

# **CHILD PROTECTION**

## **IN FAITH-BASED**

## **ENVIRONMENTS**

### **A Guideline Report**

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# **Breaking the Taboo of Child Abuse**

Ghayasuddin Siddiqui

Child abuse exists in all societies and cultures. It exists in family settings and in institutions. Often the abuser is known to the victim. It is their closeness and the position of trust that makes the criminal act much easier. It would be simplistic and naïve on the part of the Muslim community to think that their families and institutions are immune, especially from child abuse. Acknowledgement of a disease makes its treatment possible; ignorance or denial makes treatment impossible, and can be fatal. The Muslim community is at present in a state of denial – denial of the fact that child abuse takes place in places of worship including in mosques, *madrasas* (mosque schools) and families. It is a taboo subject. There is very little discussion taking place in the community on the subject at any level. Hence when such a crime is committed, the victim knows no one to turn to and the abusers are answerable to no one. This protects the abuser and ostracizes the victim. The victims of child abuse on growing up often become abusers themselves, taking their revenge on others. Taboo perpetuates the situation.

Children are a precious gift and trust from God. As adults, parents and teachers it is our responsibility to help them develop into responsible, confident and mature adults. Any failure on our part could potentially harm them or impede their maturing process for which the society will have to pay a price at a later stage.

There are around 700 *madrasas* in Britain, which teach basic Islam to pupils of school-going age during after-school hours; some have over 500 children attending them.

Because of the fear of child abuse some parents prefer home tuition instead, a practice said to be flourishing.



Absence of a good-practice guide on child protection and the perception that abuse exists in *madrasas* warranted a report to break the taboo in order to make all concerned in the community realise that sweeping the subject under the carpet is not the solution. If nothing be done we may face an avalanche of child sex-abuse scandals, decades afterwards, as has happened with the Roman Catholic Church in the 1990's 'when a culture of secrecy, deception and intimidation' could not keep the lid over cases of child abuse any longer. To protect the integrity of these valued institutions it is important that all *madrasas* across the United Kingdom put in place a transparent and accountable policies and procedures as a matter of urgency. To protect children from harm is a legal obligation for all those who deal with children in any capacity. The *madrasas* have to recognise that this is not a matter of choice that could be ignored.

*Madrasa* learning is a great tradition in Islamic civilisation. It was from *madrasa* education that the concept of universal education grew. Modern residential universities are but advanced versions of something, which began at the time of the creation of a Muslim society in Medina some 1400 years ago. *Madrasa* education developed great traditions of creativity, inquiry, learning and scholarship. The civilisation Moorish Spain created highlights what *madrasa* education is capable of. It produced intellectual giants who contributed to laying the foundations of the Renaissance, which removed despotism and obscurantism from across Europe.

Our *madrasas* confront the twin challenges of creating the best standard of behaviour and recovering old values of creativity, logical thinking and respecting difference. At present they have no policies in place that meets their legal requirements under the Children Act 1989 nor does there exist a body that supervises and monitors their educational performance, resulting in an uneven delivery of their courses. From the perspective of this report, establishing an explicit and nationally implemented child protection strategy throughout *madrasas* in the United Kingdom remains central to meeting these challenges with strength and integrity.

This report is a result of a seminar held on January 8, 2005, at the Ilford Islamic Day Care and Community Centre, Ilford, Essex, on 'Child Protection in a Faith-based Environment', in which Simon Moules, Richard Marks, Imam Haroon Patel and Mufti Barkatulla participated. The discussion that followed made it clear that most *madrasa* teachers were unaware of their legal obligations highlighting the need for a policy document. We invited speakers of the seminar to contribute their paper to this report. Before the seminar, the Muslim Parliament approached a number of mosques and community centres to host the seminar. Most were reluctant to do so. Their objections varied from: 'Why raise a non-issue?', and 'This will further marginalise the community' to 'This will be opening a can of worms'. Yet, discussion with some ex-teachers indicated that physical abuse is widespread. In *madrasas* up to 40% hit or scold their pupils; cases of sex abuse, 15-20 per year, were considered by insiders as being an understatement. It would have been surprising if there were no cases of child abuse as Muslims societies are after all like any other human society. They will, unfortunately, have to face such horrific issues like many other faith communities in our society. This does not mean *madrasas* should be considered as dangerous places, we just need to be more aware of incidents of abuse that takes place in faith-based environments, and work together to eliminate them from our society.

Firdusi Begum Uddin's article on 'Effects of Childhood Abuse' in this report provides a useful insight as to how various forms of abuses can effect childhood development, also indicate what remedies are available to those who are responsible for the welfare of children. Importantly, she highlights the dangers of using physical punishment as a form of discipline, a practice widespread in *madrasa* education.

In preparing this report we have greatly benefited from examples of good practice in England: 'Safe Children, Sound Learning – Guidance for *madrasas*', a guidance document produced by Kirklees Education/Social Services, is unique of its kind

and should be the first port of call for anyone attempting to put together guidelines on child protection. Further guidance is available in example of partnership working within the Blackburn with Darwen Borough. Other reports covering wider issues include 'A Programme for Action', i.e. the Nolan Report dealing with the Catholic Church, and 'Safeguarding Children', a child-protection handbook and policy model issued by the Church of England. These reports also contain useful model forms, policies and procedures for the preparation of good-practice guidelines for *madrasas*.

Out of some 150 local authorities in England and Wales only a handful have taken positive initiatives, involving their local mosques and *madrasas*, to put in place guidelines to meet their legal obligation as required by the Children Act 1989. This reluctance to engage with faith communities in general and Muslim communities in particular has left a large portion of some 100,000 children who attend madrasas, at any time, vulnerable. In our view this is simply not acceptable. It is also not acceptable for the local authorities and the police not to take this challenge seriously for fear of being accused of cultural insensitivities. We would like to see a national registration scheme, coordinated centrally and monitored by local authorities, to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children's Boards provide necessary advice and support, followed by effective training to staff and volunteers. Because if madrasas were left on their own, it is likely that due to poor understanding of child protection law and practice, a large number of Muslim children will remain exposed to significant risk of harm.

This report is intended to highlight the issue of child welfare and the need to recognise children's right to be safe. Hopefully a healthy debate within the community will follow its publication.

*[Dr. Ghayasuddin Siddiqui is Leader of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain]*

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# **Effects of Childhood Abuse**

Firdusi Begum Uddin

*“Self-esteem is “the essence of contentment and self-acceptance that stems from a person’s appraisal of his (or her) own worth, significance, attractiveness, competence and ability to satisfy aspiration”.”*

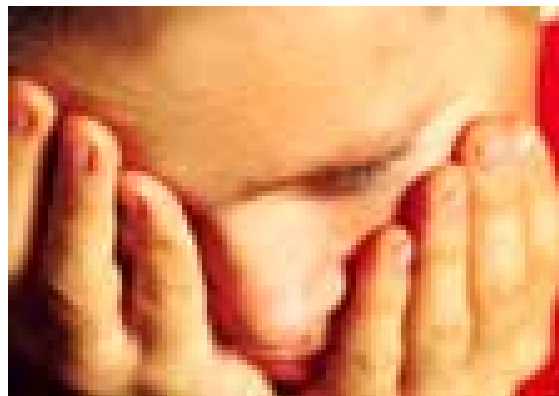
(Robson, 1988)

Self-esteem is a crucial component of a balanced and successful life. Most children receive the love, care and attention they need to become healthy and happy adults, with a strong sense of self-esteem. However, for some children this is not the case. Negative experiences of abuse in childhood can hinder the normal psychological and physical developmental processes, thus having damaging immediate and long-term consequences.

Abuse is a social problem: children can be abused in any setting and community. Abuse can occur in family, institutional or community settings, usually by people who know the children, and sometimes by strangers. There is no clear indication of difference between social classes or ethnic groupings; rather, incidents of abuse can occur in all faith settings, and can be perpetrated by almost anyone. With this in mind, if a particular community continuously denies the existence of child abuse, then the long-term effects on that community may well be irreparable.

## **What is Childhood Abuse?**

The NSPCC (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) defines the occurrence of child abuse to be *“when a child suffers harm, or death, because of physical cruelty, emotional cruelty, sexual abuse or neglect by an adult”*. The World Health Organisation estimates that 40million children (between 0-14 years of age) suffer from abuse. In 2003 the UK child protection register listed 32,700 children in need. During 2003-2004 the NSPCC and other help-lines received over 24000 calls for help. Every week in England and Wales, one to two children die following cruelty.



The Muslim community can no longer ignore the sad reality of childhood abuse, in all its forms, subtleties and extremes. Every individual has a social and human responsibility to promote the welfare of children. Members of all communities can help to protect children from harm if they are aware of children’s needs, and willing to act when concerned about a child’s welfare.

A child can be abused in many ways. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, and also by failing to act to prevent harm. To help prevent the occurrence of abuse, every community should be aware of the national legal

standing on child protection issues, and the guidance which is available; for example, the Children Act 1989 provides recommendations on how children should be cared for and protected (see Appendix A). Four main categories of abuse have been identified by the Department of Health (DoH), all of which have significant physical and psychological effects on the victims of such abuse. Though the DoH provides separate definitions and indicators for each type of abuse, professionals recognise that there is often an overlap in the occurrence of these types of abuse.

Following is a summary of the different forms of abuse, and the possible signs and symptoms of each, to allow people in the community to recognise and acknowledge what happens:

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is when deliberate physical harm is caused to a child. This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, biting, burning, punching or beating with objects. The use of belts, sticks and other such objects to administer discipline is also considered physical abuse. Physical abuse may also include poisoning, giving a child alcohol or drugs, and allowing other children to harm a child physically. Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy (when a parent or carer deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after) also constitutes physical abuse.

Some indicators of physical abuse:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- A history of previous injuries to the same child or siblings
- Injuries to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls and rough games etc: whereas accidental falls can produce bruises to the front of the child, it is uncommon for accidental bruising to occur on the back of a child or on areas such as the mouth, cheeks, stomach or neck
- There is a delay in reporting the accident or getting treatment
- Reluctance on the part of the child to change for, or participate in, games or swimming

### **Emotional Abuse**

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all forms of ill-treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone. This form of abuse is much harder to detect because there are usually no physical signs.

Emotional abuse is where persistent emotional ill-treatment adversely affects the child's emotional development. It may include repeated verbal threats, criticism, ridicule, shouting or a lack of love, affection and warmth. Constantly belittling or threatening a child, and causing children to feel frightened or in danger also constitute emotional abuse. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only if they meet the needs of another person.



Some indicators of emotional abuse:

If the child displays

- Excessively clingy or attention seeking behaviour
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration
- Changes in mood or behaviour, e.g., fearfulness, being excessively withdrawn, depression, aggression, extreme anxiety
- Seeking adult attention, not mixing well with other children
- Very low self-esteem and excessive self-criticism
- Eating disorders of various kinds
- Extreme shyness or passivity

If the parent or carer is

- Being verbally hostile
- Preventing social contact
- Consistently undermining a child
- Imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves any contact or interaction whereby a child or adolescent is used for the sexual stimulation of an older, stronger, or more influential person, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Actions may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape) or non-penetrative acts, such as touching, stimulating, rubbing or patting, which is meant to arouse sexual pleasure in the offender. It may also involve non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornography and unsuitable videos.

Some indicators of sexual abuse:

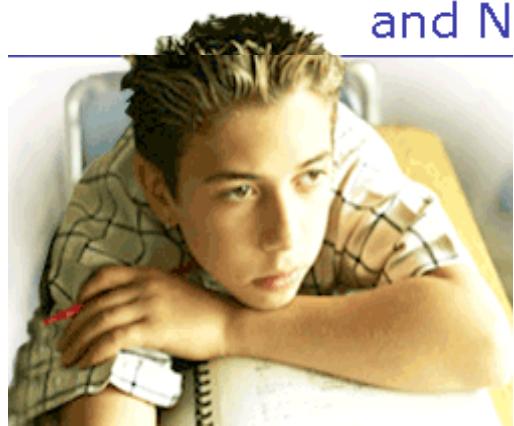
- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- A child with an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and age-inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Physical signs, e.g., repeated urinary infections, unexplained tummy pains, genital soreness, injuries or discomfort
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Self-harming behaviour, e.g., eating disorders, self-mutilation, suicide attempts

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure to provide a child's basic physical, emotional and psychological needs. Neglect involves a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, housing, clothes, heating, medical care and the necessary supervision to protect a child from physical harm or danger including failure to ensure access to education.

It may also include a failure to respond to a child's basic emotional needs. Some indicators of neglect:

- Being frequently hungry and tired
- Being frequently left unsupervised or alone for periods of time
- Inappropriate standards of personal hygiene e.g. dirty skin, body smells, unwashed, uncombed hair
- Clothing that is unclean, under or oversized, or inappropriate for the weather conditions
- Untreated illnesses, infected cuts, and other physical complaints not responded to by carer
- Nutritional neglect, e.g., over-eating junk food



and N

## **What Are the Effects of Childhood Abuse?**

Childhood abuse, in any of its forms, leaves a lasting impression on the victim, through adolescence and into adulthood. Severe abuse of any form can be the cause of mental health problems in adult life, having a detrimental effect on the individual's educational attainment and the social and economic status gained in later adult life. The low self-esteem and pessimistic outlook on life created by the occurrence of abuse may have repercussions on the social functioning of the individual (as a child and adult), thus having implications for society as a whole, (see Appendix B). As such, if a social community desire balance and stability, the issue of childhood abuse needs to be addressed, however challenging this may be.

Just as there is an overlap between the occurrences of the different types of abuse, there is also an overlap in the short-term and long-term effects generated. One of the most widely recognised consequences of childhood abuse and possibly the one with the most far reaching consequences is the finding that, without the appropriate help or treatment, children who have been abused go on to abuse others.

Continuous physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect can have significant immediate and long-term effects on all aspects of a child's health and development.

Consequences of all types of abuse include:

- Low self-esteem
- Feeling helpless and powerless
- Feeling unlovable, betrayed and frightened
- Being mistrustful of others
- Having learning problems, a lack of concentration and easily distracted.
- Having emotional problems and displaying anti-social behaviour e.g. lying and stealing
- Being reclusive and alienated from family and friends
- High levels of anxiety, depression and medical illnesses
- Serious behavioural and mental disorders
- Violence towards others, with high probability of abusing own children
- Self-destructive behaviour, e.g., self-mutilation and suicide

Often, the response triggered by continuous abuse is to attempt an escape of some form. This can range from the victim withdrawing into his or her self on running away from home to suicide attempts, as it is the ultimate escape response in humans.

### **The Consequences of Physical Abuse**

- Direct neurological damage
- Physical injuries, e.g., bruises, fractures, disability
- Aggressive and abusive behaviour towards others
- Emotional problems
- Behavioural problems, anti-social behaviour e.g. stealing, violence
- Learning difficulties
- Substance abuse
- Negative outcomes on reproductive health
- Death

These harmful consequences may be caused by abuse to children themselves, as well as by the abuse occurring in a family or institutional context where there is conflict and aggression.

### **Consequences of Emotional Abuse**

- Seriously hinders the normal developmental process of a child growing into a healthy, psychologically balanced and reasonable adult
- Mental illness
- Low self-esteem
- Being emotionally abusive towards others
- Negative effects on education and social functioning
- Loneliness, inability to make friends
- Inability to form/sustain relationships as adults
- Depression, anxiety and stress
- Sleeping and eating disorders
- Self-harming behaviour

## **Consequences of Sexual Abuse**

- Negative outcomes for reproductive health
- Sexually transmitted infections, e.g., HIV/ AIDS
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Alcohol / drug / substance abuse
- Sexual activity starts at an early age
- Mental illness
- Depression (the levels are higher among adolescent victims than among children)
- Strained relations as adults
- Self-harming behaviour
- Lasting feelings of shame and guilt

Studies have found that the damaging effects of sexual abuse can be greater depending upon the length of time the abuse continues, how young the child is when the abuse begins, and how closely related the abuser is to the victim.

## **Consequences of Neglect**

- Significant impairment of physical health
- Developmental effects, both physical and intellectual
- Long-term difficulties with social functioning, relationships and educational progress
- Illness / disability
- Physical injuries
- Emotional damage
- Being abusive towards others
- Death

## **Why Does Abuse Occur?**

Abuse can occur in any setting and community. There are no clear indications of differences between social classes or ethnic groupings, though sometimes particular cultural traditions could lead to behaviour identified as abusive.

However, certain risk factors have been identified in cases of abuse, which could help a community to recognise the danger signs.

Risk factors identified include the following:

- Sexual abuse occurs more in socially deprived and disorganised families
- Children in families with marital dysfunction are more at risk of abuse
- The cultural tradition of a family can lead to abuse e.g. the belief that children are the property of parents, to be treated and controlled any way the adult wishes; or the belief that children need to be toughened up to face the hardships of life

- Parents suffering from mental illness, alcoholism, criminality and a history of previous abuse are more likely to abuse their own children
- Belief in the necessary use of physical punishment as a form of discipline

## **Punishment: Discipline or Abuse?**

One of the risk factors identified for abuse is the belief in, and use of, physical punishment as a form of discipline.

Forms of 'punishment' occur in family, community and educational settings. Learning from punishments and sanctions are an important part of development, as it teaches us not to do the things which threaten our well-being or disrupt the balance of society, such as paying a fine for speeding, or having to do a detention after school for not completing homework. The systems of rewards and punishments are effectively used by many to teach and strengthen the acceptable behaviour of children. However, in the case of some, the punishment is taken a step further and can become abusive.

The danger seems to occur most when the punishment becomes physical. Physical punishment includes:

- spanking, slapping, smacking with the hand
- striking with an object (e.g., belt, shoe, ruler, stick)
- forcing a child to kneel on hard objects ( e.g., floor, pencils)
- forcing a child to hold an uncomfortable position (e.g., standing motionless)

Research has identified two commonly held beliefs about physical punishment:

- 1) Physical punishment is effective and necessary
- 2) Physical punishment can be distinguished from physical abuse.

However, studies have challenged both these beliefs.

Studies have found that physical punishment can lead to child aggression, delinquency and poor mental health. Physical punishment does not effectively deter the repetition of the undesirable behaviours; rather, it teaches children that violence pays, and may lead to aggressive, anti-social behaviour in later childhood/adulthood. Instead, research suggests that positive, non-violent discipline is the key to better behaved children, and by consequence, a better behaved society.

Frequently, physical abuse has been identified as a consequence of action taken by parents / carers to discipline a child. Thus, once adults give in to the use of physical punishment in their attempts to discipline a child, the likelihood of physical abuse occurring becomes very real.

Alongside physical punishment is the use of emotional punishment to 'teach them a lesson'. Threatening language, belittling, ridiculing, insulting and humiliating a

child for getting something wrong, verbal abuse and other such forms of emotional cruelty can be equally harmful for the development of the child, and equally ineffectual in teaching the child anything. Rather, they prevent the child from developing emotional stability, by hindering mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Physical punishment has the same damaging, negative impacts as physical abuse. The use of excessive physical/emotional punishment in educational settings in particular causes the child to become disaffected with the system, and anything related to it. The child does not gain any positives from the experience, and abandons any actions and behaviour associated with the experience, as soon as the possibility arises. This disaffection can last into adulthood.

Studies have also found that the consequences of abusive punishment have wider ramifications. Parents who have experienced physical / emotional methods of punishment are more likely to deal with their own children in the same way. Using excessive punishment as a disciplinary tool leads to the same psychological and behavioural maladjustment, and overt physical harm as abuse itself.

The only way to avoid the danger of physical / emotional punishment turning into abuse is to explore more constructive, alternative approaches to discipline. Behavioural studies have found that punishment does not effectively deter undesirable behaviour; rather, alternative reinforcement methods are more effective. In other words, it works better to reward good behaviour and thus encourage its repetition than to punish wrong behaviour.

## **What Can We Do?**

The occurrence of childhood abuse, in any of its forms, cannot be denied. The harmful short-term and long-term consequences of childhood abuse cannot be ignored. The challenge now for every community is to confront this, and try to identify methods to deal with this issue. Tackling the issue of child protection is imperative, as it is the only way to safeguard the interests of the children. Children have a right to be safe. Children are not to blame for being abused. Children should not feel they are alone; rather they should feel able to tell someone they trust if they are being abused in any way. With this aim in mind, the NSPCC launched its latest campaign “someone to turn to”. We should all try to make ourselves that ‘someone’ for the children in our community.

The most important factor when dealing with victims of abuse is to let them know that they are believed. Overcoming the fear, misplaced guilt and shame of abuse, to actually being able to confide in someone is the most difficult steps taken by a victim of abuse. This demands a sensitive and understanding response from the person taken into confidentiality, and



from society as a whole. The biggest task for those dealing with victims of abuse is to counteract the feelings of guilt and shame, and to restore self-confidence and assertiveness.

Alongside learning how to deal with victims of abuse, communities also need to work to prevent the abuse taking place at all. More subtle forms of abuse, such as neglect and emotional abuse can be just as traumatising as violent physical and sexual abuse. As has been seen, the traumatic experiences are not only harmful to the child, but also have far-reaching consequences on society. If the cycle of abuse from one generation to the next is to be prevented, then the needs of the victims must be recognised, and the appropriate support and treatment provided.

According to the *Children Act 1989*, the safeguarding of children from harm should be the focus of every community. To achieve this, it is essential to stop blaming the victims, and rather to believe in them, and do everything necessary to create an environment that minimises the risk of abuse. The *Nolan Report (2001)* was the Catholic Church's response to the issue of child abuse, and emphasised its commitment to place the protection of children at the forefront of its policy. This should also be the commitment of the Muslim community, and the steps to ensure this outcome need to be put into action.

Childhood is a time when many physical, emotional and psychological changes are happening in the life of the child. Abuse to occur during this period leaves the child extremely vulnerable to sustaining damage that can prevent the normal developmental processes. Research shows that children who are treated with love and respect grow up to be intelligent, responsive and sensitive members of society. Surely this is in the best interests of us all.

*"People whose integrity has not been damaged in childhood, who were protected, respected and treated with honesty by their parents, will be – both in their youth and adulthood – intelligent, responsive, empathetic and highly sensitive. They will take pleasure in life and will not feel any need to hurt others or themselves."*  
(Alice Miller, 1991)

*[Firdusi Begum Uddin is a graduate from LSE in Psychology and Philosophy and works as Assistant Head of year and RE teacher in an inner-London mixed secondary school]*

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## Appendix A

### National Legal Guidance for the Protection of Children

#### **The Children Act 1989**

The duty to safeguard children from significant harm is the foundation of the Children Act 1989, which outlines the *legal right* of children to be protected from harm. This legislation (recently reviewed in the Children Act 2004) applies to all children living in the UK, and includes recommendations on how children should be cared for and protected.

The Children Act emphasises that children should be treated with respect, and accords them the right to:

- be protected from harm and neglect
- be listened to
- be told their rights
- be given the opportunity to talk about any worries they may have
- have their wishes considered when decisions are made about them

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of *significant harm* as a threshold to justify intervention into family life. Every local authority has a *duty* to investigate where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes “significant harm”. Rather, the judgement depends on a range of factors:

‘Significant’ depends on

- the severity of the injury / neglect
- whether or not it be an isolated incident
- the degree of intent
- whether or not form part of a broader context of poor standards of care

Section 31.9 of the Children Act 1989 defines harm as *ill-treatment* or the impairment of *health* or *development*

- ill-treatment includes physical and sexual abuse, and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical, such as verbal and emotional abuse
- health means physical or mental health
- development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development

The Dept. of Health, the Home Office and the Dept. for Education and Employment have issued further guidance on this matter. Some of the documents available are:

- The DoH's "Working together to Safeguard Children" (published in 1999). This explains the roles and responsibilities of agencies and others in protecting and promoting the welfare of children. Agencies involved in child protection work include social services, education, Day Care and other voluntary and private sectors e.g. masjids and madressahs.
- The DoH's "Protection of Children Act 1999: A Practical Guide" (published 2001). This is a framework for a cross-sector scheme to identify people considered unsuitable to work with children.
- The Criminal Records Bureau allows access to information sources for checks on potential employees.

It is advisable for these legal and guidance documents to be used when devising child-protection procedures for any organisation working with children.

### **The Role of the Police**

As the Children Act 1989 is a legal document outlining the right of children to be protected from harm, any violation of the Act constitutes a criminal offence, one of the consequences of which is police involvement. Under the Act, the police have powers to support the courts and local authorities in following their duties to safeguard the welfare of a child. Police services work with social services to ensure that the correct procedures are followed once an instance of possible maltreatment has been reported. Social services have to discuss any information they have with the Police Child and Public Protection Unit. This unit is particularly trained at interviewing children about allegations of mistreatment.

The Home Office outlines the role of the police in child protection issues in circular *HO44/2003: The duties and powers of the police under the Children Act 1989*.

The following is a summary of some of the points from this document:

- The Children Act 1989 gives the police the power to take a child into police protection if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child would suffer significant harm. In most cases, this can only be done after the investigating child protection officer has seen the child and assessed his or her circumstances. A child can remain under police protection for up to 72 hours. Chief officers need to ensure adequate liaison exists between the police force, local authorities and other agencies who may provide suitable accommodation, should the need arise.
- The Children Act allows the police to use reasonable force if necessary, to take a child into police protection, or to keep them there.
- The investigating officer has a duty to communicate and keep the child informed of the process, taking into account the child's wishes on matters involved in being taken into police protection. The investigating officer may also interview the child as a victim of crime.

- The investigating officer has a duty to inform the parents and any other legal guardians of the steps taken with respect to the welfare of the child.
- A child will only be discharged from police protection if the investigating officer considers the child to no longer be at risk, or if the child has been provided with accommodation by the local authority
- While a child is in the protection of the police or the local authority, these authorities are responsible for allowing or denying contact with parents, legal guardian or any other person acting on behalf of these persons.

## **Appendix B**

### **A Model for the Effects of Child Abuse**

(The Untouched Key, by Alice Miller)

The traumatising of children has an effect on society:

- All children are born to grow, develop, live, love and articulate needs and feelings for their self-protection.
- For their development, children need the respect and protection of adults, who love them and help them understand the world.
- When the fundamental needs of children are not met, and instead they are abused by being beaten, punished and manipulated, their integrity and self-belief will be severely damaged.
- In the environment of abuse, the child cannot react with anger and pain, thus the child is forced to suppress his/her feelings, and to repress the memory of the traumatic experience.
- However, the anger, pain and despair will find another outlet, often in violent and destructive acts against others (criminal behaviour) or against themselves (substance abuse, psychological disorders, suicide).
- If the abused victims become parents, they often direct acts of revenge for their mistreatment against their own children.
- To prevent such damaging consequences it is vital for victims to feel that they are believed and not blamed for what has happened to them.

# **The Catholic Churches' Response to Allegations of Child Abuse**

Simon Moules

The trauma and sadness of child abuse is not a faith-based problem but a problem within society as a whole. We are part of society and therefore affected by it. However, as an organisation and role model, we can be pro-active in being part of a wider approach to dealing with abusive behaviour.

Child abuse is difficult to define since there are many ways in which a child can be abused but it is usually divided into four main forms: Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse and Neglect. Although divided into four categories for ease of description, these forms of abuse can often be found together. This is not a new problem but we are now better informed and able to recognise and acknowledge that it happens.

There is a responsibility placed upon the Church toward our congregations to develop a strategy to reduce risk as far as possible and demonstrate a full commitment to protecting vulnerable children and adults.

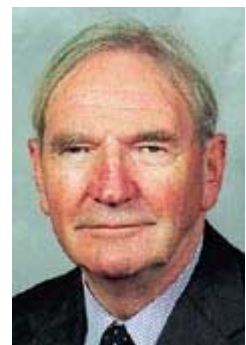
## **Strategic Considerations**

In 2000, as a response to allegations of child abuse and an increasing awareness within society, the Catholic Church, specifically the Archbishop of Westminster, commissioned an independent committee to review child protection within the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The committee was led by Lord Nolan and the subsequent report referred to as the **'Nolan Report – A programme for action'**.

Committee members consisted of both Catholic and non-Catholic professionals who consulted with over 200 organisations and individuals within the field of child protection.

The specific terms of reference were to:

***“examine and review arrangements made for child protection and the prevention of abuse within the Catholic Church in England and Wales and to make recommendations”***



Lord Nolan

As such, the Nolan report identified guidelines for creating a safe environment, responding to allegations of abuse and any other salient points not encompassed within these two main sections through identifying 83 recommendations to be adopted at both National and Local level.

It is not necessary to refer to specific recommendations since the document can be found in its entirety on the Internet by searching for 'Nolan Report', however, as a brief overview, the recommendations can be separated into categories, which

provides clarity around what the Committee considered to be important. The summary of actions and structures designed to optimise current research and understanding around child protection within the Catholic Church are as follows:

- Safeguarding children from abuse
- Structures required to safeguard children from abuse
- Creating an environment that minimises the risk from abuse
- Record-keeping
- Responding to allegations of abuse
- Acknowledging and dealing with mistakes and lapses
- Dealing with child abusers within the congregation
- Child abuse in the community
- Raising awareness

The report concluded:

***“Our hope is that this report will help to bring about a culture of vigilance where every single adult member of the Church consciously and actively takes responsibility for creating a safe environment for children. Our recommendations are not a substitute for this but we hope they will be an impetus towards such an environment”***

It is also important to add that the Report recommended a further review in 5 years time to reflect assessing the implementation of the recommendations and possible further adaptation to an ever-changing society.

As a result of the Nolan Report, recommendations began to be implemented. As a direct consequence, the organisational structure of child protection within the Catholic Church in England and Wales became defined.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales consists of 22 Dioceses. Each Diocese has a Bishop and consists of a number of Parishes, for example, the Diocese of Brentwood is an area covering Essex, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and consists of 93 parishes.

Whilst each Parish has a certain level of autonomy, the Diocesan Bishop has overall control. Similarly, whilst each Diocese has a degree of autonomy, national directives are set out through a Bishops conference, The Cardinal and Vatican.

Each Parish has a Priest, some paid employees and a large number of volunteers who help in the overall running of the Parish. Specific committees have also been set up to run activities such as a summer camp, pilgrimages and youth groups. These are cross Diocese and in some cases, National.

Each Diocese has a *Child Protection Officer*, a *Child Protection Co-ordinator* or both. The Child Protection Officer's responsibilities are to create an example of best practise in the prevention of Child Abuse and in responding to it, both nationally and at the level of the Diocese. Responsibilities also include developing the effective operation of preventative policies and practices in Parishes and the Diocese that will minimise the opportunity for abuse.

The Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (now referred to as COPCA) was set up. This is a centralised and national body that oversees policy, procedure and provides advice to each of the 22 Dioceses. This helps to provide a consistent and considered approach to the protection of vulnerable children and adults.

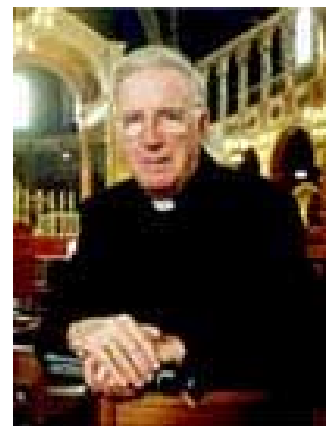
On a Diocesan level, The Bishop appointed a Child Protection Co-ordinator as his delegate (who is usually but not always a Priest) and employed a Child Protection Officer who has the necessary qualifications and skills to work and advise on child protection matters.

A *Child Protection Commission* was also set up. This commission consists of both Clergy and Professionals from within child protection related agencies, examples of which are Police, Social Services, Education, Law and Health. The Commission meet at least quarterly to consider any child protection issues or referrals and offer a reviewing process for all child protection involvement from the Child Protection Co-ordinator and Officer. If necessary, members of the Commission can be called to a 'rapid response' meeting if consideration of an urgent child protection matter is needed.

On a Parish level, a Child Protection Representative was appointed. These are volunteers who usually have existing skills in child protection matters through past or present employment although training is always provided.

There followed the development of child protection policy and procedure within the Catholic Church. This consisted of various sub-groups tackling Specific issues before final agreement and Implementation through confirmation from the Bishop's conference.

Having identified some of the structural changes, practical steps have also been taken at a local level to assist in the protection of children and vulnerable adults.



*Archbishop of Westminster*

Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it should provide ideas for the development of future protective measures within other faiths.

Child Protection training is provided for all volunteers within each Parish. This is an ongoing part of the Child Protection Officer's role and includes the Parish Priest, Child Protection Representative and all volunteers who come into contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. The training is to raise awareness of child abuse, clarify how to actions any concerns, discuss best practice in terms of working with children safely and clarifying policies and procedures. This forum also allows for questions and discussion around child protection issues raised by volunteers.

COPCA provide a policy and procedure manual which is frequently reviewed. Specific policy is in place around how to respond to allegations of abuse – providing consistency and clarity throughout the 22 Dioceses.

COPCA also act as an advisory service and are contactable to discuss any child protection related matter.

*Criminal Record Bureau Disclosures* are being completed throughout all Dioceses with the intention that ALL Clergy, paid employees and volunteers who have any contact with children and/or vulnerable adults complete a form enabling access to any criminal history or concerns held through Education, Social Service Departments or the Protection of Vulnerable Adults list. Whilst this will only show people who have been found guilty of a criminal offence, it is still a clear commitment to protecting all within the Catholic Church and the only available process at the present time.

Two references are taken up on all volunteers as a further way of legitimising them as suitable representatives of the Catholic Church.

It is important not to place our own value judgements upon any allegations received. As such, any concerns or allegations regarding Clergy, paid employee's or volunteers are immediately notified to the Police and/or Social Service Department. This allows the statutory investigative agencies the ability to make decisions over how to proceed without possible future corruption of evidence. The Catholic Church does not decide if abusive behaviour has taken place.

Clear records are kept of all intervention in matters of child protection for future reference and evidential purposes.

Links are formed with other agencies, both Statutory and Voluntary, in order to be part of developing policies and procedures in the future and maintaining awareness of developments in the wider community.

Each Parish has a '*Safe Children, Safe Church*' A4 folder with procedures on taking up references, dealing with any concerns and other child protection matters. This is to assist the Child Protection Representative in their role. A booklet providing an overview of this is available to all parishioners.

The details of the Child Protection Representative are clearly displayed at each Parish so that anyone with concerns (adult or child) can approach them for advice.

There is a website with information on how to contact the Child Protection Office.

A booklet regarding guidelines is provided to all volunteers and is easily accessible within Church.

## **Conclusion**

Children can be abused in any environment given a certain set of circumstances. It would be naïve to assume that child abuse could not happen within our faith.

People who abuse children are not visually any different to anyone else. They may be friends, relatives or people in positions of power. In fact, anyone could potentially abuse a child. Whilst we do not know exact figures for abuse,

statistically the majority are male, it is behaviour which is hard to identify and even harder to convict upon.

I believe that, in all religions, people have an expectation of safety within their environment and invest trust within their faith. This is as it should be. However, this also means that the protective capabilities of parents/carers/extended family members etc. may become relaxed and opportunities for abuse may also increase. This is a painful area to contemplate and an area where denial is easier to deal with than face the prospect of a trusted member of our community being a child abuser.

Whilst all professionals and religious should strive to eliminate child abuse, it is unlikely that any environment will ever be able to describe itself as 'child abuse free'. This does not mean that we shouldn't continue to work toward this goal but does mean that in reality; the risk of abuse is reduced not removed. As such, we should be aware that this work is an ongoing process and in need of frequent review. This is the same approach taken by all agencies directly involved in the protection of children and is a reflection of a constantly changing society and a greater understanding in the complexities of protecting children from abuse.

The Catholic Church aims to promote accountability and transparency. Only through ensuring that statutory agencies (such as the Police and Social Services) are brought into our faith-based environment and actively encouraged to work in partnership with us, will we begin to professionally address abusive behaviour and demonstrate a real commitment to the vulnerable children and adults within our community. Not only does this fit with our own sense of morals, responsibilities and faith, but it sends out a clear message to abusers that they will not be tolerated or treated more leniently.

Our experience has been that by addressing issues of child protection and in creating a safer environment in which victims of abuse may feel able to come forward, there is an increased rate in allegations of child abuse, particularly in historical abuse.

The Catholic Church continues to develop 'best practice' through learning from experience, research and other agencies.

Preventative policies and practices can minimise risk but never totally eradicate the potential for child abuse. A consistent approach is key to a nationwide standard against child abuse and encourages understanding and clarity for all concerned. Further, in respecting a child's dignity and rights there is also an undertaking of responsibility and a duty of care.

Developing policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults within our communities is vital, as is co-ordinating a national response and raising awareness. This is why I feel that such interactions as this are hugely important in the response to child abuse and future safety of our religious communities.

*[Simon Moules is Child Protection Officer in the Diocese of Brentwood]*



# **Creating Awareness about Child Protection**

Richard Marks

Many members of faith and community groups tend to look upon themselves as being a congregation or collective, which all its members aspire to high standard of moral code and lifestyle. As part of their allegiance to a worthy set of principles, some people find it difficult to accept that some members of their community can and do behave badly towards children.

However, if we are to be honest, we know that no community can say their children have never been affected by, or been at risk from, inappropriate behaviour or actions by adults within their own family or community.

It is important that faith groups acknowledge the majority of its members are good and law abiding citizens that cherish and respect children. Having said this, it is equally importance that faith groups also recognise that within their own community there are people who abuse children.

Sometimes such people are described as 'a few bad apples', this is not necessarily the best terminology to describe a person who poses a risk to children. However, the use of such terms maybe an avenue that could be used to initially broach this difficult and sensitive subject. So if one was to approach this subject by using such terminology, it is of the up most importance that these 'bad apples' are not allowed to damage the rest of the apples in the box and removed immediately from the box.

In light of this and the importance children play in our lives, beliefs and values, it's important that we deal with the issue of Child Protection in an open and honest manner.

I would suggest there are five key audiences we need to actively engage with, so that the message of Child Protection can be discussed with respect and integrity and not seen as a taboo subject.

- Community leaders, teachers, etc.
- General population of a faith community
- Schools
- Social Services, Police, etc
- Children and young people



This is not easy, but this should not be a reason why open dialogue does not take place. In fact, the opposite is true. Children are at the very centre of any community or faith group, they are often the main focus of many activities and celebrations. For these very reasons, it is important that we have the courage and indeed we have a duty to our children, to enable discussions about Child Protection to take place, without people feeling they are bringing shame upon their community. The discussion of child protection should serve to demonstrate a level of strength within the community in terms of their willingness to tackle a difficult, yet important, issue; and not as a means to stigmatise it.

## **Community Leaders and Teachers**

Some members of faith communities do not wish to believe that child abuse takes place within their own community. When this does happen, many (but not all) would wish this would just go away, or be swept under the carpet.

Community leaders and teachers need to actively take the lead in ensuring that Child Protection is acknowledged, understood and supported on both an individual and communal basis.

By doing so, this will ensure the leaders and teachers gain respect and credibility from child care professionals and others in the wider community, as well as from their own faith group. This will demonstrate to the whole community that its faith leaders and teachers actively support the legislation and good practice regarding safeguarding children.

Also, by leading by example this should encourage others within their community to support and implement Child Protection policies and procedures in schools, youth clubs, etc. Further, this will also give confidence to children and parents alike, to be able to talk about this sensitive subject at home.

## **General Population of a Faith Community**

### **Elders**

Many people, particular the elders of a community, sometimes do not wish to acknowledge that child abuse takes place within their community, this maybe for a variety of reasons. For some people, Child Protection is often seen as a taboo subject that brings shame on the child, their family and the community as a whole.

Elders may have grown up in an environment where there were unwritten rules or beliefs such as: - children lie about such things; this will bring disgrace on the family name; family members would not be able to take their place within communal society.

Alongside this, elders play an important part within faith communities and are usually held in high esteem. Therefore, if they as a group are able to accept that child abuse does happen within their community, this is likely to be a positive step in ensuring Child Protection gains acceptance by others within their community.

Further, this would enable the elders to talk about the subject with their own family members. If elders are seen as being able to discuss such matters, then others are likely to gain confidence to do the same.

Community leaders need to positively engage with elders groups as a key constituent to child protection strategies. There are a number of different forums that can be used to reach this target audience and leaders of each community are best place to know how to access these groups.

### **Schools**

Schools need to play a key role in promoting this topic, in the course of which they should positively engage with parents. Schools offer specific helpful opportunities to bring about dialogue in a range of non-threatening ways.

A very clear and positive message can be given to parents by schools including information about their child protection policy and procedure in their literature and by actively informing parents of this in other forums as well. This will give a reassuring message to parents and children that the school takes child protection seriously; it is able to deal with any child protection issues; and this will be done in a sensitive and professional manner.

Furthermore, this will give a reassuring message to pupils that there is someone in a position of trust with whom they can talk with, who will listen to and act upon what they have been told in a sensitive and professional manner.

### **Parents**

Some parents may struggle to discuss child protection with their children. This could be for a number of reasons, such as: - they were brought up with this being a taboo subject; they feel they would be going against the wishes of communal leaders, elders or other family members ultimately not feeling comfortable about discussing such matters with their own children.

Those people who are in positions of respect and influence within their community need to be seen taking positive steps in talking openly about such matters; this will give parents the confidence to approach this issue with their own children.

For those parents who may feel the need for some assistance to speak with their children about child protection, the community needs to be able to sign post where such support can be found.

This will also give a positive message to parents and children alike that demonstrates, it is okay to talk about such matters; and that this is positively supported by communal leaders.



### **Social Services, Police, and other formal agencies**

Sadly, a number of people have an unfounded fear that if Social Services or the Police become involved with their family, this will bring shame upon them, their family and their community. In light of this, steps need to be taken to reassure people that the sometimes the involvement of Social Services, Police and/or other statutory agencies is necessary so that children can be kept safe from harm.

It is important that the community, its leaders and institutions (i.e. schools, youth clubs, etc) are seen to be setting a positive example of embracing affirmative action in regard to Child Protection. In particular, they need to be able to demonstrate that Child Protection is taken seriously by them.

This can be done by the following:

- *Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure*  
Ensuring that all adults working with children (either in a paid or unpaid capacity) have an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure, before they take up their post. In addition, two independent references should also be taken before the person begins working with children.
- *Child Protection Policy and Procedure*  
Ensuring each institution has in place a child protection policy and procedure; and that all its staff are aware of this, receive appropriate training and are confident in its use. This should include a clear chain of accountability.
- *Training*  
From experience we know that Social Services and Local Education Authorities would be willing and able to assist in the development and implementation of such policies. Also, these public bodies would be willing to assist in the training of staff.

By following these steps, a clear message is given to those people who behave inappropriately towards children, demonstrating that their credibility will be checked and that if any concerns come to light about their behaviour, this will be investigated.

Robust systems in place will greatly assist in ensuring those people about whom there maybe concern's, are kept away from working with children.

The taking of such steps and working in partnership with the statutory agencies, will bring about a better understanding of each others role and a real sense of trust and confidence. This will pay dividends when a Child Protection case arises, as both the community itself and the statutory agencies will already have in place established means of dialogue, so these matters can be dealt with in a sensitive and professional manner.

## **Children and young people**

By adopting the afore mentioned approaches, a very clear and reassuring message will be given to those most vulnerable and cherished of our society, our children.

By encouraging open dialogue and having in place clear and transparent policies and procedures, children and young people can be confident that if they have any concerns of a child protection nature, they will be able to be confident that they will be listen to and believed; and that there are trained people in place who can deal with such matters in a sensitive and professional manner.

We owe a duty to our children not to just protect them from harm, but also to prepare them for the future. So when they in turn become adults and take their place in society, their contribution to their own community and society as a whole, can be seen as a positive and lasting legacy for the generations of children to come.

*[Richard Marks was until recently a Divisional Director of the Jewish Charity, Norwood – Children & Families First]*

## **References**

- 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child is Being Abused'  
**Dept of Health (DoH), May 2003**
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'  
**DoH, 1999**
- 'Protecting Children from Abuse: The Role of Education Service'.  
**Dept of Education (DfEE) 1995 Circular 10.95**

# **Guidance on Developing Child Protection Procedures for Madressahs**

Imam Haroon Rashid Patel

For all organisations involved in working with children, it has become increasingly important to make sure that they respond to the requirements and expectations of society and the law. Mosque committees now need to ensure that they have policies and procedures in place that look at the roles, obligations and responsibilities of people working with children, how to promote children's welfare, and how to protect them from harm.

One of the ways in which Mosque committees can achieve this is by providing written guidance for paid and unpaid members of staff about their responsibilities and the standard of care expected of them under the Child Protection Act.

Here are some recommendations on how to develop guidance on formulating child protection procedures for Madressahs:



## **Topics that Should be Discussed Prior to Developing Written Procedures**

- The benefits of partnership-working in child protection
- How to start the process
- The role of mosque committees
- What should be included in the guidelines
- How the procedures will be approved
- How the procedures will be put into practice
- How the procedures will be reviewed
- What accountability structures will be put into place

## **Good Practice in Partnership-Working with Child Protection Teams**

- It is advisable that a joint approach is taken involving local Social Services, Police and Mosque Committees for advice and guidance.
- It is useful to gain from the experience of those groups and organisation that have already formed and implemented procedures. In particular examples can be drawn from the partnership work between Blackburn with Darwen Social Services, Lancashire Social Services, the NSPCC, Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Council of Mosques and Blackburn Council of Mosques who have drawn up guidelines in relation to child welfare issues. These guidelines are used to then train one representative

from each mosque's management committee whose responsibility it is then to systematically train the administrators in their respective mosques. A similar initiative has been begun in Kirklees.

### **Getting Started**

- Agree on a steering committee consisting of members representing the different groups to be involved
- Carry out community consultation (to ensure that families are aware of their legal obligations under the Child Protection Act and support the efforts)
- Ensure that there are clear objectives, the aim being to provide information, guidance and practical support for mosque management committees, staff and volunteers
- Ensure access to secretarial resources

### **Role of Mosque Committees**

- It is the responsibility of a mosque committee/management to understand and be aware of their legal obligations in managing mosques/madrasahs.
- To produce written guidance for teachers and volunteers (providing a good practice guide and developing a clear framework)
- To address behaviour management (so that there is agreement on what sort of behaviour is acceptable) and to have agreed plans with regard to discipline so that everyone follows the same procedures
- To provide training and guidance (around behaviour management/child protection/health & safety)
- To develop robust recruitment and selection procedures (including seeking references for staff, verifying documentation, carrying out CRB checks)
- To ensure that there is always one qualified first aider and that emergency contact details are held on all children (including any medical conditions) and kept readily accessible.

### **Content of the Guidelines**

- Background information regarding child abuse (this should cover basic information such as an outline of legislation, types and indicators of child abuse)
- The process for managing allegations of child abuse (what happens when a complaint has been made? What is a strategy meeting? Who is responsible for taking the complaint forward etc)
- The need to maintain confidentiality with regard to all (information received should be understood. In particular the importance of, not discussing the matter with inappropriate persons as that could potentially harm the very children who need the most protection)

- Support for staff members (paid and unpaid)
- Support for students and/or/parents
- The need for accurate recording (including listening and recording protocols)

## **Approval**

- It is important to have approval for the newly created procedure from the local child protection committee
- Approval will also be needed from mosque committees, parents and members
- If the steering committee is fully representative of the area child protection committee and the mosque committees, and if people are kept informed of the purpose and progress of the steering group, approval will be very much easier

## **Putting Policy into Practice**

- Providing training for all involved, culminating in approval by the mosque committees is imperative in establishing and putting the commitment to child welfare and protection into practice.
- Parental agreement will be invited through the provision of information to keep them abreast of, and facilitate understanding as to the underlying ideas and progress. This can be done via Friday lectures or community meetings. It is important to ensure that women as well as men are given this information.
- Carry out a risk assessment for each Madressah.



## **Review**

- It is good practice to review how the guidelines are working. One way of doing this might be through monitoring the volume of complaints received
- A chain of accountability should be established to ensure complaints have a clear framework and reviews are conducted. This will ensure that there remains understanding as to who is ultimately responsible for enforcing child protection within any particular establishment.
- Provide refresher training for teachers, volunteers and mosque committee members.



## **Final Thoughts**

- The proposals must be credible, workable, and ultimately manageable
- For some organisations all this may be too much too soon and, for some, too little and too late. This said, it is imperative that every establishment strive to achieve as much as they can, no matter what stage they are at as they must recognise that it is their legal obligation.
- It must be a step-by-step approach.

*[Imam Haroon Rashid Patel is based at Balfour Road Mosque in Ilford. He has had local child protection foundation training and was part of a working group, consisting of local mosque leaders and local authority officers, that met to discuss the feasibility of drawing up child protection guidance for mosques schools in the London Borough of Redbridge.]*

# **Recommendations on Protecting Children from Abuse**

Childhood abuse has horrific and detrimental consequences not only for the victims but also for future generations. If the damaging physical and psychological consequences of child abuse are not dealt with adequately, the cycle of abuse is more likely to continue and escalate over generations. This is why it is crucial to face up to the issues and try to deal with the challenges that arise with it. For the Muslim community to achieve this, a unified approach to the issue of child protection is essential if we are to avoid sending out conflicting messages both to the children themselves and to those who are involved in child protection issues.

There are around 700 *madrasas* in Britain, which teach basic Islam to pupils of school-going age during after-school hours; some have over 500 children attending them.

In the absence of a nationally implemented child protection strategy throughout madrasas in the United Kingdom some 100,000 Muslim children who attend these mosque-schools would remain exposed to significant risk of harm.

## **Main Recommendations**

We ask the government to establish a national registration scheme for madrasas, coordinated centrally and monitored by local authorities, to meet their legal obligations as required by the *Children Act 1989*, to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children's Boards provide necessary advice and support, followed by effective training to staff and volunteers.

The following recommendations are a good beginning for madrasas in protecting and helping the lives of innocent children:

### **1. General Guidance on Working with Children**

- All children should be treated with respect
- Adults should provide an example of good conduct for others to follow
- Adults should respect a young person's right to personal privacy
- Adults should keep in mind that their actions, no matter how well intentioned, might be misinterpreted by someone else. Thus, try to ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present within sight or hearing, during activities with children.
- Adults should not allow themselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- Adults should not make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children, or have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children

- Any physical contact should only take place in public
- Physical contact should reflect the child's needs, and not the adult's. It should be age appropriate, and initiated by the child.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should feel able to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misunderstood.
- If an adult persists in inappropriate physical contact with a young person, this must be challenged, reported and the correct procedures used to handle it.

## **2. Creating an Environment to Minimise the Risk of Childhood Abuse**

- Ensure that those working with children are aware of child protection issues. This should take the *form* of *formal* training for paid and voluntary staff in organisations working with children, such as *masjids* and *madrasas*. This training should be repeated at regular intervals (e.g., annually) to remind staff of the issues.
- When employing paid and voluntary staff, national guidelines (such as the Home Office and DfES documents) should be used to develop procedures to identify those most suitable to work with children in organisations such as *masjids* and *madrasas* for example, the report on 'Preventing unsuitable people from working with children' (published by the Home Office) offers guidance on how to define those unsuitable, how to define the idea of working with children, and how to identify and prevent those unsuitable from gaining a position to work with children.
- National information pools, such as the criminal records bureau, should be used as mandatory practice, to check the details of potential employees or volunteers.
- Organisations which work with children should develop a child-protection policy, clearly outlining procedures for dealing with suspected cases of abuse.
- Organisations which work with children should develop a Behaviour Policy, outlining the expected behaviour from the children and clearly stating the agreed methods of discipline. (This should help avoid circumstances when discipline may be perceived as abuse.)
- Organisations which work with children should enable parents to have access to all their policies and procedures, including copies to take home, thus ensuring a community understanding child-protection issues.

## **3. Working with the Survivors of Childhood Abuse**

- If an allegation of abuse be made, do not ignore it. Make the necessary enquiries, or inform someone responsible who can make these enquiries.

- Listen to the child and closely observe their behaviour. Let them know that you are taking them seriously, and that you believe what they are saying. Because of their experiences survivors are very sensitive to how people react.
- In some situations it may be necessary to advise the child that you will need to tell someone about the problem who will be able to help them. Do not promise a child that you will keep the matter secret.
- Relate to the child with warmth and kindness, with a non-judgemental attitude
- Be genuine, accepting, objective, patient and understanding always remembering that to bring themselves to confide in someone is the biggest and most difficult step for victims of abuse to take.
- It is important to ensure the victims of abuse feel valued and respected for their courage in surviving and disclosing what they have endured.
- Respect the choices the victim wants to make regarding the next steps, as this is very important to give them back a sense of self-esteem and self-control.
- Many survivors have physical health problems resulting from their abuse – encourage them to get health checks and to talk over their fears of doing so.

## **National Support Agencies**

This section gives details of contacts of National Professional Support agencies that are trained to provide help and support to victims and their families of various forms of abuse, in particular Child Abuse.

### **Careline 020 8514 1177**

This is a national confidential counselling line for children, young people and adults on any issue including family, marital and relationship problems, child abuse, rape and sexual assault, depression and anxiety.

### **Childline 0800 1111**

This service is for any child or young person with a problem.

### **NSPCC 0800 096 7719**

#### **Asian Child Protection Helpline**

This free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk of harm offers counselling, information and advice. The service also connects vulnerable young people, particularly runaways, to services that can help.

### **NSPCC**

#### **Child Protection Helpline 0800 056 0566 (text phone)**

[help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

This free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk of harm it offers counselling, information and advice. The service also connects vulnerable young people, particularly runaways, to services that can help.

### **Muslim Youth Helpline 0808 808 2008**

[www.myh.org.uk](http://www.myh.org.uk)

MYH is a free and confidential service which provides counselling to children, young people (men and women) dealing with parents, drugs, sexuality and abuse.