants observed changes in attitudes towards women working, as more role models lead the way.

## Appraisal, pay and progression

Muslims are under-represented in the 'top professions' (higher and lower managerial and professional occupations) compared with other religious/non-religious groups, with only 16% of British Muslims holding professional or managerial jobs compared to a national average of 30%; in addition, the gender gap within the Muslim community is also larger than for any other religious group (ONS, 2015, cited in Reynolds and Birdwell, 2015).

While there was evidence from our participants that determination and persistence in gaining employment was reaping some benefits, many also reported difficulties in making progress as their experience and skills increased but without the commensurate recognition and reward:

*They send me people, white people, any colour, I train them. I told them I'm not there for training people because I'm not getting that money for training, you know, so I'm staying there the same level...they prefer another person and colour to do their things, they're happier you know, but I trained them. (Leeds FG: male)*

*Three years into the role, I kept being promised I would progress and I'd be promoted. And it never happened. I remained on the same salary. But there was no feedback to tell me... actually I need to be doing this in order for that to happen. It was just 'no, everything is great', but nothing ever happened. It was a lot of sort of broken promises. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

In some cases, these struggles can lead to 'giving up', or just surviving at work rather than progressing or aspiring:

*No, everyone knows, you know, everyone knows about it [lack of promotion] so what to do? Because I'm sticking there to have money to pay my rent, not get out and go and find another job and go to Job Seeker, you know, so anything, just to survive, you know. That's it, clock in, clock out. (Leeds FG: male).*

Moreover the young Muslims in this study stated that they routinely experience or are aware of others who experience discrimination or racism on an everyday basis, and at all points in the process of applying for, gaining, sustaining and being successful in the workplace. Persistent experiences of this had deterred entry to some types of employment and progression, as there was a perception and fear that workplaces will treat them differently. Negative discrimination is expected, even if qualifications and abilities are equal:

*I think if you come equal to another individual who is non-Muslim and from a white background, and you come with equal qualifications and equal abilities, they would favour someone who is not from the minority.  
(Liverpool FG 1: female)*

## Workplace interactions and challenges

Being in a minority in the workplace often means constantly being aware and working hard to be accepted and fit in. Everyday workplace interactions can be a challenge, for example dealing with colleagues' or customers' lack of knowledge or understanding of Islam - often reported as resulting in feeling 'othered', different, separate or feared - as well as experiencing or feeling discrimination more directly:

*Since 9/11 things have gone downhill. It's not always direct or verbally. I went on safeguarding training and I was early and sat at a table. Not one single person came to sit next to me until everything other seat had gone. The trainer had to tell them to come and sit at my table, it was so embarrassing. (Sheffield FG: female)*

*When Brexit happened, more people came out and said I voted leave because of the immigrants. My sister teachers in a school where the majority of teachers voted leave... How do they teach children about tolerance and understanding different cultures?...She sees teachers discriminating and excluding black children but not white children for the same thing. She tries to raise it but they brush it under the carpet. Every day she feels frustrated and angry, but sometimes you have to stay to prove a point, that we're not that type of person and change things. But these people can turn against you, when it's 20 to 1 how can you survive?  
(Sheffield FG 2: female)*

Relationships with managers and colleagues were often affected by comments, attitudes and misunderstandings which were considered to impact perceptions, networking, and ultimately success in the workplace.

*Actually there was another time when a director had come to our sort of branch... and I was growing a beard, he said 'Oh, are you growing a Muslim beard are you?' and I was just like 'Ermm, I just haven't shaved for a week' or whatever it was, and it was just his comment of have you got a beard, it's a Muslim beard, and I felt a bit-. Again, those kinds of things were quite awkward, I suppose. (Oxford interview: male)*

*You have to work ten times harder to be noticed. Push yourself to get ahead....fight to make sure you are not overlooked. (Leeds interview: female)*

In addition, the role of alcohol in social interactions outside work hours or as part of the 'way deals are done' also disadvantaged some young Muslims (and others known to them), and was perceived as having reduced their chances of promotion within certain occupations:

*I would struggle to make relationships. And I've seen other people who are from our kind of Muslims and that, struggle more with the people side. The other thing is obviously I don't drink, so it's a huge social impact, not drinking. I think also... so, it's a client-based role. Always working with people from your customer. And you just... I believe that it's easier for people from the same group to get on. (London FG: male)*

The need to frequently challenge others' cultural assumptions, or feeling compelled to represent, defend and explain the practices and actions of all Muslims, was regularly cited as a workplace issue that felt like an additional pressure and challenge.

For Muslim women, wearing the headscarf at work presented further dilemmas, as this was an additional visual marker of difference that was perceived and experienced as leading to further discrimination:

*It's quite similar in my workplace where there are not that many Muslims around and since I started wearing the headscarf, I identified as Muslim walking into that building and I think quite often you do stand out. I've been quite confident that I can be with any group of people and have a chat and blend in, but actually I find that a little bit harder now [I wear the headscarf]. (London FG: female)*

## Workplace strategies and success

Some young Muslims have learned coping strategies to deal with harassment, racism or Islamophobia in the workplace:

*You're... we're trying just a little bit harder. I'm a little bit more friendly, just so there's not a barrier between you and the other person, you're not just some person walking in with a headscarf that they cannot have a conversation with. (London FG: female)*

Role models can be key to support and success:

*I ended up working for a social enterprise consultancy, with a lot of people of faith, and it had a very transformative effect on my life. I met successful Muslim people in my community. I was working with brands and companies to help them in a consulting capacity. (London FG: male)*

Not all Muslims reported discrimination and disadvantage. Some participants also identified ways of using their identity to their advantage in the workplace:

*I've been to some super-white areas and, if anything, I feel like it's helped me quite a lot to be the token brown person. It's not caused me any issues. If there's any sort of thing... like discrimination, it kind of works in my way. I work in technology, being a woman, it's really, really easy. You pretty much get every interview you go to. (High Wycombe FG: female)*

## Self-employment

In their analysis of self-employment by ethnicity 2011-2016, the TUC (2017) found that overall self-employment rates had risen by 1.2% between 2011 and 2016 with a higher rise for BME workers (2.2%) than for White (1.1). The overall self-employment rate in 2016 was 15%; however for Pakistanis it was 23.4% and for Bangladeshis 20.3%. It is particularly notable however that although the rate for Pakistanis had fallen over time (down from 25.3%), for Bangladeshis it had risen by a staggering 8.1%.

Given the range of challenges most Muslims reported in seeking and progressing in employment, some of those in our research had sought self-employment as an empowering response to these difficulties, offering new opportunities and safer choices that enabled them to feel more positive. For others, however, it was imposed on them due to problems in the workplace:

*Eventually I found a job and I left it because of how crude and rude people in the environment were. And I couldn't find a job basically after being made redundant. I couldn't understand why... Even though I can be quite hard work, there was something about me based on what I'd done, that I was employable. And that's when I decided just to go it alone, essentially, and take a risk. I thought the risk of not doing it was higher than the risk of continually... I just found it demoralising. It knocked my confidence massively and I'm a fairly confident sort of person... If you want to have any hope of doing it, you need to sort of go it alone. (Oxford FG2: female)*

The levels of self-employment amongst some BME groups is of particular concern since those who are self-employed earn on average 60% of the median annual rate of an employee per year whilst 45% of those self-employed aged 25 or over are paid below the National Living Wage (TUC, 2017).

## Conclusions: Employment and the Workplace

1. Muslims (Pakistani and Bangladeshis) are more likely to be unemployed, under-employed or in insecure employment than White workers. They are

also paid less than their non-Muslim peers. This has both direct and indirect implications for their social mobility.

2. The lack of schools-based information, advice and guidance for young Muslims to help inform career choice and help develop employability skills can result in young Muslims lacking knowledge about the workplace and/or how to access employment commensurate with their educational attainment.
3. A lack of informal networks and financial, social, cultural resources or soft skills makes it more difficult for some young Muslims to access and progress in the labour market. This is particularly compounded by a lack of access to paid or unpaid internships or work experience.
4. A lack of careful monitoring of recruitment practices and decision-making at the point of recruitment or advancement may be exacerbating the likelihood of discrimination. This is penalising Muslims (amongst other BME groups) entering the workplace, preventing them translating educational gains into employment.
5. Racism and discrimination in the workplace is working to limit aspiration and prevent young Muslims from 'aiming high' and fulfilling their potential.
6. Self-employment rates for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are significantly higher than for other groups which has significant implications for household poverty and thus for social mobility.

## Section 7: Political, Cultural & Economic Environment<sup>12</sup>

The Council of Europe's Commission on Racism and Intolerance 2010 UK country report (ECRI, 2016) noted that “Muslims, migrants and asylum seekers [and] Gypsies/Travelers are regularly presented in a negative light in the mainstream media”. These concerns were picked up by the Leveson enquiry and subsequent report into UK press standards (House of Commons, 2012) which also stated that: “discriminatory, sensational or unbalanced reporting in relation to ethnic minorities, immigrants and/or asylum seekers is a feature of journalistic practice in parts of the press, rather than an aberration”.

### The media and its portrayal of Muslims

Perhaps unsurprisingly those who participated in the focus groups or interviews held largely negative views about the UK media, believing that media discourses about Muslims, or the stereotypical ways Muslim were portrayed, contributed to difficulties they might experience in being fully accepted by their non-Muslim peers. Of particular concern was that, as young Muslims, they constantly had to defend their own beliefs when, for example, terrorist attacks took place even when they found such events to be indefensible. The timing of the data collection drew clear attention to this, being undertaken at a time of three different terrorist attacks. The participants were also frustrated that although they might face less racism and Islamophobia than their parents, they continued to have to deal with ignorance and prejudice, exacerbated by stereotypical, inflammatory or careless media reporting. This in turn was perceived as having a negative effect on young Muslims' potential to form positive relationships with others and to integrate successfully:

*It was like they saw a Muslim for the first time and it was just what they see in the media. So honestly you feel like a creature. But I think you just have to prove yourself and be who you are, because you know, you're not going to change yourself. You just have to do what you're doing. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

There were also concerns that Muslims are put on the defensive more than people of other faiths, to answer for events for which they are not personally responsible - such as terrorist events in the news. A particular concern was expressed that, even in supportive environments, young Muslims had to be vocal about their condemnation of 'events' and that White individuals would not be required to behave similarly in the

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<sup>12</sup> Author: Jacqueline Stevenson

same situations (such as the Islamophobic attack on the Finsbury Park mosque which occurred during the data collection period):

*The thing is, what I've noticed as well, is say for example you do make good relationships with people and you get on. Yeah, fine. And then all of a sudden something happens in the news [and] the people that you were so close to are doubting you again! And you have to prove yourself again! You know, that's the most difficult part that I faced. (Liverpool FG1: female)*

However, there was a level of recognition that it was worse for some than others and also that not everyone reacted in such extreme ways:

*Apart from school, where we are the minority, we can still gather, we can still be there for each other, we can still have our groups. So it's helped us to develop. But then what does someone who comes into the country and tries to integrate, and faces all this backlash, and has no-one to come back to, no-one to fall back on? What are they going to do? They're going to lose their faith. They're going to face a lot of bullying. They're going to face a lot of backlash. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

*I don't particularly feel the pressure as much, because I know like the friends that I've made, they would reassure me themselves, they would say to me, we know that there is good and bad in everything. We know that it's not you, it's not your religion, we know that. (Liverpool FG 1: female)*

Such perceptions were considered to have a profound and limiting effect on what young Muslims felt they could achieve:

*It really saddens me, because that's what they've been led to believe, or that's how they feel, based on everything that they're faced with and bombarded with, on social media, in the media that they read, people around them. And they feel so angry, and they have such low aspirations, when actually their potential is so much, but genuinely their own self-worth and belief in themselves is so low, based on how they feel. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

A particular concern was that much of the media coverage took little account of how its portrayal of Muslims might be received by, for example, those with family overseas in affected areas:

*They take what the media feed them. And that was a turning point in my life where I felt it was one of the lowest. I was in depression. There was a lot of things going on for my family, because they're there. A lot of things happened. I didn't feel supported in my community, to be honest. The people who I know – because I think they were very involved in themselves they didn't understand as somebody who is from Syria, how would you feel. (Sheffield FG: female)*



Despite such incidents there was still a strong sense that the discrimination faced by young Muslims in Britain today is not as great as the discrimination faced by their parents' generation - even if they still faced persistent racism. What was clear was that they were highly aware of the racism, discrimination, injustices and hardships faced by their parents' generation:

*I remember hearing the stories that he would tell my mum about how angry he got, about how he felt he was mistreated, or the comments that he would get based on what he looked like, or being told that he didn't belong here, and he was claiming off the system. He'd get really angry because he would always say I've never claimed a penny off our system for me or my family or my kids. I work and I work hard to have what I have and I will always do that so I don't ever give people the opportunity. (Oxford FG 2: female)*

### **Conclusions: Political, Cultural & Economic Environment**

Young Muslims feel the need to defend their faith in the face of negative discourses about Muslims in the media, particularly following media reporting on terrorist events. This contributes to difficulties they may already be experiencing in being accepted by their non-Muslim peers, affects their willingness to undertake actions which might potentially make them the further target of hostility, constrains their aspirations, and thus has a limiting effect on their social mobility.

## Section 8: Delphi Study Findings<sup>13</sup>

The three-step Delphi method was used to establish (a level of) consensus across key stakeholders, including young Muslims, about the causes of low social mobility as well as what might be done to redress this. In particular the data helped to triangulate findings from the focus groups and interviews and check that our findings and conclusions reflected broader considerations.

Thirty-five respondents were purposefully selected for Delphi rounds 1 and 2 to provide a sample of those supporting young Muslims in peripheral or more focused ways. This sample included those supporting young Muslims in school, further and higher education settings, representatives from local authority departments, employer umbrella organisations, relevant policy organisations, and academics researching this area. A number of young Muslims were also invited to respond.

Responses were anonymous. Nineteen respondents complete the round 1 survey and 38 completed the round 2 survey. All those who attended the final Summit event (43 attendees) were invited to complete round 3 and of this group 24 completed the survey. See Appendix 5 for demographics on the Delphi survey respondents.

**In round 1**, respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought each of the six themes were in explaining the relatively low social mobility of Muslims in Britain. For each of the six themes, respondents were also asked to consider a range of sub-areas and to indicate how important (on a scale of 0 to 10) they felt each sub-area was in explaining the relatively low social mobility of Muslims in Britain.

**In round 2**, respondents were again asked to respond to each of the six themes; for each of the sub-themes, respondents were asked to consider a number of statements and to indicate their level of agreement from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) with each. The statements for round 2 drew on the responses to round 1 and the discussions emerging from the focus groups.

**In round 3**, respondents were asked to give final responses to the six themes. In addition, recommendations from the Summit event were used to develop a set of broad and wide-ranging recommendations. This survey also elicited qualitative responses designed to further explore possible recommendations.

Table 2 below summarises responses for each of the six themed areas for the three Delphi rounds. Whilst there should be a degree of caution in interpreting all of these statistics, there is a remarkable degree of consistency in the relative rankings of the six themed areas. It seems clear that the three samples identify (i) the Political,

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<sup>13</sup> Author: Sean Demack

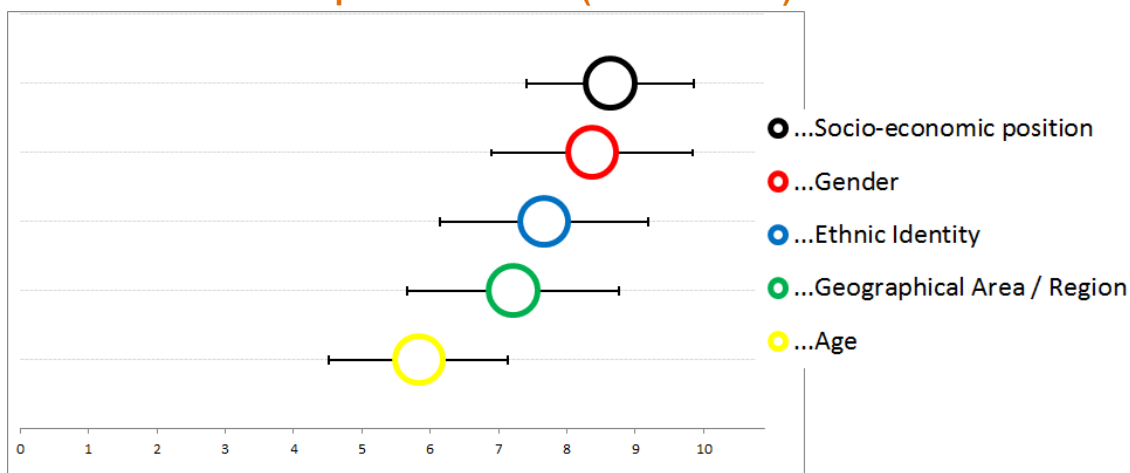
Cultural and Economic Environment; (ii) Employment; and (iii) Social/Community factors as the most important themes in explaining the relatively low social mobility of Muslims in Britain. Schools and Early Education, and Higher Education/University, are seen as less important than these three themes but more important than the Families & the Individual theme.

These patterns echo discussions at the Summit event including during the Respondents' Jury where the need for structural change was a clear point of agreement on the day. Specifically, the findings shown in Appendix 6 suggest the need for change relating to policy and political discourse, media bias, employment practice and law, and community relations. Moreover, the stakeholder respondents suggested that socio-economic considerations must be taken into account when developing interventions.

### Diversity amongst British Muslims

In round 1, respondents were also asked about diversity within the British young Muslim population. Respondents were asked to indicate how important (on a scale of 0 to 10) it was that research and policy took account of five specified dimensions of diversity (age, gender, ethnic identity, geography and socio-economic status<sup>14</sup>). The ranking of socio-economic background accords with findings from the focus groups and interviews. Respondents commented on implications of familial and neighbourhood poverty including the lack of well-paid, high status and/or managerial jobs, and progression to higher education, including to higher status institutions.

**Figure 2: Diversity amongst British Muslims (Round 1)**  
Mean 'importance' score (scale 0 to 10)

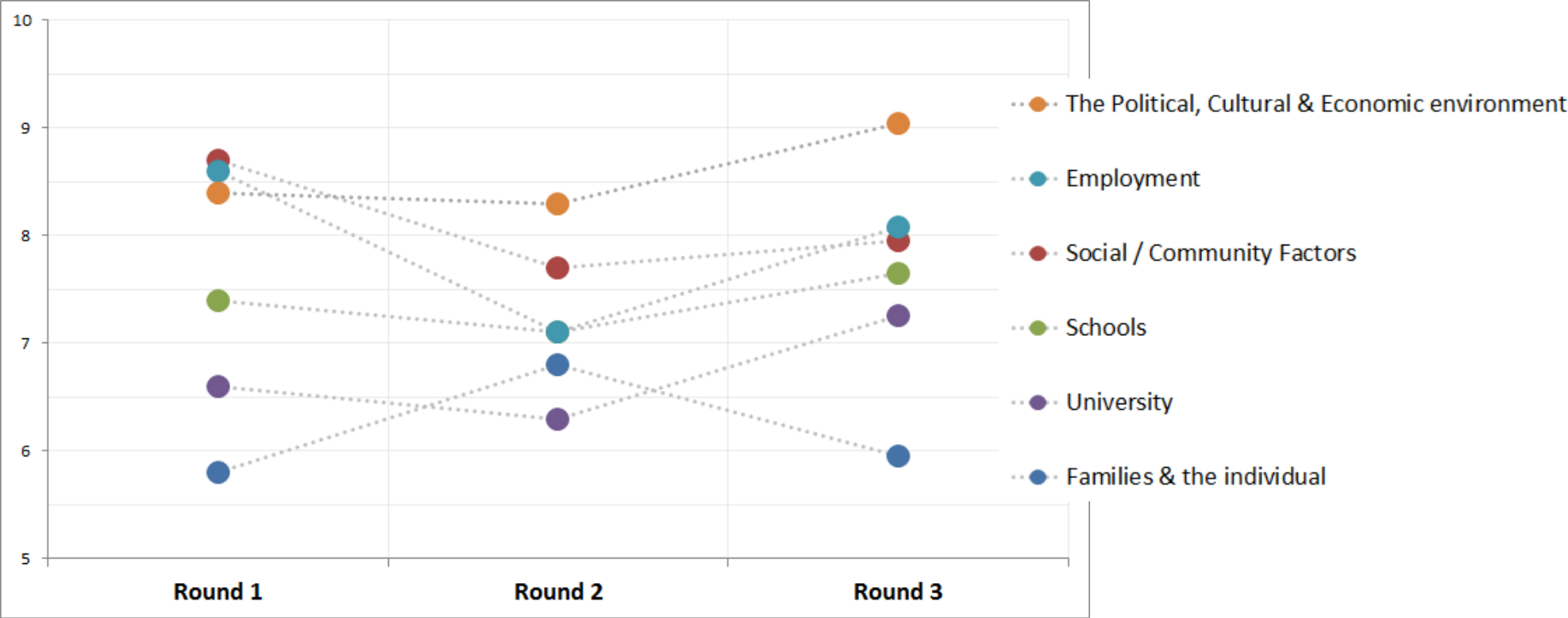


Further substantial findings from the Delphi surveys are presented in Appendix 6.

<sup>14</sup> The mean scores for the Muslim diversity items were highest for socio-economic background (mean=8.6; n=19) followed by gender (mean=8.4, n=19), ethnic identity (mean=7.7, n=18), geography (mean=7.2, n=19) and age (mean=5.8, n=18). Figure 2 summarises responses.

**Table 2: Comparison of six themes (Delphi rounds 1, 2 & 3)**

*Perceived 'importance' on a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) Mean scores (standard deviation)*



## Section 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

The following section draws together our young Muslims' perceptions of their experiences in making the transition from education to employment, as well as their perceptions of the causes of their 'broken promise' of social mobility.

Young Muslims from low socio-economic backgrounds, where parents are new arrivals, and/or where parents do not have high levels of education or wealth, consider background and circumstances as having a fundamental and negative impact on possibilities for social mobility.

Families are highly supportive of young Muslims' aspirations and want them to succeed; however they may not always have sufficient social, cultural or economic capital to facilitate success and enhance the likelihood of social mobility. Muslims from low socio-economic backgrounds in particular may lack sufficient resources and support to enable them to reach their potential. Young Muslims are, however, highly agentic in seeking out and using such capital where it is available to them.

Young Muslims are critical of low expectations and lack of aspiration from teachers and other educational advisors and perceive some setting and streaming practices to be racist. This means that if young Muslims are going to succeed they need to work harder and do significantly more than their White or non-Muslim peers, simply to have the same successes. Whilst such strategies mean that young Muslims are very resilient they also feel the injustices of being forced to adapt in these ways, and for some their identity as young Muslims is at risk.

At school and beyond, single individuals are seen as being vital to attainment, success or failure. The roles of Muslim teachers, mentors and advisors, or those who understand the needs of young Muslims, are key to success; however, these are lacking in the system.

Many young Muslims feel unable to express their own views freely about political or cultural events for fear of being dismissed as 'outsiders' with no right to an opinion on 'British issues', or being judged for their religious or cultural beliefs and motivations. Such fears are compounded by sustained, pejorative and negative media discourses.

Racism and Islamophobia, as experienced, is pervasive, entrenched and frequently unchecked, and operates at both an overt level and in more insidious ways. It is, however, experienced differently by different groups: female Muslims encounter high levels of Islamophobia in relation to dress; Black Muslims face significant racism as well as Islamophobia and so encounter an additional ethnic penalty; first-generation Muslims face racism and hostility in relation to their immigrant status.

The level of casual racism experienced has for some young Muslims become normalised. It thus operates, for some and in some ways, to limit their aspirations. Moreover, failures to check racism or discrimination results in young Muslims having to learn how to deal with these issues themselves which again has implications for their identity as young Muslims.

Experiences may be very different where young Muslims are in the majority or minority in any community (geographically, at home, school, or the workplace). In addition, multicultural London is perceived differently (and more favourably) by many, whereas more segregated cities or rural areas are perceived as being more difficult places for Muslims to live. In contrast, however, those who live surrounded just by members of their own community consider that this could also be restrictive and/or self-limiting in terms of aspiration and awareness of opportunities.

Access to resources varies, with some young Muslims (unsurprisingly) substantially more privileged than others; this is related largely but not exclusively to whether they are new immigrants or second or third generation. The impact of immigration is, for some, ameliorated by parental emphasis on education.

Because of their experiences, young Muslims move into higher education and/or employment bringing with them histories of racist and discriminatory treatment. These histories are, however, largely not recognised or made visible. In addition, threats to a sense of belonging and challenges to identity contribute to cautious or ambivalent attitudes towards employment or education where 'aiming high' is seen as a highly risky strategy and, for some, too risky.

Despite high levels of career aspiration and strong work ethic, young Muslims need to work harder than their White British/non-Muslim peers to make the same progress in accessing and sustaining employment. They face repeated rejection at application and interview stages, perceiving this to be the result of both direct and indirect discrimination. In addition, there is a perception that employers are reluctant to recruit Muslims either because they are prejudiced or hold stereotypical views. Working part-time, on zero hours contracts or in self-employment can result from these combined failures to attain full-time salaried employment.

Not all of the following causes of the 'broken promise' of social mobility apply to all young Muslims or to all sub-groups. Rather, again, they reflect broad findings from across the research.

The causes relate to three key areas:

1. Educational under-attainment, and/or a failure to fulfil educational potential, which can have implications for longer term social mobility.

2. The failure to translate educational outcomes into employment outcomes commensurate with levels of educational attainment and/or potential, which is directly related to social mobility.
3. Broader social, cultural and familial concerns which can prevent young Muslims achieving their potential and can thus more broadly inhibit social mobility.

The specific challenges to social mobility are summarised for each causal area in turn.

#### **A. Educational under-attainment**

1. Fears that they will be targets for overt bullying/harassment based on their appearance, beliefs and their overall 'difference' leads to young Muslims avoiding asking for help and this can affect academic attainment.
2. The low expectations of (some) teachers, including placing Muslim students in lower or middle sets, and a lack of encouragement to take challenging subjects, has a negative impact on the confidence of young Muslims which in turn limits their educational aspiration and attainment.
3. The lack of interpersonal engagement by teachers, the failure of teachers to listen to appeals, and the emphasis on Muslims' own failings for their lack of success has a negative impact on confidence which results in young Muslims 'giving up'.
4. Insufficient and inadequate individual tailored support, guidance and encouragement for young Muslims to take specific subjects, take part in extra-curricular activities, or explore alternative pathways to education or employment limits young Muslims' post-compulsory education choices which in turn affects possibilities for social mobility.
5. Insufficient numbers of Muslim role models in schools, including Muslim teachers, further compounds the poor experiences of many young Muslims and can contribute to their low aspirations or under-attainment.
6. The lack of schools-based information, advice and guidance for young Muslims is most keenly felt if parents also lack the requisite capital, knowledge or access to social networks to help their children make informed choices. This can result in young Muslims making poor choices about where or what to study and have long-term implications for social mobility.
7. Constraints on where young Muslims, particularly young female Muslims, study can affect possibilities for accessing 'high status' institutions.
8. The policies and practices of higher education can be enacted in ways which feel discriminatory or racist and are often under-challenged or under-addressed. This can contribute to young Muslims feeling unsupported or unable to access support resulting in them aiming low and failing to achieve their potential.
9. More traditional views of girls' roles may be reinforced by teachers within private Islamic schools, thereby limiting female aspirations.

## **B. Translating educational outcomes into employment outcomes**

1. Inequitable access to high status universities, compounded by Muslims having significantly lower degree attainment than White non-Muslims, inhibits access to high status employment and thus has direct implications for social mobility.
2. Insufficient access to informal networks and financial, social, cultural resources or soft skills makes it more difficult for young Muslims to access and progress in the labour market. This is compounded by a lack of access to paid internships and/or work experience.
3. The lack of careful monitoring of recruitment practices, as well as decision-making at the point of recruitment or advancement, is exacerbating the likelihood of discrimination. This is penalising Muslims seeking to enter the workplace.
4. Racism and discrimination in the workplace is working to limit aspiration and prevent young Muslims from 'aiming high' and fulfilling their potential.
5. The unemployment, under-employment, insecure employment and low pay of young Muslims have both direct and indirect implications for their social mobility.
6. Cultural norms and values about the role of women may play a part in limiting social mobility if and when communities or families prioritise marriage and motherhood over a young woman's pursuit of a career.

## **C. Broader social, cultural and familial concerns**

1. Parents may lack the social and cultural capital needed to help their children translate their aspirations into educational or employment realities. Middle-class families are better able to successfully navigate and afford the support needed to improve their children's achievements and enhance their potential for social mobility.
2. Neighbourhood poverty, poor resourcing for ESOL teaching, and a lack of recognition of parents' qualifications contribute to low household income. This in turn limits the support that parents are able to offer to their children, which reinforces their low social mobility.
3. Incidences of Islamophobia or racism, and failures to recognise Muslim identity, support isolated minority students or promote peer integration affects young Muslims' self-esteem and self-confidence. This impacts on their educational and career aspirations and ultimately their attainment.
4. Failures to accommodate religious norms, develop understanding of Muslims' needs, or provide information about the lives of ordinary Muslims directly impacts on young Muslims' sense of belonging, compounding feelings of isolation and limiting aspiration.



5. Misconceptions and stereotypical assumptions about Islam or assumptions made about gender expectations can make it difficult for Muslims to engage in meaningful interactions with non-Muslims and/or to integrate effectively.
6. This in turn can shape where young Muslims feel safe and has implications for their geographic mobility and, in turn, their social mobility.
7. Familial safeguarding, designed to prevent young Muslims from exposure to prejudice or discrimination, can result in many young Muslims being educated or working only within their local communities which can constrain possibilities for social mobility.
8. Geographical differences in the availability of high status universities, or postgraduate level employment, can also have profound implications for young Muslims' social mobility.
9. The requirement on young Muslims to defend their faith in the face of negative discourses in the media inhibits integration and constrains aspirations, which can have a limiting effect on social mobility.

## **The Twelve Recommendations**

All those who took part in the focus groups and interviews, as well as the round 1 and round 2 Delphi respondents, were asked to consider how the broken promise of social mobility for young Muslims might be addressed. Responses were varied and somewhat contested. However, reflecting these multiple concerns, we have drawn together 12 recommendations which span all six of the research themes:

1. The issues identified in this report, and by the Women and Equalities Select Committee and others, should be a central consideration in future work of the Government, namely the Department for Communities and Local Government's Integration Strategy. An action plan should be developed to set out how to address, ameliorate or remove the barriers faced by young Muslims which hold them back from realising their potential and becoming more socially mobile.
2. A Steering Group should be formed to help develop and then monitor this action plan on a regular, at least six-monthly, basis. This should include non-Government representatives, including charities, community organisations, academics and Muslims groups in the UK, and relevant Government departments, including the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and the Department for Work and Pensions. This Steering Group should be separate from, but aligned to, the forthcoming findings of the Race Disparity Audit.

3. Regular, independent evaluations should be commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the equality of opportunity in employment in Britain for young Muslims.
4. Informed by an evidence based evaluation of which programmes work<sup>15</sup>, mentoring and other support programmes for young (school-aged) Muslims should be established to include sessions or provision for parents to ensure they are provided with support and information about post-16 choices. Existing mentoring/support initiatives should be extended so that they enable and encourage local role models to return to their communities. The Department for Education should work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to target some of its charity funding on these mentoring programmes.
5. The Department for Education should put in place a careers strategy that promotes informed and inclusive choices by pupils in schools, free from stereotypical assumptions, with the aim of raising aspirations for pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds and providing information on expected returns of different work routes. This should be piloted in schools in areas with high rates of unemployment for people from Muslim communities and include routes for involving parents in understanding these choices. It should be evaluated through both post-16 outcomes and by measuring student satisfaction.
6. The Department for Education should require that all Initial Teacher Training includes sophisticated and practical diversity training with a particular focus on religious diversity, as well as the development of cultural competencies. In addition, there should be a review of the training offered to teachers who teach religious education, as well as research into who delivers religious education in schools and the skills and training they have received to do so.
7. Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions should collect and monitor data on religion/belief. Routine monitoring of access, retention and success of Muslim students should take place, including the further and higher education attainment of students from different religious backgrounds. Performance indicators should be set by the UK's Higher Education Funding Councils in relation to both religious and ethnic access, retention and success in HE.
8. HE institutions should ensure that all work placements take place in organisations that are inclusive, based on a common understanding of what an inclusive experience is. This should be made clear to all providers of work placements and students should be enabled and encouraged to anonymously

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<sup>15</sup> Based on criteria including raising aspirations, increased information and support for the most disadvantaged.

alert the HE institution should they encounter issues relating to inclusiveness or discrimination while undertaking any work placement in connection with their course.

9. The Careers & Enterprise Company should have a goal or target to recruit a diverse network of Enterprise Advisers and Coordinators and mentors that reflect the population of young people. It should provide information in its Annual Report showing how well it is performing in relation to this objective. They should also monitor the demographic backgrounds of mentees engaged through their Mentoring Fund grants to ensure strong and representative diversity of backgrounds.
10. The Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy should jointly fund career-start mentoring schemes for disadvantaged young people, particularly NEETs. This should be targeted in areas with large Muslim populations and requiring mentoring providers to recruit mentors from more diverse pools and with high levels of cultural competence.
11. The Confederation of British Industry, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and trade bodies should promote greater awareness and take-up by employers of good training provision in unconscious bias, diversity, religious literacy and cultural competence. This should include the development of guidance to promote inclusive practices regarding workplace culture, work placements and work experience, in particular to address racist behaviours and attitudes experienced by Muslims.
12. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should undertake or commission a detailed analysis of pay differentials between BME and, where possible, Muslim and non-Muslim workers disaggregated in relation to sector/industry, concentration of types of employment (e.g. rural or industrial areas) and modes of employment.

## Glossary of Terms

**BME:** Black and Minority Ethnic, the terminology conventionally used in the UK to describe people of non-White heritage. (We use this term while recognising that it can be problematic, contested and that the sub-groups falling within it are not homogeneous.)

**Deductive research:** an approach to research that aims to testing existing theory, beginning with a hypothesis, in contrast to **Inductive research**.

**Delphi:** a research survey method used in this research project to derive quantitative data from qualitative themes and ideas gathered from stakeholder respondents in order to build stakeholder consensus.

**ESOL:** English for Speakers of Other Languages.

**FE or Further Education:** referring to the sector itself or to courses of education or training for people over compulsory school age (currently 16 in England) which do not take place in a secondary school. Further Education courses are generally up to the standard of GCE A-level or NVQ Level 3.

**HE or Higher Education:** referring to the sector itself or to programmes of study which count towards qualifications at Level 4 and above, including degree courses, postgraduate courses and sub-degree courses such as HNCs or HNDs. Higher Education providers include all publicly funded universities and other HE institutions in the UK.

**HEFCE:** The Higher Education Funding Council for England.

**Inductive research:** a research approach which aims to generate new theory from emerging data, without using pre-conceptualised categories but with specific research questions to define the scope of the investigation.

**Initial Teacher Training or ITT:** programme of undergraduate or postgraduate education and training leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) and encompassing in-school training or placements as well as formal academic teaching at HE institutions. ITT may be provider (HE)-led or school-led.

**Islamophobia:** Throughout this report we use the *Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism's* definition (FAIR, no date), being: “the fear, hatred or hostility directed towards Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia affects all aspects of Muslim life and can be expressed in several ways, including: attacks, abuse and violence against Muslims; attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim cemeteries; discrimination

in education, employment, housing, and delivery of goods and services; lack of provisions and respect for Muslims in public institutions.” Of note, however, this is a contested term<sup>16</sup>.

**Racism:** the less favourable treatment of any individual or group on the grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins.

**Respondents’ Jury:** a panel of six young Muslim respondents, convened for the Summit event, who listened to the research findings presented and gave feedback based on their personal experiences. Following the jury members’ contributions, debate was widened to all event participants to discuss potential formal recommendations arising out of the research.

**Summit event:** a one-day event held jointly by Sheffield Institute of Education and the Social Mobility Commission at Sheffield Hallam University on 10 July 2017 to share early quantitative and qualitative findings of this research project with 43 stakeholder participants and to gather their reflections and perspectives.

**White:** the term conventionally used in the UK to describe people of the majority ethnic group. (We use this term while recognising that the sub-groups falling within it are not homogeneous.)

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, papers presented at the Thinking Thru’ Islamophobia symposium (Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, 2008).

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Inductive Focus Group Questions

- Do you think you did as well at school as you could have done?
  - Why do you think this?
  - Who supported you at school?
  - Who should have supported you but didn't?
  - What additional support would have helped? (Probe: at school, at home, beyond?)
- Can you describe your transition from school or further or higher education into employment.
  - Did you face any barriers? If so can you describe these?
  - How did you overcome these (if at all)?
  - What strategies did you adopt to try and gain employment?
  - How successful were these?
  - What else could you have done?
  - What else could others have done to support these transitions?
- Do you feel you have attained the level of employment you should have done (if employed)?
  - Why do you think this?
  - What has enabled you to attain the level of employment you have?
  - What form did this support take?
  - What has worked against you?
  - What might have made a difference?
- If appropriate: Why do you think you have struggled to gain a job at a level commensurate with your level of education?
  - Who could have done more to support you?
  - Why do you think this support didn't happen?
  - Do you think you have faced any discrimination?
  - Can you give some examples of this?
  - What did you do (if anything)?
- Overall, do you think you/other young Muslims have had a fair chance to get on in life and achieve their potential?
  - Do you feel you have had more/different opportunities (better chances in life) than your parents' generation? (probe experience/impact of migration vs being born here)
  - How does your experiences differ from theirs and why?
  - What has changed?
  - How do you think the chances/opportunities of those younger than you/young Muslims in the future will change?
- What do you think schools, colleges/universities, employers and the Government could do to improve this situation?

## Appendix 2: Deductive Focus Group Questions

### Families & the Individual: Familial knowledge and networks

- How have your parents supported you in terms of education or employment?
- Do you think your parents have been able to support you as much as you might have needed? Why do you think this?
- Do you think the experiences of young Muslims differ by their gender? If so, how and why do you think this is?

### Recommendations

- How can we recognise and support young people who hold differing beliefs and expectations to their families or communities?

### Social/Community Factors: Belonging and integration

- To what extent do you feel a sense of belonging in your
  - a) Muslim community and
  - b) wider non-Muslim community?
  - why is this? what works to make you feel you belong? what works against this?
- To what extent, if any does Islamophobia, Discrimination &/or Racism affect your everyday experiences?
- How do these things affect how integrated you feel in your wider non-Muslim communities?

### Recommendations

- How could these issues be addressed?
- Prompts:
  - To help develop a sense of belonging for young Muslims?
  - To support better integration?
  - To tackle casual racism and everyday discrimination?
  - To better educated non-Muslims about the contributions Muslims make to the UK and more widely?

### Schools and Early Education

- What barriers have you experienced at school and how did this affect you?
- Prompts:
  - Have you experienced any discrimination at school, or in any other educational setting? what form did this take?

## **Recommendations**

- How can educators best work with parents to ensure that we enable young people to reach their potential?
- How can educators work with girls in particular to help them reach their potential?
- How can and should discriminatory practices in educational settings be better challenged and addressed?

## **Further and Higher Education: Barriers, aspiration and attainment**

- Have there been any barriers to you accessing or being successful in FE/HE? in what ways has this affected you?
- What are your aspirations beyond FE/HE?

## **Recommendations**

- What could and should be done to support better integration in further and higher educational settings, particularly where Muslim students are in the minority?

## **Employment and the Workplace**

- What have been your experiences of employment?
- Have you experienced any discrimination in seeking employment or in the workplace? if so in what ways?
- What effect has experiencing discrimination had on you?
- In what ways do you think the experiences of Muslim men and women differ in finding work/in the workplace?

## **Recommendations**

- What support could be offered to young Muslims to better prepare them for employment?
- What more can be done to address workplace discrimination?

## **Political, Cultural & Economic Environment: Fairness, Stereotyping and Media Representations**

- Do you feel you have had more/different opportunities (better chances in life) than your parents' generation? (probe experience/impact of migration vs being born here)
- How does your experiences differ from theirs and why? What has changed?
- How do you think the chances/opportunities of those younger than you/ young Muslims in the future will change?
- How do media representations affect young Muslims?

## **Recommendations**

- How can the media portray Muslims more fairly?

### Appendix 3: Demographic data: Focus group and interview participants

	Location	Country of family origin	Nationality	Muslim <sup>17</sup> sect	Gender	Age	Marital status	High level of education	Current activity
1.	High Wycombe Focus Group	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	Not known	Married	Undergraduate degree	Unemployed
2.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	Not known	Single	A-levels	Working full time (IT)
3.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	29	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (primary school teacher/youth teacher)
4.	Liverpool Focus Group 1	Somaliland	British	Muslim	Female	18	Single	A-levels	FE/college full time
5.		Nigeria	British	Sunni	Female	18	Single	A-levels	FE/college full time & working part time (waitress)
6.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	18	Single	A-levels	FE/college full time
7.		Iraq	British	Muslim	Female	23	Single	Postgraduate degree	University full time
8.		Yemen	British	Muslim	Female	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
9.		Yemen	British	Muslim	Female	23	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
10.		Somalia	Dutch	Sunni	Female	19	Single	A-levels	University full time and working part time (admin)
11.	London Focus Group	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	27	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (financial consultant)
12.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	25	Married	Postgraduate degree	Working full time (scientific researcher)

<sup>17</sup> self identification



13.		Iran	British	Shia	Male	26	Single	Postgraduate degree	Working part time: researcher
14.	Oxford Focus Group 1	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
15.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	20	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time and working part time (sales advisor)
16.		Bangladesh	British	Sunni	Female	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time and working part time (stylist consultant)
17.	Leeds Focus Group 1	Guinea	British	Not known	Male	31	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (construction)
18.		Guinea	British	Not known	Male	29	Single	FE qualification	Working full time (it admin)
19.		Guinea	British	Not known	Female	28	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working part time (admin)
20.		Guinea	British	Not known	Female	29	Married	Postgraduate degree	Working part time (child minder)
21.	Sheffield Focus Group 1	Somaliland	Swedish	Muslim	Female	18	Single	FE qualification	FE/college full time
22.		Somalia	British	Sunni	Male	30	Married	GCSEs	Unemployed
23.	Liverpool Focus Group 2	Yemen	British	Muslim	Female	26	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (biomedical scientist)
24.		Somalia	British	Muslim	Female	18	Single	FE qualification	Working part time (admin)
25.		Yemen	Yemeni	Muslim	Female	22	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (counsellor)
26.		Yemen	British	Muslim	Female	28	Single	Postgraduate degree	Working full time (psychological wellbeing practitioner)
27.	Leeds Focus Group	Guinea	British	Muslim	Male	31	Single	FE qualification	Working full time (call centre)

28.	2	Guinea	British	Muslim	Female	29	Single	FE qualification	Working part time (nursery assistant)
29.		Sudan	British	Muslim	Female	30	Married	No formal qualifications	Unemployed
30.		Sudan	British	Muslim	Male	33	Married	No formal qualifications	Unemployed
31.	Oxford Focus Group 2	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	23	Single	Postgraduate degree	Working full time (schools and colleges liaison assistant)
32.		Uganda and India	British	Not known	Female	28	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (director)
33.	Sheffield Focus Group 2	Pakistan	British	Ahmadiyya	Female	24	Married	Undergraduate degree	University full time
34.		Pakistan	British	Muslim	Female	19	Single	A-levels	University - full time and working part time (sales assistant)
35.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	20	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time and working part time (customer service advisor)
36.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	29	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time and working full time
37.		Syria	British	Ahmadiyya	Female	29	Married	Undergraduate degree	Volunteering
38.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	29	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (centre manager)
39.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	29	Single	A-levels	Working full time (manager)
40.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	26	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (early years practitioner)
41.		Yemen	British	Muslim	Female	26	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (early years practitioner)
42.		Morocco	British	Sunni	Female	28	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (early years practitioner)

43.		Yemen	British	Sunni	Female	26	Married	FE qualification	Working full time (early years teacher)
44.	Leeds Focus Group 3	Pakistan	British	Muslim	Male	19	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
45.		Pakistan	British	Muslim	Male	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
46.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	20	Single	Undergraduate degree	University part time and working full time (it)
47.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
48.	Leeds Focus Group 4	Pakistan	British	Not known	Male	28	Single	A-levels	Working full time (it manager)
49.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	20	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
50.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	22	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
51.		Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	21	Single	Undergraduate degree	University full time
52.	Edinburgh	East Africa	Canadian	Sunni	Male	30	Single	Postgraduate degree	Working part time (lecturer)
53.	Leeds	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	24	Single	A-levels	Working full time (call centre)
54.	Sheffield	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	25	Single	A-levels	Working full time (call centre)
55.	Oxford	Bangladesh	British	Sunni	Female	25	Married	Postgraduate degree	Working full time: community officer (university)
56.	Oxford	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Male	35	Married	Undergraduate degree	Working full time (university manager)
57.	Oxford	Pakistan	British	Shia	Female	23	Single	Undergraduate degree	Working part-time (counter assistant pharmacy)

58.	Oxford	Pakistan	British	Sunni	Female	30	Married	GCSEs	Working full time (student advisor) & other training course)
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## Appendix 4: Research questions cross-referenced by each stage of data collection

Research questions	Lit. review	Delphi 1	Inductive FG Qs	Delphi 2	Deductive FG Qs	Summit event	Delphi 3
1. Young Muslims' views of barriers		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2. Differential perceptions	✓		✓		✓	✓	
3. Fit with literature/stakeholder views	✓	✓		✓		✓	
4. What accounts for difference		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Recommendations for policy and practice		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Appendix 5: Demographic data: Delphi surveys

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
n=	19	38	24
<b>Gender</b>	15 females, 4 males	22 females, 9 males, 7 unknown.	18 females, 5 males, 1 unknown
<b>Age</b>	aged 18 to 67, mean = 34	18 to 62 mean=32	19 to 60 mean=37
<b>Ethnicity</b>	6 white British 2 Indian 3 Pakistani/Bangladeshi 4 prefer not to say	10 white British 2 Indian 9 Pakistani/Bangladeshi 3 Black African 5 other 9 prefer not to say / unknown	8 white British 3 Indian 8 Pakistani/Bangladeshi 2 Black Caribbean 2 other 2 prefer not to say / unknown

## Appendix 6: Detailed responses to the Delphi surveys<sup>18</sup>

### Theme 1: Families & the Individual

The **Families & the Individual** theme had the lowest ranked mean score in round 1 (5.8). At round 2, this theme was the fifth highest ranked with the mean score increasing to 6.8. At round 3, this theme returned to be the lowest ranked of the six themes with a mean score of 6.0.

In round 1, the Families & the Individual theme had four sub-areas and respondents were asked to indicate how important they perceived each to be in explaining the broken promise of social mobility for British Muslims (on a scale of 0 to 10). In round 2, this theme had four statements and respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to each (on a scale of 0 to 10). Table 3 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 3: Summary of responses to the Families & the Individual sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**

Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
<b>Household / family poverty</b>	18	7.6 (2.12)
<b>Family commitments / demands</b>	19	7.3 (2.58)
<b>Parental/family educational expectations</b>	19	6.8 (2.78)
<b>Individual educational aspirations</b>	18	6.1 (3.03)
Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
<b><i>Muslim culture and knowledge is not understood in Britain today</i></b>	38	7.9 (1.84)
<b><i>Household poverty severely limits the support that Muslim parents can provide for their children</i></b>	33	7.0 (2.11)
<b><i>The low attainment of young Muslims is wrongly attributed to the conservative beliefs of Muslim parents</i></b>	33	6.4 (2.41)
<b><i>Muslim families have very different aspirations for their daughters compared with their sons.</i></b>	33	6.2 (2.74)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for the Families & the Individual theme were highest for Household/Family Poverty (mean=7.6; n=19), followed by Family Commitments/Demands (mean=7.3, n=19), Parental/Family Educational Aspirations (mean=6.8, n=19) and Individual Educational Aspirations (mean=6.1, n=19). The highest mean 'agreement' related to the limited/lack of knowledge about Muslim culture (mean =7.9; n=38) followed by the limitation of household poverty (mean =7.0; n=38). Conservative beliefs had a lower level of agreement (mean=6.4, n=38) with gendered differences in parental expectations (mean=6.1, n=38). The wide error bars indicate large variation in levels of agreement across the four statements.

<sup>18</sup> Author: Sean Demack

## Theme 2: Social/Community Factors

The **Social/Community Factors** theme had the highest ranked mean score in round 1 (8.7). At round 2, this theme was ranked second, the mean score reduced to 7.7. At round 3, this theme was the third highest ranked theme with a mean score of 8.0. In round 1, the Social/Community Factors theme had four sub-areas and in round 2, this theme had five statements. Table 4 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 4 : Summary of responses to the Social/Community Factor sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**

<b>Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)</b>	<b>n=</b>	<b>mean (sd)</b>
<b>Islamophobia, discrimination &amp;/or racism</b>	19	8.7 (1.33)
<b>Support &amp; social networks</b>	19	8.0 (2.03)
<b>Area deprivation &amp; poverty</b>	19	7.9 (1.78)
<b>Community expectations</b>	19	7.7 (1.94)
<b>Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)</b>	<b>n=</b>	<b>mean (sd)</b>
<b><i>Muslim stereotypes and misinformation found in the British media encourage division between Young Muslims and other communities</i></b>	30	8.8 (1.19)
<b><i>Persistent experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism are major obstacles to the integration of young Muslims in Britain</i></b>	29	8.7 (1.37)
<b><i>In areas where they live, young Muslims often experience Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism</i></b>	31	7.9 (1.73)
<b><i>Young Muslims and young people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds mix well together</i></b>	31	5.9 (2.05)
<b><i>Lack of integration is a key reason for explaining the low social mobility amongst young Muslims.</i></b>	31	5.8 (2.89)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for Social/Community Factors were highest for Islamophobia, Discrimination & Racism (mean=8.7; n=19), followed by Support & Social Networks (mean=8.0, n=19), Area Deprivation & Poverty (mean=7.9, n=19), and Community Expectations (mean=7.7, n=19).

The highest mean 'agreement' related to the role of the media in encouraging division (mean =8.8; n=30) and the narrow error bar lines indicate the consistency of this response across respondents. This is followed by experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (mean =7.9; n=31). The mixing of young Muslims and other religions/ethnicities had a lower level of agreement (mean=5.9, n=31) as did lack of integration (mean=5.8, n=31).

## Theme 3: Schools

The **Schools** theme had the fourth highest ranked mean score in round 1 (7.4), round 2 (7.1) and round 3 (7.7).

In round 1, the Schools theme had seven sub-areas and in round 2, this theme had five statements. Table 5 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 5: Summary of responses to the Schools sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**

Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
<b>Attainment &amp; types of qualifications</b>	17	8.6 (1.23)
<b>Advice / guidance about future education &amp; employment</b>	19	8.3 (2.00)
<b>Islamophobia, discrimination &amp;/or racism</b>	19	8.0 (2.31)
<b>Teacher perceptions &amp; expectations</b>	19	7.5 (2.39)
<b>Setting, streaming &amp; tiering</b>	18	7.5 (2.09)
<b>Access to private schools</b>	18	6.4 (2.62)
<b>Pre-school learning</b>	17	6.1 (2.45)
Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
<b><i>At school, young Muslims routinely experience Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism</i></b>	29	6.2 (2.30)
<b><i>Young Muslims get poor advice about future study from schools</i></b>	30	6.0 (2.55)
<b><i>The low expectations of young Muslims by schools is a key reason for their low social mobility</i></b>	28	5.8 (2.77)
<b><i>Ability group setting and streaming routinely discriminates against young Muslims</i></b>	30	5.6 (2.36)
<b><i>The subjects and qualifications young Muslims take at schools limit their options in the future</i></b>	30	5.6 (2.36)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for Schools theme were highest for Attainment & Types of Qualifications (mean=8.6; n=17), followed by Advice/Guidance (mean=8.3, n=19), Islamophobia, Discrimination & Racism (mean=8.0, n=19), Teacher Perceptions (mean=7.5; n=19); Setting & Streaming (mean =7.5, n=18), Access to Private Schools (mean=6.4, n=18) and Pre-School Learning (mean=6.1, n=17). The highest mean 'agreement' related to experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism at school (mean=6.2; n=29) followed by poor advice about the future (mean=6.0; n=30) low teacher expectations (mean=5.8, n=28), setting/streaming (mean=5.6, n=30) and subject/qualification mix (mean=5.6, n=30).

#### **Theme 4: Higher Education/ University**

The **University** theme had the fifth highest ranked mean score in round 1 (6.6). At round 2, this theme was the lowest ranked with the mean score reducing slightly to 6.3. At round 3, this theme returned to be the fifth highest ranked theme with a mean score of 7.3.

In round 1, the University theme had eight sub-areas and in round 2, this theme had four statements. Table 6 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 6: Summary of responses to the Higher Education/University sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**



Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
Islamophobia, discrimination &/or racism	16	7.9 (2.38)
Support whilst at university	17	7.6 (2.62)
Completing a degree	16	7.2 (2.69)
Degree attainment	16	7.1 (2.53)
Accessing different types of university	18	7.1 (2.40)
Types of qualification & subjects studied	15	7.1 (2.74)
Guidance on applying to university	16	6.8 (2.62)
Admissions to university	16	6.8 (2.38)
Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
<i>There is not enough information, advice and guidance about University for young Muslims and their families</i>	30	6.3 (2.67)
<i>Universities do not recognise the educational aspirations of young Muslims</i>	30	5.6 (2.61)
<i>At university, young Muslims routinely experience Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism</i>	29	5.4 (2.69)
<i>Targeting support / interventions at university aimed towards young Muslims is not helpful</i>	30	4.7 (2.93)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for the University theme were highest for Islamophobia (mean=7.9 n=16), followed by Support whilst at University (mean=7.6, n=17), Completing a Degree (mean=7.2; n=16); Degree Attainment (mean=7.1, n=16), Accessing different types of University (mean=7.1, n=18), Types of Qualifications/Subjects (mean=7.1, n=15), Guidance on applying to University (mean=6.8, n=16) and Admissions to University (mean=6.8, n=16).

The highest mean 'agreement' related to information about university (mean=6.3; n=30) followed by a lack of recognition of educational aspirations (mean=5.6; n=30), Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (mean=5.4, n=29), and problems with targeted support (mean=4.7, n=30).

### Theme 5: Employment

The **Employment** theme had the second highest ranked mean score in round 1 (8.6). At round 2, this theme was ranked third with a mean score of 7.7. At round 3, this theme returned to be the second highest ranked theme with a mean score of 8.1.

In round 1, the Employment theme had six sub-areas and in round 2, this theme had four statements. Table 7 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 7: Summary of responses to the Employment sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**

Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)	n=	mean (sd)
Islamophobia, discrimination &/or racism	18	8.4 (1.20)
Access to 'the professions' (e.g. Medicine, Law, Teaching)	17	8.2 (1.67)
Types & status of employment / occupation	18	8.2 (1.47)

<b>Recruitment, appraisal &amp; progression</b>	18	8.2 (1.47)
<b>Pay and conditions</b>	17	8.0 (1.58)
<b>Entrepreneurship / self-employment opportunities</b>	16	7.3 (2.77)
<b>Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)</b>	<b>n=</b>	<b>mean (sd)</b>
<i>Persistent experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism deter young Muslims from some types of employment</i>	29	7.2 (2.12)
<i>Employers should use positive action to make the workplace fairer for young Muslims</i>	29	7.0 (1.82)
<i>Young Muslims rarely get higher status employment even if they have all of the necessary educational qualifications</i>	29	6.6 (2.26)
<i>At work, young Muslims routinely experience Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism</i>	29	6.3 (2.26)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for the Employment theme were highest for Islamophobia, Discrimination & Racism (mean=8.4; n=18), followed by Access to the Professions (mean=8.2; n=17); Types/Status of Employment (mean=8.2, n=18), Recruitment, Appraisal & Progression (mean=8.2, n=18), Pay & Conditions (mean =8.0, n=17) and Entrepreneurship/Self Employment (mean=7.3, n=16). The highest mean 'agreement' related to the limiting impact of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (mean=7.2, n=29) followed by the use of positive action workplace policies (mean=7.0, n=29), difficulties accessing employment commensurate with qualifications (mean=6.6, n=29) and experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (mean=6.3, n=29).

### Theme 6: The Political, Cultural & Economic Environment

The **Political, Cultural & Economic Environment** theme had the third highest ranked mean score in round 1 (8.4). At round 2, this theme was highest ranked even though the mean score reduced to 8.3. At round 3, this theme remained the highest ranked theme with a mean score of 9.0.

In round 1, the Political, Cultural & Economic Environment theme had four sub-areas and in round 2, this theme had three statements. Table 8 summarises responses to the round 1 sub-areas and round 2 statements.

**Table 8: Summary of responses to the Political, Cultural & Economic sub-areas (round 1) and statements (round 2)**

<b>Round 1 Sub-areas (importance score; 0 to 10)</b>	<b>n=</b>	<b>mean (sd)</b>
<b>Local / national Government policy</b>	16	9.1 (1.31)
<b>Islamophobia, discrimination &amp;/or racism</b>	17	9.1 (1.22)
<b>The media</b>	18	8.9 (1.47)
<b>Political discourse / debate</b>	17	8.9 (1.52)
<b>Round 2 Statements (level of agreement; 0 to 10)</b>	<b>n=</b>	<b>mean (sd)</b>
<i>Politicians are responsible for ensuring that Britain is a fair, safe and welcoming place for young Muslims</i>	29	8.9 (1.33)
<i>The racist and discriminatory portrayals of Muslims by the British media lead to increased Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism</i>	28	8.4 (1.55)

***The discrimination faced by young Muslims in Britain today is not as great as the discrimination faced by previous generations of British Muslims*** 29 5.0 (3.05)

The mean scores for the sub-areas for Political, Cultural & Economic Environment theme were highest for Local/National Government Policy (mean=9.1; n=16), followed by Islamophobia, Discrimination & Racism (mean=9.1, n=17), The Media (mean=8.9, n=18) and Political Discourse / Debate (mean=8.9, n=17).

The highest mean 'agreement' related to the role of politicians in ensuring a fair, safe and welcoming society (mean=8.9, n=29) followed by the role of the media in increasing Islamophobia, discrimination and/or racism (mean=8.4, n=28) followed by discrimination being lower today than that experienced by past generations (mean=5.0, n=29).

### Emerging Recommendations

The third Delphi survey asked respondents about 25 emerging recommendations that aimed to improve social mobility for Muslims in Britain. These recommendations drew on those presented during discussions at the Summit event on 10 July 2017 and subsequently within the research team.

Respondents were asked to indicate how likely they thought that each of the 25 recommendations would help to contribute towards improved social mobility for Muslims in Britain on a scale between 0 (no improvement at all) to 10 (a large improvement). Following this, respondents were asked to identify three of the 25 recommendations that they felt were most likely to contribute towards improved social mobility for Muslims in Britain.

Table 9 summarises responses to the emerging recommendations. First, the mean scores (and standard deviations) for each of the 25 emerging recommendations are shown. Table 9 is rank ordered using these mean scores from highest to lowest. Alongside the mean scores, a column records the number of times each recommendation was selected as one of the three most likely to contribute towards improved social mobility for Muslims in Britain.

Four recommendations have a mean score of 8.0 or above:

- **Rank 1 (mean score = 8.4; number of respondents who placed this in the 'top 3'= 4):**  
To promote and resource high quality unconscious bias training in schools and colleges in order to increase awareness and challenge discriminatory practices in education.
- **2 (8.2; 5):** Regular, reliable and independent evaluations commissioned to evidence how Muslims and other marginalised groups are portrayed in the British media.
- **3 (8.1; 1):** Greater responsibility of Universities for checking suitability of workplace placements and offering support when discriminatory practices are identified.
- **4 (8.0; 4):** Employers to ensure greater provision of effective unconscious bias training and be required to monitor its effectiveness.

All four of these recommendations were selected as being among the 'top 3' by at least one respondent. Recommendation 2 was in the 'top 3' by more respondents (identified by five respondents) compared with recommendations 1 and 4 (both

identified by four respondents) and recommendation **3** (only identified by one respondent).

Eight recommendations have a mean score of above 7.5 but below 8.0:

- **5 (7.9; 1)**: To develop and promote guidance and good practice on inclusive and ant-racist work placements and how to be pro-active in addressing racist behaviours and attitudes experienced by young Muslims.
- **6 (7.8; 3)**: Efforts and action to decolonise school, college and HE curriculum materials to be put in place in order to address and correct for current biases towards white western males.
- **7 (7.7; 1)**: Employers to ensure equality and diversity training includes the development of cultural competencies.
- **8 (7.7; 4)**: Initial teacher training and continuing professional development provision to be critically reviewed with respect to introducing diversity and religious literacy.
- **9 (7.6; 1)**: Regular, independent evaluations to be commissioned on the equality of opportunity in employment in Britain.
- **10 (7.6; 1)**: The Social Mobility Commission to develop briefing papers to make evident Muslim under-attainment and user guides on how to effect change.
- **11 (7.6; 3)**: Resource made available to promote and encourage the political and civic engagement of young people, particularly those currently disengaged.
- **12 (7.6; 2)**: Students to have multiple spaces/places in HE (university) where they can express their voices and make their experiences visible.

All eight of these recommendations were selected as being among the 'top 3' by at least one respondent. Recommendation **8** was in the 'top 3' by more respondents (identified by four respondents) compared with recommendations **6** and **11** (both identified by three respondents), recommendation **12** (identified by two respondents) and recommendations **5**, **7**, **9** and **10** (all identified by just one respondent).

Eight recommendations have a mean score of above 6.9 but below 7.6:

- **13 (7.5; 1)**: Guidance and recommendation on good unconscious bias training for university staff that should include dialogue and debate.
- **14 (7.5; 3)**: Universities to provide flexible assessment / examination timings (e.g. early mornings during Ramadan).
- **15 (7.5; 7)**: To introduce a 'Critical Citizenship Education' in schools that covers democracy, the rule of law, civic engagement, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding discrimination and racism.
- **16 (7.4; 2)**: Government to identify, promote and fund the efforts of organisations working to promote greater representation of Muslims in the media.
- **17 (7.4; 2)**: Normalisation of no-alcohol spaces within HE (university) environments.
- **18 (7.3; 5)**: To recruit more school/college careers counsellors with the cultural competencies to help young Muslims with the specific issues that they face.
- **19 (7.2; 5)**: Employers to adopt 'blind' recruitment practices to reduce discrimination based on name in the application process.
- **20 (7.0; 2)**: To extend existing mentoring/support initiatives so that they enable & encourage local role models to return to their communities.

All eight of these recommendations were selected as among the 'top 3' by at least one respondent. Recommendation **15** was in the 'top 3' by more respondents

(identified by seven respondents, the most selected recommendation) compared with recommendations **18** and **19** (both identified by five respondents), recommendation **14** (identified by three respondents), recommendations **16**, **17**, and **20** (all identified by two respondents) and recommendation **13** (identified by just one respondent).

The final five recommendations had a mean score below 7.0:

- **21 (6.9; 1):** Employers to encourage more Muslim role models willing to talk about their experiences to Human Resource panels.
- **22 (6.8; 2):** Greater provision of mentoring support for employees, including digital access arrangements (e.g. online mentoring).
- **23 (6.8; 0):** Introduce regular collection of religion data on trainee teachers, qualified teachers and pupils to monitor applications, recruitment, retention and progression of Muslims in all areas/stages of the education system.
- **24 (6.7; 4):** More efforts, structures and resource to encourage social mixing in schools, colleges and universities.
- **25 (6.5; 2):** To ensure that 'British values' education encourages 'integration' rather than being used to force assimilation.

No respondents selected recommendation **23** as among the 'top 3'. Among the remaining four recommendations, recommendation **24** was in the 'top 3' by more respondents (identified by four respondents) compared with recommendations **22** and **25** (both identified by two respondents) and recommendation **21** (identified by just one respondent).

**Table 9: Emerging Recommendations (round 3)**

Table 9 describes how Summit respondents ranked whether the following statements might help to contribute to social mobility for Muslims in Britain, on a scale of 0 (no improvement at all) to 10 (a large improvement). The table also evidences whether a recommendation was identified as one of the three recommendation most likely to contribute to improved social mobility (in %).

Emerging Recommendation Statements	Mean Scores		Top 3?
	n=	mean (sd)	number selected
1. <i>To promote and resource high quality unconscious bias training in schools and colleges in order to increase awareness and challenge discriminatory practices in education.</i>	23	8.4 (1.53)	<b>4</b>
2. <i>Regular, reliable and independent evaluations commissioned to evidence how Muslims and other marginalised groups are portrayed in the British media.</i>	23	8.2 (2.39)	<b>5</b>
3. <i>Greater responsibility of Universities for checking suitability of workplace placements and offering support when discriminatory practices are identified.</i>	22	8.1 (1.86)	<b>1</b>
4. <i>Employers to ensure greater provision of effective unconscious bias training and be required to monitor its effectiveness.</i>	23	8.0 (2.01)	<b>4</b>
5. <i>To develop and promote guidance and good practice on inclusive and ant-racist work placements and how to be pro-active in addressing racist behaviours and attitudes experienced by young Muslims.</i>	23	7.9 (2.31)	<b>1</b>
6. <i>Efforts and action to decolonise school, college and HE curriculum materials to be put in place in order to address and correct for current biases towards white western males.</i>	23	7.8 (2.61)	<b>3</b>
7. <i>Employers to ensure equality and diversity training includes the development of cultural competencies.</i>	23	7.7 (1.92)	<b>1</b>
8. <i>Initial teacher training and continuing professional development provision to be critically reviewed with respect to introducing diversity and religious literacy.</i>	22	7.7 (2.23)	<b>4</b>
9. <i>Regular, independent evaluations to be commissioned on the equality of opportunity in employment in Britain.</i>	22	7.6 (2.44)	<b>1</b>

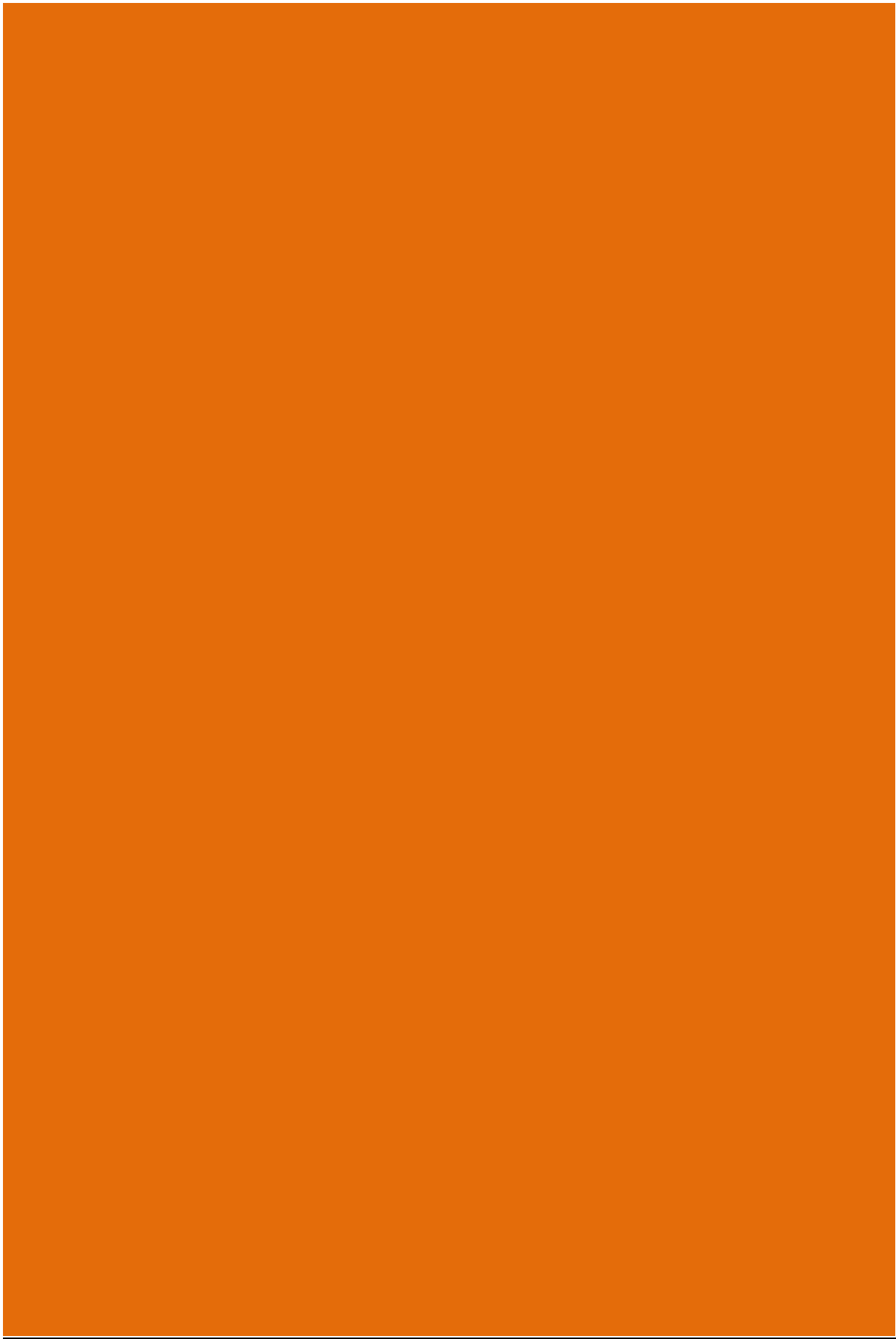
**Table 9: Emerging Recommendations (round 3) continued**

Emerging Recommendation Statements	Mean Scores		Top 3?
	n=	mean (sd)	number selected
10. The Social Mobility Commission to develop briefing papers to make evident Muslim under-attainment and user guides on how to effect change.	23	7.6 (2.48)	1
11. Resource made available to promote and encourage the political and civic engagement of young people, particularly those currently disengaged.	23	7.6 (2.04)	3
12. Students to have multiple spaces/places in HE (university) where they can express their voices and make their experiences visible.	23	7.6 (2.06)	2
13. Guidance and recommendation on good unconscious bias training for university staff that should include dialogue and debate.	23	7.5 (2.02)	1
14. Universities to provide flexible assessment / examination timings (e.g. early mornings during Ramadan).	23	7.5 (2.37)	3
15. To introduce a 'Critical Citizenship Education' in schools that covers democracy, the rule of law, civic engagement, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding discrimination and racism.	23	7.5 (2.61)	7
16. Government to identify, promote and fund the efforts of organisations working to promote greater representation of Muslims in the media.	23	7.4 (2.95)	2
17. Normalisation of no-alcohol spaces within HE (university) environments.	23	7.4 (2.39)	2
18. To recruit more school/college careers counsellors with the cultural competencies to help young Muslims with the specific issues that they face.	22	7.3 (2.57)	5
19. Employers to adopt 'blind' recruitment practices to reduce discrimination based on name in the application process.	23	7.2 (3.33)	5
20. To extend existing mentoring/support initiatives so that they enable & encourage local role models to return to their communities	22	7.0 (2.34)	2
21. Employers to encourage more Muslim role models willing to talk about their experiences to Human Resource panels.	23	6.9 (2.76)	1

**Table 9: Emerging Recommendations (round 3) continued**

Emerging Recommendation Statements	Mean Scores		Top 3?
	n=	mean (sd)	number selected
<i>22. Greater provision of mentoring support for employees, including digital access arrangements (e.g. online mentoring).</i>	23	6.8 (2.59)	<b>2</b>
<i>23. Introduce regular collection of religion data on trainee teachers, qualified teachers and pupils to monitor applications, recruitment, retention and progression of Muslims in all areas/stages of the education system.</i>	22	6.8 (2.54)	<b>0</b>
<i>24. More efforts, structures and resource to encourage social mixing in schools, colleges and universities.</i>	23	6.7 (2.53)	<b>4</b>
<i>25. To ensure that 'British values' education encourages 'integration' rather than being used to force assimilation.</i>	23	6.5 (3.34)	<b>2</b>







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