



# **Summary Report**

# **#VisitMyMosque Day 2016**



www.mcb.org.uk/visitmymosque

Submitted on 07 March 2016 by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) for the World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016 Prize

### 1 Introduction

#VisitMyMosque day took place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2016 in the UK. It is a national initiative facilitated by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) where over 80 mosques took part in simultaneously holding a mosque open day.

Mosques across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland invited in neighbours to share tea and refreshments, alongside an insight into the day-to-day goings on of a busy Muslim centre of worship.

First conceived in February 2015 with about 20 mosques taking part, 2016 saw the initiative expand to over 80 mosques, achieving both increased geographic spread across the UK as well as increased press coverage in mainstream national and regional media, as well as social media.

### 2 Vision and Aims

Recognising the value derived to society from places of worship welcoming in visitors from other faith groups and no faith at all, the vision of #VisitMyMosque is for *every mosque in Britain to hold an open day at least once a year.* 

In this way open days can become an effective tool for improving community cohesion and interfaith harmony.

Given that open days are nothing new and that many mosques in Britain have actually been holding open day events for years if not decades, #VisitMyMosque aimed to amplify the positive work already being performed by asking mosques to co-ordinate at least one of their open days per year on a single day: 'Visit My Mosque' day.

The specific aims of the #VisitMyMosque initiative in the UK are to:

- 1. Reduce the 'unknown' factor of members of the British public with their local mosque
- 2. Ease tensions caused by constant negative media attention towards Islam and Muslims.
- 3. Encourage members of the public to get to know their local mosque and meet their local mosque management committee (i.e. put a human face to the building etc.)
- 4. Encourage more mosque management committees to actively find ways to engage with their local neighbours and faith communities.
- 5. Celebrate the positive social work being performed by mosques in the UK.
- 6. Create positive media attention for British Muslim communities at national and local levels.

### **3 Summary of 2016**

Once the date of Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February was selected in early December 2015, mosques across the UK were contacted and invited to register their participation in the initiative.

Overall 84 mosques took part on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February, with a further 8 mosques holding open days on other days in February for logistical reasons (Total 92). The full list of the participating mosques - as well as their addresses and open day times - was published on the MCB website and publicised at:

### www.mcb.org.uk/visitmymosque

The list was accompanied by a map and post code 'search' feature to assist the mosques with their publicity and to help members of the public to find their local mosque.

A breakdown of mosques by region is shown in Figure 1 below.

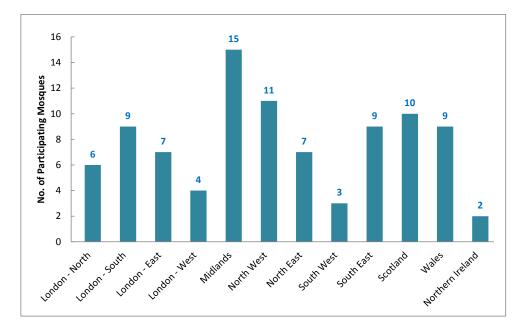


Figure 1 Breakdown by geography of the 92 participating mosques in #VisitMyMosque 2016

A full list of the 92 participating mosques is provided in the Appendix.

Participating mosques were provided with a "How To" guide containing general guidance on how to run an open day, as well as template invitation letters, press releases and poster. Mosques were encouraged to invite a wide range of visitors, including neighbouring residents, local faith group leaders, MPs, Councillors, Mayors, Schools and Teachers, Local charities organisations, Local businesses and shop owners, Police or police community liaison officers/Safer Neighbourhood team and Fire Brigade Officers. Some mosques had prior experience of running open days, while approximately a quarter of the mosques were holding an open day for the first time.

At a national level, MCB sent press releases to national and regional press prior to the day to generate interest and publicity, and media interviews were arranged. A promotional trailer video was also released, featuring short submitted clips from mosque congregations members saying "*Visit my mosque, where... [insert mosque activity]*". This can be viewed here:



#VisitMyMosque 2016 Promo Trailer https://youtu.be/SGsYyeg7HkQ

On the day, media launch events were held in four mosques in London, Glasgow, Cardiff and Leeds. At the media and VIP launch event at London Central Mosque, a range of interfaith speakers addressed the audience, including:

- Catriona Robertson, Interim Director of Christian Muslim Forum
- Mehri Niknam, Executive Director of Joseph Foundation

- Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan, Director of Islamic Cultural Centre
- Dr Shuja Shafi, Muslim Council of Britain
- Reverend David Musgrave, Methodist Minister in Brixton and Streatham
- Harriet Crabtree, Director of the Inter Faith Network (IFN) for the UK

Each of the participating mosques arranged activities in line with the resources, capacity and needs of their local communities. The range of activities included:

- Guided mosque tours
- Exhibition or poster display
- Prayer observation
- Open Q&A session with the Imam
- Tea/coffee/refreshments
- Arabic calligraphy or "write your name in Arabic" stall
- "Try on a hijab" stall
- Bouncy castles/Kid's corner

Mosque volunteers - male and female, young and old - were on hand during the day to meet and greet, talk to visitors and guide them around. In fact the majority of mosques reported significant participation of young volunteers and students aged 25 years old or younger taking part in running the open day.

Mosques were asked to share photos on social media via the hashtag **#visitmymosque** as well as encourage their visitors to post feedback using the same hashtag. Twitter was trending significantly throughout the day and afterwards.

The range of photos and comments posted before, during and after the day can be viewed online at:

### https://twitter.com/hashtag/visitmymosque

A number of mosques attracted prominent civic and political leaders to attend, including Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn MP, and other Members of Parliament including Bob Blackman, Stella Creasey, Fabian Hamilton, Wes Streeting, James Flanagan, Rupa Huq, Sadiq Khan and Zac Goldsmith to name but a few.

### 4 Impact

### 4.1 Number of Visitors

Overall the 84 events engaged with thousands of Britons across a large geographic spread of the UK, contributing significantly towards the promotion of interfaith harmony and impacting religious understanding.

Some larger mosques such as Harper Road, East London Mosque and Manchester & Didsbury Mosque each attracted over 250 visitors on the day, while Finsbury Park Mosque attracted about 500 visitors. Many smaller mosques holding open days for the first time also attracted 100+ visitors each.

### 4.2 Intra-Faith Significance

The 92 participating mosques consisted of Muslim communities from the various schools of thought in Islam, including both Sunni and Shi'i traditions.

This shows that Muslims across all the various schools of thought are interested in showing that the sectarian violence occurring in some parts of the world has no place in the UK. And moreover, that Muslims in Britain from all the traditions are united in contributing towards a just, cohesive and harmonious British society where people of all faiths and no faith at all are respectful, tolerant and understanding of each other.

### 4.3 Historical Significance

Of the 92 mosques taking part, two of the oldest mosques in the UK, the Shah Jalal Mosque in Woking and the Abdullah Quilliam Mosque in Liverpool, both first opening in 1889, held open days This indicates the historical significance of the Islam faith on the rich interfaith heritage of the UK. A number of the largest and most-established mosques in the UK, such as London Central Mosque, the East London Mosque and the Birmingham Central Mosque also took part.

### 4.4 Press Coverage

#VisitMyMosque generated significant media coverage in UK national and regional press. Below is a selection of article, TV and radio news reports:

### Press Releases

**28th January:** <u>British Mosques Invite in Neighbours in Second National 'Visit My Mosque' Day</u> **8th February:** <u>Thousands of Britons take part in 'Visit My Mosque' initiative</u>

#### National press articles:

BBC News Online - British Muslims open doors to mosques to 'demystify' them The Guardian - Visit My Mosque day: British Muslims offer tours and tea to public Russia Today - British mosques 'explain faith' in #VisitMyMosque day Sky News - Mosques Open Their Doors To Tackle Prejudice Independent - Why UK Mosques are opening their doors in a bid to tackle Islamophobia Mail Online - Mosques open doors to show unity 'at a tense time'

#### TV/Radio news reports

ITV News Wales - Mosques across Wales take part in open day to encourage people to find out more about Islam

ITV News Tyne Tees - Open Day at Newcastle Mosque PressTV - Mosques across UK open doors to non-Muslims BBC London – Finsbury Park mosque welcomes visitors on open day BBC Radio Leeds BBC World Service

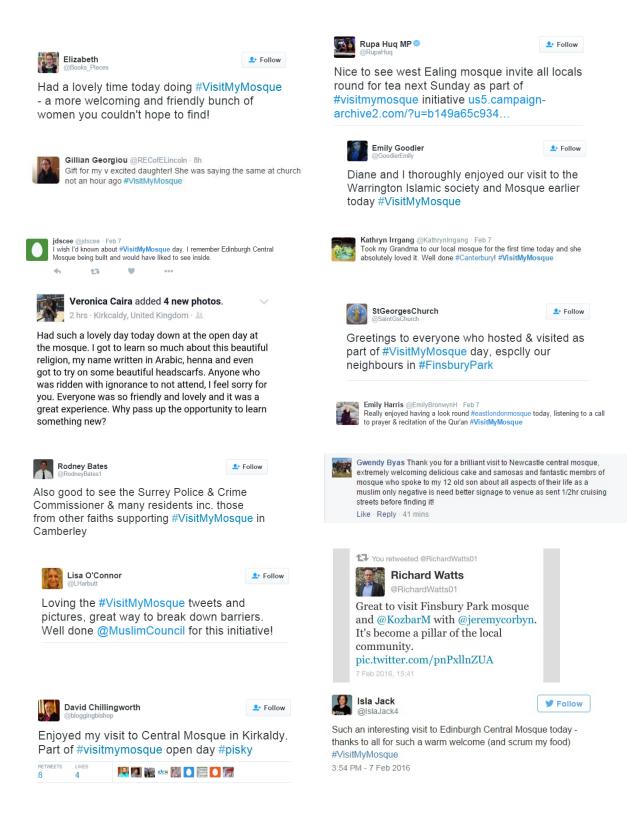
### Local Press Articles

Warrington Guardian - 'This will help engage residents' - community invited to mosque open day Lincolnshire Echo - Islamic association to open doors of Lincoln Mosque to residents Liverpool Echo - The UK's oldest mosque, which is in Kensington, opened its doors to the public Harrow Times - Mosques in Harrow open their doors for 'Visit My Mosque' day This is Lancashire - Mosque opens the door to community to develop better understanding of Islam The Bolton News - Mosques open doors to show unity 'at a tense time' Hastings Observer - Hastings Mosque filled on busy open day Slough Express - In pictures: Visit My Mosque day at Masjid Al Jannah Fife Today - Kirkcaldy Mosque open day hailed as success Enfield Independent - Mosques open doors to show unity 'at a tense time' South Wales Evening Post - Swansea mosques open their doors to build bridges between Muslims and wider community Rochdale Online - Visit My Mosque Day at Neeli Mosque Swindon Advertiser - Manchester Road Mosque opens doors to dispel myths about Islam Londonist - London's Mosques Invite All Londoners Inside This Sunday

A fuller list of press coverage has been uploaded with this submission, as well as videos produced independently by individual mosque organisers documenting their events.

### 4.5 Social Media Coverage

Mosques and visitors were encouraged to poster photos and comments on social media via hashtag **#visitmymosque**. Below is a selection of screen grabs from twitter. More can be viewed online at: <a href="https://twitter.com/hashtag/visitmymosque">https://twitter.com/hashtag/visitmymosque</a>



### 5 Feedback

Two types of feedback were collected: (1) From visitors to each mosque and (2) from mosque organisers to MCB

(1) From Visitors: Mosques were provided with template feedback form to use at their events. The events were well-received by visitors with a wide range of positive feedback. Many visitors were visiting mosques for the first time. Many reported that they had visited mosques abroad whilst on holiday in Turkey, Malaysia or other countries, but never in the UK, and found comparing the differences and similarities in mosque architecture, form and function fascinating.

Other visitors such as local interfaith leaders with a prior existing relationship with the mosque management found it a useful opportunity to catch up with developments in the local area. Some visitors went out of their way to praise mosque volunteers, for example MP for Ealing North, Steve Pound, wrote a letter to the Ealing Gazette, praising West London Islamic Centre volunteers for their hospitality and welcoming atmosphere at their open day (See Section 8)

(2) From Mosque Organisers: Organisers were asked to complete a 10minute online survey immediately after 7th February here: <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/VisitMyMosque2016-Feedback">www.tinyurl.com/VisitMyMosque2016-Feedback</a> . Overall many mosques were pleased at the level of interest generated locally and nationally in the initiative and requested more help with publicising the events nationally next year.

Many mosques reported visitors who had travelled long distances to visit their nearest mosque (for example visitors to Aberdeen came from as far as Peterhead, and in Birmingham they came from as far as Worcester), indicating the level of effort some members of the public were willing to go to, to engage with this national event. Mosque organisers also reported that mosque volunteers, in particular the youth volunteers, gained valuable experience in organising an event, understanding the value of outreach work and engaging with their local neighbours and communities from other faiths.

### **6** Testimonials

Testimonials from several high profile attendees are provided below:

**Zac Goldsmith MP** said: "Visit My Mosque Day is a hugely effective way of breaking down barriers and increasing community engagement and it was a pleasure meeting members of the centre."

**Sadiq Khan MP** said: "Great to see mosques across London opening their doors all day on #visitmymosque day"

**Jeremy Corbyn MP** whilst visiting his local mosque in North London said: "The people visiting Finsbury Park Mosque today, the nearest mosque to where I live, are Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Muslim or have no particular faith. We're here to support this mosque and to show that our community is very united in our diversity."

**Steven Pound MP** writing in the Ealing Gazette said: "My sincere congratulations to all at the West London Islamic Centre, West Ealing, for organising the mosque open day and afternoon tea on Sunday 7 February. Many myths of the Muslims faith were dispelled and everyone that I spoke to welcomed this generous and openhearted gesture by the mosque trustees that showed me a confident community engaging positively with people of all faiths in a spirit of mutual respect."

**Robert Buckland MP** whilst visiting his local mosque in Swindon said: "I am delighted to have been invited here. It's a really positive step to open their doors to the public to show what they do for Swindon. Anything which helps to increase social cohesion is bound to be a good thing."

**Gareth Thomas MP** whilst visiting his local mosque in London said: "This is a great initiative by the Muslim Council of Britain. There's a great crowd here tonight from all faiths coming along to visit the mosque. The interfaith work that the community does here is really quite impressive. You may think it is your mosque but actually it is my mosque too."

### 7 **Plans for 2017**

#VisitMyMosque is planned to continue in 2017 as an annual initiative, increasing in the number of participating mosques each year.

Mosques will be encouraged to find new and innovative ways to engage with their neighbours and local communities of other faiths or no faith at all. Regional training workshops will be organised on running interfaith events for volunteers. Standardised #VisitMyMosque printed literature is planned to be provided.

Ideas are being developed to encourage mosque members to additionally arrange visits to their local Church, Synagogue, Temple, Gurdwara or other place of worship in advance of the next #VisitMyMosque day. Finally more targeted social media and local advertising will also be used to help reach even more members of the public, thereby further contributing to steps towards increasing community cohesion across British society.

Ends.

### **Appendix 1 – Full List of 92 Participating Mosques Holding Open Days**

Mosques also listed with map and 'search' feature online at <u>www.mcb.org.uk/visitmymosque</u> London – West Islamic Centre & Jamia Masjid Brownlow Road, West Ealing, London W13 0SQ London - West Islamic Cultural Centre, 7 Bridges Place, Parsons Green, London, SW6 4HW Al Manaar Mosque, 244 Acklam Road, London, W10 5YG Hayes Muslim Centre, 3 Pump Lane, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 3NB

### **London - East**

Newham North Islamic Association, 88, Green Street, Forest Gate, London, E7 8JG. Noor UI Islam Trust, 711-723 High Road, Leyton, London, E10 5AB Redbridge Islamic Centre, 28-28A Woodford Avenue, Gants Hill, Essex, IG2 6XG East Mosque and the London Muslim Centre, 46 Whitechapel Road. London E1 1JX Darul Ummah Mosque, 56 Bigland Street, Shadwell, London, E1 2ND Faizan-e-Islam, 8 Corbett Road, Walthamstow, E17 3JZ Quwwatul Islam Masjid, 62-66 Upton Lane, Forest Gate, London, E7 9LN

#### **London - North**

Finsbury Park Mosque, 7-11 St Thomas's Road, London N4 2QH North Finchley Mosque (IANL), 683-685 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 0DA SICM (Mahfil Ali), 39 Gloucester Road, North Harrow, London, HA1 4PR The KSIMC of London, Wood Lane, Stanmore, HA7 4LQ Muslim Welfare House, 233 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DA London Central Mosque, 146 Park Road, London, NW8 7RG

#### **London - South**

Lewisham Islamic Centre, 363-365 Lewisham High Street London SE13 6NZ Hyderi Islamic Centre, 26 Estreham Rd, Streatham, London SW16 5PQ Manuk Old Kent Road Mosque, 365 Old Kent Road, London, SE1 5JH Balham Mosque, 47a Balham High Road London SW12 9AW Tooting Islamic Centre, 145 Upper Tooting Road London SW17 7TJ Peckham Islamic Centre, 12 Choumert Road London SE15 4DB South Islamic Centre,8 Mitcham Lane, London , SW16 6NN Assalatur Rahman Islamic Association, 5-9 Record Street, London, SE15 1TL Baitul Aziz, 1 Dickens Square, off Harper Road, London SE1 4JL

#### **Midlands**

Aisha Mosque & Islamic Centre, 4 Rutter Street, Walsall, WS1 4HJ Masjid Al Husayn, Leicester, 17A Duxbury Road, Leicester, LE5 3LR Ksimc Birmingham, 17 Clifton Road, Birmingham, B12 8SX
Husaini Islamic Centre, 4 Burton Street, Peterborough. PE1 5HD
Darul Arqam Education Trust, 16 Thurmaston Lane Leicester LE5 0TE
Birmingham Central Mosque, 180 Belgrave Middleway, Highgate Birmingham B12 0XS
UKIM Masjid Khadijah, 311 - 313 Cromwell Road, Peterborough, PE1 2HP
Islamic Foundation, Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicester, LE67 9SY
Muslim Welfare House of Sheffield, 10-12 Severn Road Sheffield S10 2SU
Masjid Usman, 53-55 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Birmingham, B66 4RQ
UKIM Jamia Masjid Sparkbrook, 179-187 Anderton Rd, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 1ND,
UKIM Alum Rock Islamic Centre, 2-8 Ludlow Rd, Alum Rock, Birmingham, B8 3BY
Lincoln Mosque, Orchard Street, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN1 1XX
Beaumont Leys Muslims, Home Farm Neighbourhood Centre, Home Farm Close, Leicester, LE40SU
Muslim Student House Masjid, 517 Moseley Road, Birmingham, B12 9BX

#### **North East**

Leeds Grand Mosque, 9 Woodsley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS5 3QN Baabulilm Centre , 166 Shadwell Lane, Leeds, LS17 8AD Ahlulbayt Cultural Centre, ADP House, 35 Hanover Square, Leeds, LS4 2QT York Mosque and Islamic Centre, Bull Lane, off Lawrence St, York, YO10 3EN Newcastle Central Mosque, The White House, Grainger Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 8RQ Hull Mosque and Islamic Centre,2 Berkeley Street Hull, HU3 1PR Madina Masjid, Purlwell Lane, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 0ET

#### **North West**

European Islamic centre, 79 Manchester Rd, Oldham, OL8 4LN Abdullah Quilliam Mosque, 8-10 Brougham Terrace, West Derby Road, Liverpool L6 1AE Zakariyya Jaame Masjid, 20 Peace Street, Bolton, BL3 5LJ Warrington Islamic Centre, Lockton Lane, Bewsey, Warrington, WA5 0BF Manchester Islamic Centre & Didsbury Mosque, 271 Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2WA Khizra Mosque, 425 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester, M8 0PF Neeli Mosque UKIM Rochdale, 25-27 Hare St, Rochdale, OL11 1JL Noor Masjid, 5-9 Woodfold Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 3AP Masjid Ibrahim UKIM, 2 Clegg Street, Burnley, BB10 1AX Jamia tul Muntazir, 102 Sherborne St, Manchester. M8 8ND Liverpool Mosque and Islamic Institute, 8 Cramond Avenue, L18 1EQ

### **South East**

Zainabiya Islamic Centre (KSIMC of Milton Keynes), Peverel Drive, Milton Keynes, MK1 1NW Masjid AlJannah, 1 Stoke Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5AH The Markaz, 1 Giles Iane, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7LT

Shah Jahan Mosque, 149 Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BA Aisha Masjid & Islamic Centre, London Road, Earley, Reading RG6 1BW Masjidul Haque Hastings Mosque, 12 Mercatoria, St Leonards On Sea, East Sussex, TN38 0EB Camberley Mosque, 282, London Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 4BT UKIM Madinah Mosque, 126-130 Oak Road Luton LU48AD Southampton Medina Mosque, Compton Walk, off St. Marys Road, Southampton, SO14 0BH

### **South West**

Plymouth Islamic Education Trust (PIETY), 19 Greenbank Avenue, St Judes, Plymouth PL4 8PS Hazrat Shahjalal Central Mosque, 136-139 Manchester Road, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 1TU Easton Jamia Masjid, St Marks Road, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6AD

### **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association (NIMFA), 7 Rugby Road, Belfast, BT7 1PS Belfast Islamic Centre, 38 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6DN

### Scotland

Central Mosque Lanarkshire, 3 Clydesdale Street Mossend, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, ML4 2RS Al Arabia Al Islamia, 490 Paisley Road West, Glasgow G51 1PY Glasgow Central Mosque, 1 Mosque Ave, Glasgow G5 9TA Edinburgh Central Mosque, 50 Potterrow Edinburgh EH8 9BT Darul-Arqam, 59 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh, EH3 9HY Inverness Masjid, 1 Portland Place, Inverness, IV1 1NE Al-Furqan Mosque (UKIM- Glasgow), 17 Carrington St.,Glasgow. G4 9AJ Kirkcaldy Central Mosque, Kirkcaldy Central Mosque, Cumbrae Terrace, Fife, KY2 6SF Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre,164 Spital, Aberdeen, Aberdeen City, AB24 3JD Islamic Education Trust Cumbernauld, 5 Craighalbert Way, Craigmarloch, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS

### Wales

Darul Isra, Wyvernne Road, Cathays, Cardiff, CF24 4BG Wrexham Islamic Cultural Centre, 6 Grosvenor Road, Wrexham, LL11 1DN Al-Manar Centre, 2-4 Glynrhondda Street, Cardiff, CF24 4AN Shah Jalal Mosque and Islamic Centre, Crwys Road (on the bridge), Cathays Cardiff, CF24 4NJ Berea Masjid, Berra Cottages, Blaina, NP13 3AD Jamia Mosque Newport, 183-186 Commercial Road, Newport, NP20 2GW Swansea University Mosque, Building 6, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP Swansea Mosque Islamic and Community Centre, 14-15 St Helen's Rd, Swansea SA1 4AW Bangor Islamic Centre, 61 High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 1NR

## Appendix 2 – Selection of Photos of Open Day Events

See other document submitted.

# Appendix 3 – Full List of Press Coverage

See other document submitted.

## Appendix 4 – Videos Made by Mosques

See other document submitted.