



Muslim Women's Network UK

WRITTEN EVIDENCE TO WOMEN AND EQUALITIES COMMITTEE INQUIRY:

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSLIMS IN THE UK

February 2016

Introduction

1. Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is a national Muslim women's organisation in Britain (www.mwnuk.co.uk). We are a small national charity (no. 1155092) that works to improve the social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls. Our membership also includes women of other faiths or of no faith and men who support our work. We find out about the experiences of Muslim women and girls through research and helpline enquiries. We identify policy and practice gaps and use this information to inform decision makers in government as well as informing our community campaigns at a grassroots level.
2. We also develop resources and train women so they are better aware of their rights. We have a separate website for our national helpline (www.mwnhelpline.co.uk) that provides advice and support on a range of issues some of which include: domestic abuse, forced marriage, honour based violence, sexual abuse, divorce, discrimination and mental health etc.
3. The impact of our work is particularly felt in reducing the vulnerability of Muslim women and girls, reducing the prejudice they face, and giving them a greater access to rights and services – all of which allow them to contribute to society like any other citizen. We are also creating a critical mass of voices to influence change with more women being confident to challenge discriminatory practices within their communities and in society and to influence policy makers.

Summary

4. Through our research and case studies from the MWN Helpline, we can state that direct and indirect discrimination is very prevalent towards Muslims in the workplace. However, we believe that the lack of research and statistics available into such discrimination has meant that the issues are being minimised and it is therefore vital to introduce a dedicated service whereby all instances of discrimination can be duly recorded.

5. Whilst the legislative framework in principle is useful and theoretically provides a remedy in discrimination cases, in reality the laws are not being effectively used due to various reasons including time limits, expense of litigation, the fear of repercussions including alienation and unemployment etc.
6. Muslim women in particular face challenges in the workplace due to misconceptions portrayed by the media, such as that they are submissive and weak. Muslim women also face the fear of physical violence especially if they wear the hijab and this can hinder their day to day activities and options available to them.
7. As well as a lack of understanding on the part of employers as to what is needed, discrimination appears to be a barrier in respect of recruitment, accessing training and support, retention and progression. Muslim women for example, are finding that they are required to remove the hijab in order to obtain employment and have to work much more than their peers in order to gain approval.
8. Although there are some good examples of employers accommodating the needs of Muslims, generally it appears to be that Muslims are accommodating themselves to the employers' requirements and accepting the status quo.
9. Most organisations treat equality and diversity as a "tick box" exercise and do not invest into promoting awareness and understanding of such issues within the workplace. Until employers actively work towards providing all its employees with a healthy and safe environment to work in, which has taken their needs into account, the barriers will remain in place for Muslims.

Q1. How prevalent are direct and indirect discrimination towards Muslims in the workplace?

10. We know that direct and indirect discrimination towards Muslims in the workplace is very prevalent but such discrimination is under-documented and under-reported, particularly in respect of Muslim women. This makes it difficult to reference research and statistics to highlight the extent of the issue involved. This is not just the case in respect of discrimination in the workplace but also other areas, such as accessing housing and public services. The rising hostility against Muslims has been fuelled by political rhetoric, media misrepresentation and a rise in right wing movements demonising the Muslim community. Such anti Muslim discourse has had an impact on the way Muslims in Britain are treated including in education, when accessing public services, in housing and also in employment.
11. One Muslim individual cited how one day during lunch time a colleague, who he had never had any issues with, came up to him and said, "I heard that Muslims are wanting to ban Christmas. I think you're great mate but that's not on and we won't be allowing this to happen". A few other colleagues in the canteen became involved in

the conversation and he explained that neither he nor Muslims generally have an issue with Christmas and that Islam taught respect for all religions. Although he and his colleagues ended up having a positive conversation about the issue, he stated how it was hurtful and unfair that he had to defend himself through no fault of his own and he found that he had to be careful with what he said in case it was misconstrued in any way. He found it especially upsetting when one of the other non-Muslim colleagues who had joined into the conversation had said, “well I’m not religious so don’t care about Christmas anyway”; he felt that the reaction would have been very different if he had said anything along those lines. This example highlights the issues at play for Muslims in the workplace.

12. As a national charity, we are aware of various instances of such discrimination and regularly receive calls to our MWN Helpline requesting help and advice on issues of discrimination and Islamophobia. We have been working to address the lack of information available and have previously assisted the Parliamentary Ombudsman in finding out why Muslim women were underrepresented in complaints against public services and governmental bodies and departments. We are similarly working towards raising awareness and addressing the issues faced by Muslims in the workplace, particularly Muslim women. We are therefore pleased to see that the Women and Equalities Committee have held an Inquiry looking into these issues.
13. The lack of information available in respect of the prevalence of direct and indirect discrimination can be attributed to a number of reasons. Data collection by some organisations and community hubs focus only on verbal threats and physical attacks on people and property whilst institutional discrimination is not being recorded or monitored.
14. Moreover, it is important to remember that the burden of proof is on the employee to prove direct discrimination and it is not always easy to do so; the lack of concrete evidence or being able to satisfy the burden of proof does not mean discrimination did not actually take place. Proving indirect discrimination is even more difficult. Even where employees have been able to cite clear examples of discrimination, they have reported how they are still disbelieved by co-workers which makes it even more difficult for them. For example, when one Muslim employee complained to her immediate supervisor that she was being made to do twice the amount of work as a non-Muslim co-worker despite the same title and pay, she was told that it should be taken as a compliment that management think that she can manage twice the workload as her peers. She also felt that by raising the issue it was somehow turned against her in that she was being seen as unable to cope with the pressures of the work with no regard to the fact that this was because her workload was disproportionate to her colleagues. Many therefore feel unable to even discuss the issues they are facing in the workplace because of fear of further alienation and finding themselves penalised as a result. It is important that such issues are clearly documented so as to address the issues and it may be useful to introduce a dedicated service to log such instances.

15. Individuals can also either dismiss various instances themselves, or have it dismissed for them by their peers. For example, where one colleague suspects she is being treated badly by a supervisor due to sexism or racism, the other colleague dismisses this by stating she has never had any issues with the said supervisor despite being a different gender and race to him.
16. We would also like to highlight the importance of considering the wider workplace environment. We tend to concentrate on issues of direct discrimination, such as less pay or being overlooked for promotion in favour of a less qualified and/or less capable individual who is not Muslim. However, in some cases the management itself is not the issue but rather the immediate workplace environment. For example, one Muslim woman who worked for a large organisation was promoted by senior management but her immediate colleagues were unhappy and believed that she had only received the promotion because she is Muslim and the company was being political correct and/or because were scared of offending the Muslim and felt compelled to promote her. Her colleagues then made the workplace hostile for her and she found it very difficult to stay in that environment but she felt unable to do anything about it as the organisation itself had provided her with various opportunities and promoted her. It is therefore important to consider the wider issues that Muslims can face in the workplace and not just the information that is available at face-value.
17. We are concerned that the lack of research and statistics available is minimising the real prevalence of direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace across all sectors and hope that thorough research is carried out in this respect. We feel that the only means by which employers and employer organisations will be made to address issues of discrimination against Muslims in the workplace is if there is public knowledge of what is going on and a clear message sent that this culture of discriminatory practices cannot continue.

Q2. How effective are current formal and informal remedies for cases involving discrimination against Muslims in the workplace?

18. The legislative framework to address discrimination against Muslims in the workplace, including in the Equality Act 2010, is in itself theoretically fit for purpose and we were pleased to see a single equality act introduced which allows for multiple discrimination and provided for a positive duty on public authorities to implement equality. However, we are concerned that despite the law being available for redress, its use is limited and therefore somewhat ineffective.
19. All individuals including Muslims, find it difficult to access the legal system in discrimination cases and it would not necessarily be their first port of call. Many individuals worry about the repercussions of making a claim against their employer;

such as losing their job, not being able to obtain a good reference in the future, being branded a trouble maker, being disbelieved and alienated etc. One Muslim woman who had been facing bullying and discrimination from her supervisor stated that her confidence had been so shattered by the situation that she feared she would never be hired elsewhere and she therefore felt it was better to remain in the environment than be unemployed and end up in financial difficulty. After counselling, she did eventually begin looking for employment elsewhere and was hired by a company that provided her with a better salary. However, the employee still did not raise any concerns even when she had secured another job because she was worried that she would be branded a trouble maker and her new employer would not want to keep her. There are therefore serious issues in Muslim employees, and employees generally, feeling confident in accessing the legal services available.

20. Moreover, in terms of the legal process itself, the burden of proof is on the claimant and it can be difficult to gather the evidence and there are also cost implications involved. Changes to legal aid mean that individuals, and Muslim women in particular, are being disproportionately disadvantaged by being denied access to justice. While we understand that it is possible to apply for Legal Aid in discrimination cases, for those who are not eligible to do so, are left with a hefty £1200 fee for discrimination claims. When considering the fact that the situation can be mixed with fear, the lack of knowledge/awareness of the process, time limits, potential language barriers and also the time it takes to come to a decision to pursue such cases, it can mean many Muslims are deterred from pursuing their legitimate claims. One Muslim woman informed us that, “by the time I’d realised what had happened, got over the shock and plucked up the courage, figured out what I had to do, and raised most of the money, over 3 months had passed. I just gave up.”
21. We believe that a revision of time limits for bringing discrimination cases is needed to make the law more effective. The current variances make it confusing and form part of the barrier to raising a claim.
22. Additionally, whilst allowing “multiple discrimination” is a positive step, this is still limiting particularly for Muslim women who are likely to face discrimination on additional grounds. Many Muslim women in UK are likely to see an overlap between gender, race and religion when it comes to discrimination. There may also be an overlap with other grounds such as disability and pregnancy. Similarly it is important to consider discrimination of Muslims overlapping their immigration status; this is particularly concerning right now given the rhetoric surrounding refugees and asylum seekers amidst the Syria Crisis.
23. Further, whilst we welcome the strengthened public sector equality duties, we believe that these positive duties ought to also be extended to the private sector, where the majority of the workforce is employed. In fact, we must express our surprise as to how the private sector is left much to its own regulation when it comes to equality and

diversity. Given that we are aware that many sectors have a culture of forcing employees to put up with a situation, we would like to see the private sector encouraged to take a much more positive and robust step to address any and all issues of discrimination.

24. We would also like to highlight that the Act does not extend to Northern Ireland and from the information available to MWNUK, it appears there are serious issues of discrimination in Northern Ireland as a result of which many Muslims are moving to England. It is extremely unfortunate that Muslims in Northern Ireland feel the only way to live in a positive environment whilst also practising their faith is to migrate to another country and this needs to be addressed.
25. At a grassroots level, there is a lack of understanding of what the Equality Act covers and whilst organisations are required to inform employees of issues of equality and diversity, it is regarded as more of a “checklist” exercise and thus does not allow for proper engagement and understanding. The sources of religious intolerance and discrimination in the workplace can be manifold and include prejudices existing among employers, employees or customers, restrictive interpretations of corporate identity or a general fear of religious diversity. While generally being aware that discrimination is illegal, people themselves are not always aware of what constitutes discrimination under existing law, nor of the procedures for reporting it.
26. Employers and employer organisations generally also have complaints procedures to deal with matters internally. However, this can still be difficult to pursue by employees due to the issues as identified in paras 14 - 16 above which remain relevant; fear of reprisal, fear of being disbelieved and being branded a trouble maker etc. Many have reported how they were made to feel as if the issue is with them and made to feel guilty for making the complaint in the first place.
27. In one case study, a Muslim female employee attended a staff gathering at the office and was given a bacon and cheese quiche by a co-worker but told that it was a cheese and onion quiche. The employee realised this after the first bite and was distraught. However, when this instance was mentioned, the employee was told that she should have been careful if she has such preferences and has to understand that the wider office cannot change its preferences for her. She tried to explain that this was not about her not wanting pork products around her or stopping someone else from eating pork, but the fact that someone purposefully gave her food with bacon in whilst stating it was vegetarian. The other co-worker involved said that it was a mistake and that was sufficient for the employer; nothing further was done to reassure the employee that this would not be happening again. Given such examples, it is unsurprising that Muslims are reluctant to make formal complaints about the issues they face in the workplace and why they have a fear of losing their jobs or being alienated as a result of voicing their complaints.

28. The fear of losing jobs is more so relevant for Muslim and BME women especially in light of the cuts being imposed. Muslim and BME women can feel that they are at more risk of losing their jobs as equality impact assessments can feel more of a token exercise procedurally and as such, they can feel it is necessary to be quiet than risk losing their jobs. The fact that some believe equality impact assessments are not conducted properly is in itself an indication that discrimination may be taking place at some stage in such situations.
29. We are aware that there has been a push by employers in promoting mediation services as an informal remedy of dealing with issues in the workplace. However, the first step is still to make a complaint about the direct or indirect discrimination being faced and given that employees do not feel able to do so, this makes such an avenue somewhat ineffective.

Q3. What are the specific challenges facing Muslim women in employment and the workplace?

30. It appears that one of the specific challenges faced by Muslim women is to actually enter the field of employment. Despite the diversity of Muslim women and the clear achievements being made, there appear to be misconceptions and prejudices in play which hinder their employment prospects. This appears to be especially the case where the women are visibly Muslim and wear a hijab; one Muslim woman stated that despite the fact that she had spent three years at a university away from home to obtain her degree in a few interviews she was questioned a lot on her ability to travel around the country for meetings and events and felt that the interviewers held a misconception that because she is a Muslim woman that she would not be allowed to travel away from home. She was also questioned as to whether she would be comfortable working with male employees, and felt generally that there were more questions relating to her religious beliefs than her skills and experiences for the role.
31. Wearing the hijab appears to be a serious challenge for Muslim women, with a number reporting that they had to remove their hijab in order to get a job. One woman stated that her friend who was a trained lawyer applied for numerous jobs but was only successful once she removed the hijab. It is extremely concerning that Muslim women are being forced to compromise with their beliefs and choices in order to get employment even though wearing the headscarf would not impact on their work in any way.
32. Muslim women have also reported that there seem to be various stereotypes at play both in the interview process and during employment. There appears to be a presumption that they will get married and leave, or go on maternity leave and not be able to work as many hours or work as hard. These concerns are of course not limited to Muslim women only and can be shared by women of other faiths and ethnicities and on a general basis. However, it appears that the media representation of Muslim

women as submissive and weak is a contributing factor for how Muslim women are treated. In one instance, a Muslim woman found out that her non-Muslim colleague will be sent to pitch to a client she had worked over 12 months building a relationship with. When she questioned her manager she was told that as the client is across the country and they would have to stay overnight they thought she won't be able to, and later changed it to they felt it would be inconvenient for her and her family. This woman was in fact single, unmarried and living with her parents and siblings and had no caring responsibilities to be worried about but it was presumed that as she is Muslim and Asian that she would not be able to travel and stay overnight to pitch to a client. By then it was too late for them to change arrangements. What is even more concerning is that at her next appraisal a few months later, she was penalised for not having contributed to client and business development even though the opportunity had been taken away from her. This case highlights the issues at play for Muslim women from the initial stages of trying to get a job all the through to trying to get a payrise or promotion.

33. On that note however, given the rise in anti-Muslim hate crimes especially against Muslim women, many are finding that they are being required to rethink their work locations or activities for their own safety. Some for example are not attending work gatherings in the evenings or refusing overtime or travel opportunities because it will mean walking alone in the dark at some point. Others have left jobs they were performing well in in order to cut travel time and work somewhere closer to home. It is therefore vital that employers take such matters into account and help employees feel a part of the team and cared for. In a time of rising islamophobia, simple actions such as the company offering to pay the taxi fare, arranging car sharing or organising lunch time events during the day for team building purposes, shows inclusivity and solidarity.

Q4. What barriers to accessing training and employment support exist for Muslims?

34. From the information available to us it appears that the barrier to accessing training and employment support are the employers themselves who are unable to correctly identify the needs of their employees, Muslim or otherwise. A common complaint seems to be that the training and support providing was either not relevant, not adequate or too late.
35. In many instances there appears to be a misconception surrounding the capabilities of Muslim employees despite the fact that they have clearly been employed and been working for the organisation due to their knowledge, skills and abilities. One Muslim woman told MWNUK that she was only offered training in writing skills despite the fact that she held a Degree and Post Graduate Diploma; such training therefore being irrelevant.

36. It appears that basic training is only provided and employers are generally reluctant to provide more in-depth training due to cost implications even if it would make their organisation more profitable in the long term. For example, one Muslim woman explained how she was made to take over the cases of a colleague who had left the organisation and had to teach herself by using the internet and buying books because her employers would not listen to her requests for training and she knew that if something went wrong it would be her career and reputation on the line.
37. Despite there being a general trend of the lack of understanding shown by employers, there does appear to be direct discrimination at play in some cases for Muslims when trying to access training and employment support. For example, one Muslim woman worked at a law firm and asked if they would pay for her training through the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives. She was refused on the basis that she had not been working for them long enough and it also depended on her obtaining high grades in her appraisal. However, a few months later a non-Muslim woman who had just joined the firm and would therefore have not had her appraisal, had been told her training would be paid for. When the Muslim employee asked again she was told she would have to pay for it herself and then they can look at reimbursing her but with the non-Muslim employee this was paid for upfront. The fact that a law firm can feel able to differentiate between employees highlights the serious issues at play. For the sake of completeness, this employee did not complain or take legal action and found another place of work. She felt that if she complained then other law firms may regard her as a “trouble maker” and she would not be employed ever again and therefore decided it was best to quietly leave. It is highly concerning to us that lawyers and prospective lawyers, who are advocates of the law and legal system in the UK, feel unable to complain about discrimination and seek legal redress.

Q5. How effectively are employers accommodating the needs of Muslim employees?

38. Although there are some positive examples of employers accommodating the needs of Muslim employees, such as prayer rooms, there are also examples where this is not occurring even when it can be a simple act to allow inclusion. For example, one Muslim employee reported how at every monthly team meeting the manager would order bacon sandwiches for everyone in the team which all her co-workers looked forward to. However, at no point did the manager think to order any vegetarian options for her. What she also found strange was that it was obviously clear that she would only eat Halal meat given that on at least two occasions the team had had a discussion with her in the meeting itself about whether it bothers her that they are eating bacon around her, whether she can manage to work with the smell of these sandwiches etc.
39. Another example is from a Muslim woman who worked in a call centre for an insurance company. In a target driven environment naturally there was a rewards

policy in place and as well as the overall company bonus to look forward to, teams would be given rewards on a weekly or monthly basis for working well and achieving their targets; in this call centre this came in the form of alcohol. The Muslim woman worked there for almost a year and yet in that time the company did not once think to change the reward for her. As such whilst everyone else was rewarded, she was essentially ignored for her work.

40. Where employers are trying to be accommodating, it appears that they do not quite grasp the concept of what is being sought. For example, one employer provided the Muslim employees with a prayer room that they could use during their breaks. However, no clean facilities were provided to allow Muslim employees to perform “wudhu”. Some employers have also been accommodating in respect Ramadhan by allowing employees to work through their lunch so as to be able to leave an hour early to go home. However, there is no understanding shown of the pressures involved and no thought as to how alternative situations can be managed. For example, one Muslim employee was asked to prepare and present a last minute report on a key project to the wider team; two other members of the team were equally well-versed in this project and either of the other two could have presented the report instead of the fasting employee.
41. It appears that some employers feel that they are being accommodating by allowing a Muslim man to have a beard or by allowing a Muslim woman to wear a headscarf. Quite frankly, we believe such attitudes highlight the serious issue of discrimination and Islamophobia in the workplace where allowing a Muslim to do anything remotely connected to their religion is considered a positive action when in fact such matters should be the status quo.
42. It appears that generally it is the employee that has to accommodate themselves to the situation than the other way round. Although we are not expecting employers to completely change their ways, in an equal and inclusive Britain we are surprised that more is not being done to provide a positive and accommodating environment for all individuals in society, irrespective of gender, faith, ethnicity, sexuality, age or disability. One Muslim woman explained how she liked to socialise with her team but was upset at their lack of regard as to her beliefs and would not be socialising with them any longer even though she was aware that this would alienate her from the team. Although she was not particularly practising and did not wear a headscarf, she still believed in her faith and she found it upsetting that on a number of occasions at the work events, including a formal ball, she has had alcohol spilt on her, either accidentally or as a joke. She complained about this to the designated events organiser who said that these things will happen and dismissed the Muslim employees concerns that beliefs aside, something should at least be done for health and safety reasons and employees should also be thinking about the reputational risk to the organisation given some of the behaviour displayed.

Q6. What are the barriers to recruitment, retention and progression for Muslim employees in professional and managerial roles?

43. We believe that the barriers to recruitment, retention and progression are the same as or similar to the barriers in terms of accessing training and employment support; that is, a lack of understanding on the part of the employer and in a number of cases, prejudice and discrimination.
44. We would like to cite some information provided to us through our research which we have previously reported to the Equality and Humans Rights Commission, as we believe the words of these Muslim women will highlight the prevalence and seriousness of the issues involved:
45. “I was working for a well known charity. A position became available and three people (two female and one male) all enquired about it to apply. I was one of those people. The manager discouraged all of us to apply although we were all suitable. However, a White female team member who was less experienced was encouraged to apply for the job. She of course got the job!”
46. “I worked for a legal firm specialising in employment law. My colleague, a White male started at the firm much later than I did. He was much younger. Within months he was earning more than I was yet he lacked experience. In fact I was always helping him. I felt I couldn’t complain as my employers would make it difficult for me to get a job elsewhere and my career as a lawyer would be over. I ended up leaving the organisation.”
47. “I worked at an inner city practice where all the partners were White. They would say things... not always overt, but things like ‘your clothes smell...a bit curry’ in reference to me being Asian. The head of the surgery was one of the top people in the Deanery. You wouldn’t dare complain.”
48. Looking at the comments from the case studies cited above (which are only some of the examples available to us), it is clear why recruitment, retention and progression are issues for Muslims across sectors. Like all individuals, Muslims also want to advance their careers and work in a healthy and safe environment; unfortunately this is seriously lacking in a number of organisations and is a problem across all sectors which needs to be addressed.
49. When speaking to Muslim women the fear of complaining was an underlying trend in their stories. When going through the experience they often dismissed many things which are considered discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. However, due to fear of being labelled as a trouble maker or not getting a good reference for the next job, many felt they had to accept the treatment or leave the situation themselves which highlights the issue in respect of retention.

50. There is also a general sense that Muslim women expect to face some level of discrimination, having indirect implications. For example, following the Marks and Spencer story in December 2013 about Muslim staff handling alcohol and pork, a Muslim woman working in Asda quit her job. While her managers were always helpful and understanding she was worried things may change and so quit before something went wrong. Where Muslims are being made to feel that they have no option but to leave their jobs, this of course hampers their progression chances given they are having to start again and again – that is, where they are able to surpass the issues faced at the recruitment stage.
51. A report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2011 noted that the employment rate for people with disability was as low as 38 per cent in the 2000s. However, for Muslim men this rate was 47 per cent, and for Muslim women this rate was 24 per cent. These numbers highlight a serious issue that needs to be addressed in terms of recruitment and retention.
52. The misconceptions and prejudices surrounding Muslims is penalising capable Muslim employees from progressing in their field. They are being denied employment, training, support and progression opportunities and where these requirements are met to a basic level, it appears employers feel they have gone above and beyond by doing so. Hiring a Muslim woman with a hijab who is clearly the most competent and capable candidate is not praiseworthy; it is exactly what you should be doing because her hijab is irrelevant in this discussion.
53. When considering barriers to recruitment, retention and progression, we would also like to question how many public bodies have Muslims in senior positions, including Muslim women? Is the situation in other sectors therefore reflective as an overall trend? We believe inclusivity can only be achieved where equality and diversity is met at all levels and across all sectors and look forward to seeing immediate changes in this respect.

Q7. What initiatives have been successful in tackling barriers to employment faced by Muslims?

54. Role modelling and mentoring schemes have been a useful way of tackling barriers to employment faced by Muslims and encouraging Muslims, especially Muslim women, to take the necessary steps towards furthering their careers. However, such initiatives in themselves are not sufficient in tackling barriers to employment and will not be until and unless the issues within the workplace are addressed by the employers themselves.
55. The main concern is that there is nothing to compel employers, particularly in the private sector, to develop a good understanding of equality and diversity principles or

to consider issues such as adequate training and progression opportunities. They would of course be aware of the legal requirements as per the Equality Act and would be aware that they cannot be racist, sexist etc, but as we have demonstrated, issues of discrimination are not as simplistic or straightforward and there will be other layers which are currently not being addressed in the workplace.

56. Most organisations treat equality and diversity as a checklist and do not invest into promoting awareness and understanding of such issues within the workplace. We feel employers should be made to properly consider the potential issues within their workplace and ensure that employees are being provided with a healthy and safe environment to work in, which has taken their needs into account.
57. It is also important to ensure that the legislative framework is in fact effective and employees feel confident in using legal remedies as well as informal remedies. Better investment and training is also required for frontline professionals on cultural and/or faith factors relative to BME and Muslim victims of discrimination in the workplace to ensure proper care and support is being provided. Without this, victims of discrimination are unlikely to come forward, and the legislation will not actively guide social justice.

Final Comments

58. As a point of clarification, we must explain that our comments and examples have been limited to BME and/or Muslim victims due to the nature of our organisation and its work. As a national Muslim women's organisation our work predominantly deals with Muslim and BME women albeit we also work with individuals of other faiths and are therefore also aware of issues of relevance to other faith communities. In turn we wish to clarify that where we ask for faith and culturally sensitive mechanisms we do so on behalf of victims of all race, ethnicity, religion and faith.
59. We are also open and inclusive and seek to promote equality and diversity for all individuals irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, age, disability etc, and hope that all workplaces can develop an environment that is healthy, safe and harmonious for all.
60. Our case studies are anonymised for the safety and protection of those involved. Some cases however may have come to us anonymously and remained as such throughout our involvement.
61. As a national women's organisation committed to combatting discrimination and promoting equality, diversity and the empowerment of women, Muslim Women's Network UK would like to express its willingness to assist through research, training,

support, information or advice or any other means in order to ensure that any cases are prosecuted accordingly and preventative measures put in place for the future.

62. We would like to thank you for holding an Inquiry which considers the barriers and discrimination faced by Muslims in employment and the workplace and what can be done to overcome them. We also thank you for providing us with the opportunity to respond to your Inquiry and hope that our Evidence proves to be helpful in your considerations.

**On behalf of Muslim Women's Network UK,
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