



Community Policy  
Forum

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR WORK**

 [www.communitypolicyforum.com](http://www.communitypolicyforum.com)

 [research@communitypolicyforum.com](mailto:research@communitypolicyforum.com)

 [@PolicyCommunity](https://twitter.com/PolicyCommunity)



 [www.communitypolicyforum.com](http://www.communitypolicyforum.com)

 [research@communitypolicyforum.com](mailto:research@communitypolicyforum.com)

 @PolicyCommunity

# CONTENTS



---

**03**

A MESSAGE FROM  
OUR CEO

---

**05**

ABOUT THE  
COMMUNITY POLICY  
FORUM

---

**06**

OUR AREAS OF  
INTEREST

---

**07**

OUR APPROACH

---

**09**

OUR WORK

---

**13**

GET INVOLVED

---



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

For many years, UK policymaking has suffered significant gaps in accounting for the experiences of Muslim communities.

For too long, policymakers have been confused over which Muslim stakeholders to engage and identifying who exactly represents 'the British Muslim community'. However, there is no such thing as a singular unified British Muslim community. The experiences of Muslim communities in the UK are vast and varying due to their huge diversity in ethnicity, culture, language, theological outlook, religious practice, gender, citizenship/ settlement status, class, and socio-economic background.

Consequently, a search for a single representative 'gatekeeper' is a fruitless endeavour. Policymaking must instead take into account a full diversity of experiences if it is to be both effective and meaningful.

At the same time, the Government continues to heavily rely upon political think-tanks with reputations of dubious research practices, bad-faith arguments, and agenda-driven narratives. Any policymaking built upon such a foundation can only be inherently flawed and ultimately exacerbate already delicate challenges.

While these problems may be somewhat accounted for by a lack of proper understanding of British Muslims amongst policymakers, the role of Islamophobia in this situation cannot be ignored. Islamophobia functions to exclude Muslims from equal participation in all spheres of social, economic, political, public, and civic life - an exclusion that is too readily witnessed in the lack of Muslim voices so often present in policy discourses. As a result, policies have been pursued that do not appropriately reflect the realities of Muslim communities and in many cases have been to their detriment

By promoting community-centred and evidence-led approaches to policymaking, the Community Policy Forum seeks to encourage policies that better encompass the broad spectrum of Muslim experiences and provide meaningful solutions to socio-political and economic challenges to which British Muslims face.

*Isobel Ingham-Barrow*

**ISOBEL INGHAM-BARROW**  
CEO





# 6.5%

*of the population of England and Wales<sup>1</sup> and 1.45% of the Scottish population are Muslim.<sup>2</sup>*

# 40%

*of Muslims in England and Wales live in the most deprived fifth of local authority districts.<sup>3</sup>*

# 49%

*of Muslim adults in Scotland live in relative poverty compared to 18% of the overall population.<sup>4</sup>*

# 42%

*of religiously motivated hate crimes in England and Wales targetted Muslims in 2021-22.<sup>5</sup>*

# 83%

*of Muslims in Scotland claim to have experienced Islamophobia.<sup>6</sup>*

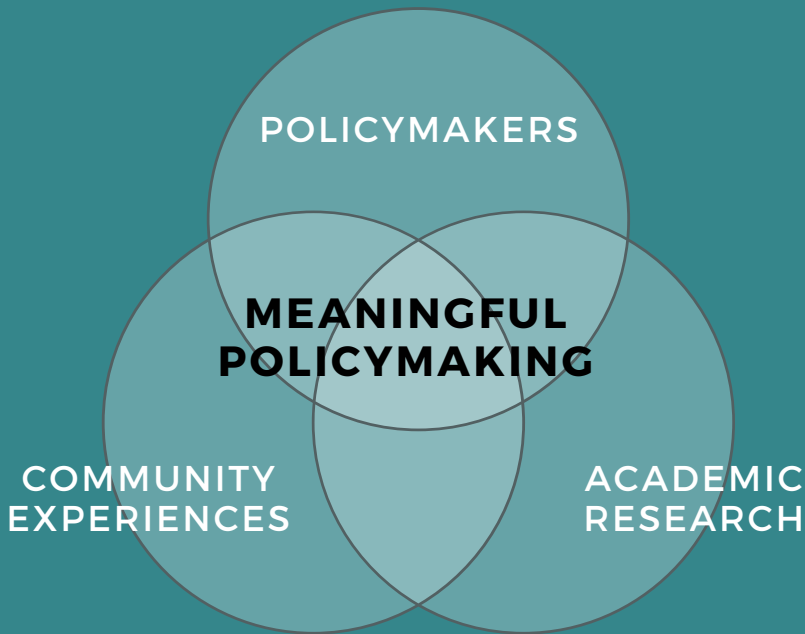


## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY POLICY FORUM

The Community Policy Forum is an independent think-tank seeking to promote evidence-based and community-centred approaches to policymaking surrounding the structural inequalities facing Muslim communities in the UK.

We attempt this through two primary avenues:

- Providing a conduit for parliamentarians, policymakers, and local stakeholders to engage with the latest evidence-based and academically accredited research.
- Providing a vehicle for policymakers to directly engage with Muslim communities to facilitate meaningful policy development.



## WE BELIEVE...

that effective policymaking must be both:

- Based on methodologically sound evidence.
- Meaningful to the communities it seeks to serve.

Consequently, our goal is to facilitate dialogue between what we see as three of the key stakeholders within meaningful policy development; policymakers, subject experts, and communities themselves.

## OUR AREAS OF INTEREST

- Education.
- The labour market.
- Crime, policing, and the criminal justice system.
- Healthcare.
- Security and counter-terror.
- Press and broadcasting.
- Social media and online spaces.
- The far-right, white supremacist, and ethno-nationalist movements.
- Political engagement and representation.
- Equalities, human rights, and civil liberties.



# OUR APPROACH

In promoting meaningful policymaking to tackle the structural inequalities facing Muslim communities, the Community Policy Forum follows three key approaches...

## 1. Centring religion within a rights-based approach.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine distinct protected characteristics that form the foundation for the analysis of structural inequalities. within policymaking.

However, in practice, race and religion are frequently combined, with religion being treated as a subcategory of race or else being neglected entirely.

Even when religious identities are treated separately, it is not uncommon for an implicit hierarchy of protected characteristics to be created, with religion being considered less deserving of protection than other characteristics.

**As such, the Community Policy Forum aims to incorporate a specific focus on Muslim identities in order to promote policy development that is inclusive of religious experiences.**





## 2. Promoting academic rigour in policymaking.

Recent years have seen the increasing role of political think-tanks, particularly in fields such as counter-terror, that have been heavily criticised for their lack of methodological rigour but which continue to hold significant influence over policy development.

At the same time, academics too often lack confidence in translating their research into materials that are accessible to policymakers and non-academic audiences - leaving valuable research confined to university libraries.



**Therefore, the Community Policy Forum seeks to assist academics in translating their research into accessible formats and deliver key findings and recommendations to stakeholders who are in positions to enact socio-economic change, thereby ensuring that policymakers are equipped with the reliable evidence necessary for their work.**

## 3. Promoting representative understandings of British Muslim communities within policymaking.

Policymakers have a famously strained relationship with Muslim organisations and often struggle to identify Muslim stakeholders that have the confidence of both communities and the Government.

In a quest to engage “gatekeepers” that are “acceptable” to political circles (frequently those who already support the Government's existing

positions), policymakers have overwhelmingly relied on individuals and organisations that are unrepresentative of the diversity of British Muslims and lack credibility amongst Muslim communities. This has severely limited the range of experiences captured within UK policy development.

**Consequently, while never presuming to represent Muslim communities, the Community Policy Forum aims to act as a platform for a diverse spectrum of Muslim voices that capture a range of experiences traditionally absent from policy discourses.**



# OUR WORK

The Community Policy Forum conducts a wide range of activities in attempting to connect policymakers, academic researchers, and Muslim community stakeholders.

## **Community Engagement**

We organise roundtables, listening exercises, and open sessions with a diverse range of Muslim voices to explore various experiences, challenges, and solutions to contemporary issues facing Muslim communities.

## **Parliamentary Engagement**

The Community Policy Forum engages with policymakers, parliamentarians, and political parties in Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, and the Senedd to promote nuanced approaches to Muslim communities.

## **Original research**

We conduct original research on topics ranging from education and employment to security, human rights, and civil liberties.

## **Translating academic research**

The Community Policy Forum develops workshops and provides individual assistance to empower academics in translating their research into briefing papers, reports, and other accessible materials of benefit to policymakers.

## **Policy documents**

We produce briefings, reports, and position papers to provide insight to policymakers and inform their work.







## **Events**

The Community Policy Forum hosts online and in-person events designed to engage academics, community stakeholders, and policymakers in collaborative approaches to policymaking.

## **Podcasts**

We host a regular podcast exploring and raising awareness about current issues facing Muslim communities.

## **Inquiry submissions**

We submit evidence to Parliamentary and independent inquiries using evidence gathered from academic research and consultations with Muslim community stakeholders.

## **Articles**

The Community Policy Forum website hosts a post-peer review journal platforming short articles authored by academics and professional practitioners providing analysis of structural inequalities facing British Muslims.

## **Explainers and quick analysis**

We publish easy-read explainers, short articles, and videos raising awareness about legislation and Parliamentary business of interest to Muslim communities.





# GET INVOLVED

**The Community Policy Forum relies on the support of academics, professional practitioners, policymakers, and community stakeholders.**

**There are many ways to get involved.**

- Become a contributor to our online journal.
- Attend an event.
- Listen to our podcasts.
- Ask us about volunteer and postgraduate development programs.
- Subscribe to our mailer.
- Join one of our community open sessions.





www.communitypolicyforum.com



research@communitypolicyforum.com



@PolicyCommunity



## REFERENCES

1. Office for National Statistics, "Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021," 29 November 2022, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>.
2. Khadijah Elshayyal, "Scottish Muslims in Numbers, Understanding Scotland's Muslim Population Through the 2011 Census," The Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh, [https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/scottish\\_muslims\\_in\\_numbers\\_web.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/scottish_muslims_in_numbers_web.pdf).
3. Muslim Council of Britain, "Census 2021, First Look," Muslim Council of Britain, November 2022, <https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/MCB-Census-2021-%E2%80%93-First-Look.pdf>.
4. Peter Hopkins, "Scotland's Islamophobia: report of the inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland," The Cross-Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, 2021, <https://anassarwar.co.uk/islamophobia-public-inquiry/>.
5. Ibid.



[www.communitypolicyforum.com](http://www.communitypolicyforum.com)



[research@communitypolicyforum.com](mailto:research@communitypolicyforum.com)



[@PolicyCommunity](https://twitter.com/PolicyCommunity)

