

BRIEFING

THE KING'S SPEECH

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 PolicyCommunity



The Community Policy Forum is an independent think-tank seeking to promote evidence-based and community-centred approaches to the structural inequalities facing British Muslim communities. We attempt this through connecting policymakers with academic research and experts and through providing platforms for engagement with diverse Muslim voices on areas of contemporary importance.

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The King's Speech on 17th July laid out the new Labour government's priorities for its first months in office and outlined a series of draft legislation that they intend to table in the weeks ahead.

The proposals span a wide range of areas from public transport and education, to justice and security. This short briefing aims to outline the primary changes proposed and what has been omitted from the proposals, as well as touch upon some of the amendments that have since been tabled in response to the speech and which may be of interest to Muslim communities.

All of the bills and issues covered in this briefing are of importance for everyone in the UK, however, the areas we consider of particular interest for Muslim communities are:

- The Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill.
- Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.
- Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.
- Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill.
- The Draft Conversion Practices Bill.
- Proposals to remove the VAT exemption for private schools.
- The amendment to end arms sales to Israel.
- The amendments to remove the two-child benefit cap.



Understanding
THE PROPOSALS

Budget Responsibility Bill

Emerging in response to the disastrous consequences of Liz Truss' mini-budget, this bill will give powers to the Office for Budget Responsibility to make judgements on any major taxation or spending announcements by the government. This is to ensure that future governments are not able to exclude the UK's independent forecaster from independently assessing its economic plans.

Read more [here](#).

Audit Reform and Corporate Governance Bill

The Audit Reform and Corporate Governance Bill is a long-awaited development aimed at preventing devastating corporate failures (such as was seen in the 11,000 jobs lost in the downfall of BHS, and the 30,000 unpaid subcontractors following the liquidation of Carillion). The bill will grant powers to a new accounting regulator, the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority, which will replace the Financial Reporting Council. This new watchdog will have greater powers to ensure more robust and rigorous scrutiny of large companies by tackling bad financial reporting, thereby helping to avoid corporate failures, protect jobs, and encourage faith and investment in UK companies.

Read more [here](#).

Pension Schemes Bill

The Pension Schemes Bill proposes a series of measures that the government claims will benefit 15 million people currently saving in workplace pension schemes, increasing the average final savings by £11,000. This package includes help for workers to bring together multiple small pension pots into one consolidated pot.

Read more [here](#).

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

This bill aims to address the UK's infrastructure needs and housing crisis by streamlining the planning system, ensuring a faster and more efficient approval process for major projects, thereby accelerating the development of infrastructure and the construction of 1.5 million homes.

Read more [here](#).

Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

These two bills are particularly relevant for Muslim communities.

The Employment Rights Bill will seek to tackle unfair dismissals, remove restrictions on trade unions, end exploitative zero-hours contracts and fire and re-hire policies, as well as granting worker rights such as protections for parental leave, sick pay, flexible working, and a 'genuine' national living wage. With Muslim and ethnically minoritised communities disproportionately represented in precarious and low-paying jobs, and on zero-hour contracts, this bill has potential to considerably improve the rights of such workers.

Meanwhile, the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will make it mandatory for all organisations with more than 250 employees to publish their ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting. Enshrining this requirement in law will provide greater transparency to pay disparities and encourage companies to actively address discrimination.

Read more [here](#).

English Devolution Bill

With the government acknowledging the geographic inequality that exists and the current centralisation of the UK economy, this bill will grant more powers to local communities to take ownership in producing Local Growth Plans, and enhance their powers regarding strategic planning, local transport networks, skills, and employment support. It will also give local communities the 'right to buy' community assets (such as vacant shops and community centres) in an effort to bring new life to neglected high streets and towns.

Read more [here](#).

Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill, the Rail Reform Bill and The High Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester) Bill

These bills aim to bring railway passenger services back under public ownership and manage the rail network in a more automatic way, as well as improving the UK's rail network in the North, thereby improving services and creating better value for money. Ownership will be transferred to public-sector operators as current existing contracts expire.

Read more [here](#).

Better Buses Bill

The Better Buses Bill will give local authorities the power to franchise local bus services, while giving councils greater control over bus funding and removing the ban on publicly owned bus companies. It will also enhance the accountability of current bus operators.

Read more [here](#).

National Wealth Fund Bill

This bill would put the recently established National Wealth Fund on a permanent statutory footing in the hope of centralising private sector investments for big infrastructure projects across the UK.

Read more [here](#).

Bank Resolution (Recapitalisation) Bill

This bill will reform how the Bank of England manages the failure of small banking institutions, by introducing a new mechanism that will allow the Bank of England to use funds provided by the banking sector to cover certain costs associated with resolving a failing banking institution and sell it.

Read more [here](#).

Arbitration Bill

This bill will implement the recommendations of the 2022 Law Commission review of Arbitration Law, in an effort to support more efficient dispute resolution and attract international legal business.

Read more [here](#).

Product Safety and Metrology Bill

This bill will provide regulatory stability to the safety of consumer products in light of technological advances.

Read more [here](#).

Digital Information and Smart Data Bill

This bill aims to enable new uses of data to help boost the economy by establishing data verification services, reforming data sharing and standards, improving data laws, and giving the Information Commissioner's Office new powers to regulate effectively.

Read more [here](#).

Great British Energy Bill

The Great British Energy Bill will establish a publicly owned clean power company in Scotland which will own, manage, and operate clean power projects across the UK, with the aim of accelerating investment in renewable energy such as offshore wind.

Read more [here](#).

The Crown Estate Bill

This bill will modernise The Crown Estate by removing restrictions on its activities, widening its investment powers, and giving it the powers to borrow in order to invest at a faster pace. This will allow it to manage public assets more effectively, for example, leasing out plots of seabed to offshore wind and other developers to meet the Clean Energy Superpower mission.

Read more [here](#).

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (Revenue Support Mechanism) Bill

The Sustainable Aviation Fuel (Revenue Support Mechanism) Bill will support sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production in the UK by establishing a revenue certainty mechanism to encourage investment in biofuel projects and expand the sector. There is currently just one UK producer of SAF in the UK. This bill hopes to see the construction of new projects across the country.

Read more [here](#).

Water (Special Measures) Bill

Emerging in response to recent controversies of water company practices across the country, this will place special measures on water companies, strengthen regulation, and begin the work of cleaning up rivers, lakes and seas. In particular, it will ensure water bosses face personal criminal liability for lawbreaking and grant new powers to ban the payment of bonuses and impose severe fines.

Read more [here](#).

Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

This bill will establish a new Border Security Command with enhanced counter-terror powers to tackle organised immigration crime, as well as enforcing stronger criminal penalties for those engaged in organised immigration crime and, modernising the asylum system.

While the details surrounding this bill are still limited, Community Policy Forum will be monitoring this bill as information becomes available as concerns are already being raised about the effectiveness of counter-terror powers in tackling people smuggling and the need for changes to the asylum system to comply with the UK's commitments under the Refugee Convention.

This is of particular concern for Muslim communities as, even when considering existing bespoke routes to asylum (such as the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme), in practice, it is virtually impossible for asylum seekers from Muslim-majority countries to arrive safely and legally in the UK. It is for this reason that they are disproportionately represented within small boat crossings and similar methods of entry. According to Home Office [data](#), all of the five most frequent countries of origin recorded amongst those arriving via this route came from countries with significant Muslim populations in the year up to March 2024.

Moreover, asylum seekers and refugees are often amongst the most vulnerable and face significant barriers to accessing legal protections and support. Many Muslim asylum seekers arriving in the UK arrive from areas of conflict, having experienced untold trauma both in their country of origin and often on a treacherous route to the UK. Meanwhile, structural, institutional, and everyday experiences of Islamophobia remain an under-researched area across the UK's immigration system.

Crime and Policing Bill

The Crime and Policing Bill will aim to crackdown on anti-social behaviour, as well as knife and retail crime. It will also enforce stronger, specialist responses to violence against women and girls by ensuring that the police respond robustly to domestic abuse, rape, and other sexual offences, in addition to strengthening the law to improve the police response to spiking.

These are all welcome aims, however, introducing new offences to address anti-social behaviour, knife crime, and retail crime will have little chance of success if there is not an accompanying effort to tackle poverty that is often at the root of patterns of criminality. This is particularly concerning for ethnically minoritised and Muslim communities who are known to be overrepresented in deprived areas of the UK (50% of the Muslims are **considered** to be in poverty) and their significant overrepresentation within the prison population (18% of prisoners in England and Wales are Muslim **compared** to 6.5% of the general population).

At the same time, severe problems in the application of stop and search is known to lead to the **targeting** of ethnic minorities. Until the discrimination and racism that infiltrates the use of such police powers is addressed, the new powers outlined in the Crime and Policing Bill will likely exacerbate structural racism and Islamophobia that is present across the criminal justice system.

Community Policy Forum will thus be monitoring this bill and will provide updates when available.

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

This bill is also known as Martyn's Law, and will introduce security requirements for certain eligible venues and locations (including mosques and associated faith buildings) to take steps to mitigate the risk and harm of a potential terrorist attack.

The requirements for smaller premises will be focused on simple, low-cost activities surrounding policies and procedures (for example, educating staff on locking doors and evacuation procedures).

Larger premises will be required to put in place measures to reduce both the risk from an attack occurring and the risk of physical harm being caused if an attack was to occur.

Read more [here](#).

Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill

This bill aims to reduce delays in the court system and ensure that victims of crime are properly supported by strengthening the powers of the Victims' Commissioner to hold the system to account if the needs of victims are not being met. It will also require offenders to attend their sentencing hearings, restrict parental responsibility for child sex offenders, and restrict sex offenders from changing their names.

These aims are welcome, however, Community Policy Forum remains concerned that it will not be possible to enforce these enhancements to victims rights, nor reduce delays in the court system unless the chronic underfunding of the justice system is addressed. Amongst the litany of challenges currently facing the system, the lack of access to legal aid licensed solicitors' firms is causing delays that can seriously impact victims' experiences. Indeed, the enforcement of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has been accused of **creating** "criminal legal aid deserts", with the High Court recently **ruling** that "the system is slowly coming apart at the seams." Meanwhile, **research** suggests that ethnically minoritised individuals constitute the majority of legal aid claimants in civil and criminal cases due to their over-representation amongst households with lower incomes. At the same time and as previously mentioned, considering that Muslim communities are disproportionately represented in the most deprived areas of the UK, the lack of access to legal aid will be disproportionately felt by Muslims and others who are amongst the most vulnerable.

As such, as more information about the bill is made available, it is likely that Community Policy Forum will be supporting amendments to address wider structural problems within the justice system that are disproportionately hampering Muslim communities from accessing justice.

Read more [here](#).

Skills England Bill

This bill will transfer functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to a new body, Skills England. This new body will bring together employers, unions, education and training providers, and experts with national government to build and maintain an ongoing assessment of current and future skills needs of the country in order to inform the Department for Education's policy priorities. This will also be used to identify non-levy training eligible for funding under Labour's proposed "growth and skills levy", which is set to replace the apprenticeship levy.

Read more [here](#).

Children's Wellbeing Bill

This bill aims to positively improve the lives of children across the country through strengthening safeguarding, providing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, and limiting the costs of school uniforms and PE kits. It will also require local authorities to maintain Children Not in School registers and provide support to home-educating parents, while giving Ofsted more powers to investigate unregistered schools and tackle patterns of poor care in children's homes.

Read more [here](#).

Renters' Rights Bill

The Renters' Rights Bill will abolish no-fault evictions, strengthen tenants' rights to challenge rent increases, give them the right to request a pet, apply a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector, and make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants in receipt of benefits or with children when deciding to let their property. It will also apply 'Awaab's Law' to the private sector, which came about in the wake of the tragic death of a two-year-old due to prolonged exposure to mould. This will set clear legal timeframes within which landlords must make homes safe where they contain serious hazards.

Read more [here](#).

Football Governance Bill

This bill will establish an Independent Football Regulator, which would address financial sustainability and ensure fans' voices are heard, as well as providing a way to block breakaway leagues such as the European Super League.

Read more [here](#).

Hillsborough Law

This bill will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities in order to address a defensive culture prevalent across much of the public sector.

Read more [here](#).

Draft Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill

Owners of leasehold properties have traditionally faced high service charges and barriers to extending their leases, often making it difficult to sell or remortgage. The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 sought to ban the sale of new leasehold homes and strengthen the rights of leaseholders to acquire their freeholds and to extend their leases. However, this new bill seeks to take these protections further by regulating ground rents, restricting the sale of new leasehold flats, exploring a new legal framework for commonhold ownership of common parts of a property, and ending forfeiture so that leaseholders are protected against losing their home for potentially small unpaid debts.

Read more [here](#).

Draft Conversion Practices Bill

The draft Conversion Practices Bill will propose new offences to target acts of conversion practices that are not captured by existing legislation. The background [briefing](#) of the King's Speech does explicitly note the need for this bill to respect the role that religious leaders and parents have in supporting those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

As such, we will be monitoring this bill to ensure that Muslims can provide informed consent to access guidance and spiritual support in exploring such personal issues with their imams and trusted individuals.

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

This bill will introduce a progressive smoking ban to gradually end the sale of tobacco products across the country. Those born on or after 1st January 2009 will never be able to legally buy cigarettes. It will also prevent vapes from being branded and advertised to appeal to children, including through providing Ministers with powers to regulate the flavours of such devices.

Read more [here](#).

Mental Health Bill

This bill will amend the Mental Health Act 1983 to give people detained greater choice and enhance their rights and support. This includes revising the detention criteria to ensure that people can only be detained if they pose a risk of serious harm to themselves or to others, limiting the extent to which people with a learning disability and/or autistic people can be detained, and removing police stations and prisons as places of safety under the Mental Health Act to ensure that people experiencing a mental health crisis are supported in the most appropriate setting.

Read more [here](#).

House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill

This bill will remove the right of remaining hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

Read more [here](#).

Armed Forces Commissioner Bill

This bill will establish a new Armed Forces Commissioner to act as an independent champion for service personnel and their families in an attempt to address declining morale and a crisis in recruitment and retention across the armed forces.

Read more [here](#).

Northern Ireland Legacy Legislation

The government intends to repeal and replace the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023, which has been heavily criticised for breaching human rights and the barrier it creates to justice for victims and survivors.

Read more [here](#).

Cyber Security and Resilience Bill

According to the government, over the last 18 months, hospitals, universities, local authorities, democratic institutions, and government departments have been targeted in cyber attacks. Therefore, this bill seeks to strengthen the UK's defences and ensure that essential digital services are protected.

Read more [here](#).

Removal of VAT exemption for private schools

While there was no specific bill, there was a commitment to increase the number of teachers by removing the VAT exemption for private schools.

While much of the public debate surrounding these proposals has centred on elite schools, the impact on small independent faith schools has been largely overlooked. **According** to Rudi Elliott-Lockhart, CEO of the Independent Schools Association, these changes could have a disproportionate impact on faith schools, many of which have already been experiencing financial hardships in the face of the cost-of-living crisis, thus leaving parents and schools without the "capacity to absorb additional costs... So in many cases, there'll be schools that simply won't be able to continue to operate".

When it comes to private Muslim schools, there are roughly 150 independent Muslim schools across the country, for which the average annual fees are approximately £3,000. Many of these schools have fewer than 150 pupils, and operate low fees on the basis of support from local communities and mosques. These institutions represent religious freedom in education and support families with limited financial means who may not be able to find suitable schools in the state sector that are reflective of their religious needs. The closure of such schools could, therefore, potentially lead to an increase in the withdrawal of Muslim children from mainstream education all together.

In the coming weeks, Community Policy Forum will be working to urge the government to amend blanket VAT policy proposals to reflect the realities of smaller faith schools and the families that rely on them. Specifically, we will be calling on them to consider thresholds either based on the size of the institution or based on a cap of tuition fees at £10,000 to ensure that those smaller schools are not disproportionately impacted by these changes.



Amendment C:
PALESTINE

A glaring omission from the proposals outlined within the King's Speech is any mention of Palestine. As such, we welcome the amendment tabled by MPs Zarah Sultana, Imran Hussain, Apsana Begum, Richard Burgon, John McDonnell, and Bell Ribeiro-Addy to suspend arms sales to Israel and end the UK's complicity in acts of genocide in Gaza.

Specifically, the amendment states that Parliament must:

“work to uphold international law in Israel and Palestine; express horror at the deaths of more than 38,000 people in Gaza and 1,200 in Israel; note the widespread recognition of serious violations of international law in the conflict and the ruling from the International Court of Justice that Israel’s assault is plausibly in breach of the Genocide Convention; also note that United Nations experts have said that arms exports to Israel must stop, that countries such as Spain, Canada and the Netherlands have suspended arms exports, and that 56 per cent of the UK public support an arms sales ban; further note ongoing British arms exports to Israel; recall that previous governments, including those headed by Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, suspended arms exports to Israel; and therefore call on the Government to support an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and release of all hostages, to immediately recognise the state of Palestine, to restore funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency*, to drop the challenge to the International Criminal Court’s jurisdiction in Gaza, and to immediately suspend export licences for arms transfers to Israel.”

Read more [here](#).

** On Friday 19th July, the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, announced that the UK government will restore funding to UNRWA.*

A photograph of a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark sweater, hugging a young child with dark hair and bangs. The child is wearing a light-colored, ribbed sweater and has their eyes closed. The scene is set indoors, with a window in the background showing bright light. The overall mood is warm and intimate.

Amendments A, B, D & F:
**REMOVING THE
TWO-CHILD LIMIT**

It is disappointing to observe that the removal of the two-child benefit cap has not been included in any of the proposals. The two-child benefit cap has been [described](#) as a “growing hole in the UK’s safety net” and, [according](#) to the Child Poverty Action Group, “is pushing families into deep poverty”; its abolition would ease the poverty of over a million children, lifting an estimated 250,000 out of poverty altogether. Removing this cap would be particularly beneficial for Muslim communities as they [represent](#) the youngest socio-religious group in the UK whilst also disproportionately experiencing poverty.

Read more [here](#).

Consequently there are four amendments that have been tabled by a variety of MPs across the political spectrum, all of which would address this omission and for which we would encourage support. As but one example, Amendment B tabled by Shockat Adam, Ayoub Khan, Iqbal Mohamed, Adnan Hussain, Carla Denyer, and Adrian Ramsay states that:

“the Gracious Speech does not contain measures to properly address child poverty by failing to reverse the two-child benefit limit; note that the limit results in affected families not receiving £3,455 a year in Universal Credit for any third or subsequent child born after 5 April 2017 and that it has been estimated that by the end of this Parliament another 670,000 children will be affected if the limit is not lifted; recognise that half of affected families are headed by a single parent; further recognise that relative and absolute poverty has risen for poorer families with three or more children since the limit was introduced, which particularly affects Bangladeshi and Pakistani families; acknowledge that ending the two-child limit would remove an estimated half a million children from relative poverty and that, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, doing so is a relatively inexpensive option equivalent to just 3 per cent of the working-age benefit budget, or approximately the same as continuing to freeze fuel duty for this Parliament; and call on the Government to bring forward proposals to end the limit as soon as possible to show its intent to end child poverty in the UK.”



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