

OUR VOICE



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Foreword

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the development of this survey and the production of the final report. My deepest thanks go to Abdul Basit Shah who led and conducted the survey with such dedication, care and attention to detail. His hard work has provided us with valuable insights that will help guide our next steps.

I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all the participating Mosques for taking the time to share their views and experiences. Their responses form the foundation of this report and their willingness to engage has made this work both meaningful and impactful.

This report reflects a collective effort, and I am grateful to each organisation and individuals who played a part in bringing it to life.

Abdul Karim

Chairman

This report was published in February 2026

Summary

The Oldham Mosques Council conducted a comprehensive survey in September 2025 to better understand the strengths, challenges and development needs of Mosques across Oldham. With an 84% response rate from 31 out of 37 Mosques (see appendix 1), the findings provide a robust insight into current operations, community engagement and areas requiring targeted support.

The survey highlights strong commitment across Mosques to continuous improvement, civic responsibility and safeguarding. All participating Mosques maintain safeguarding policies and training, with 93.3% confirming DBS checks for Imams and teachers. Volunteerism remains a defining strength, with every Mosque relying on volunteers and most providing structured training. Governance structures are well established, with nearly all Mosques operating under formal constitutions and offering a range of religious and community services.

Despite these strengths, the report identifies significant external barriers. Concerns around safety - particularly when travelling during dark hours - are heightened by far-right activity. Additionally, misinformation and negative media narratives continue to undermine trust and hinder effective partnership working.

The findings also reveal opportunities for internal growth, including enhanced training in compliance, governance, GDPR, counselling skills and improved collaboration with agencies addressing mental health and substance misuse.

To address these issues, the report recommends strengthened partnerships, securing additional resources, coordinated work with Greater Manchester Police on safety and proactive strategies to counter harmful media narratives. These steps will support Mosques in building resilience and improving services for the wider Oldham community.

Survey Methodology

The study employed a mixed-methods approach combining an online questionnaire with qualitative focus group discussions. The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire distributed electronically to individual mosques. On behalf of the mosque a representative completed the survey online at their convenience, allowing for broad participation and efficient data capture. All responses were received anonymously.

To complement the quantitative findings, two focus group discussions were conducted. These sessions provided an opportunity to explore key themes in greater depth, clarify emerging issues from the questionnaire responses and gather richer insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. The focus groups were facilitated by the survey coordinator and followed a semi-structured discussion guide to ensure consistency while allowing for open dialogue.

Together, the online questionnaire and focus group discussions provided a comprehensive understanding of the topic by combining measurable trends with nuanced qualitative insights.

1. Introduction

The Oldham Mosques Council was established in 2002 in the aftermath of the May 2001 Oldham disturbances, a period during which the town was widely described as a “divided borough” due to strained community and police relations.

Oldham Mosques Council was created with a core mission to provide a unified voice for Oldham’s mosques. Its founding aims included supporting Muslim communities to articulate their concerns, address shared strategic challenges and foster constructive relationships with other faith groups and partner agencies in a safe and collaborative environment.

Between 2022 and 2023, the Oldham Mosques Council undertook a comprehensive review and revision of its constitution to ensure it reflected contemporary governance standards and the evolving needs of the community. Following this process, an Executive Committee (see Appendix 2) was unanimously elected in June 2023 for a three-year term. Since its appointment, the Committee has continued to advance the strategic and operational work of the Mosques Council.

As part of our work programme, we commissioned a four-week survey in September 2025, engaging 37 affiliated mosques. This report presents the findings of that survey, which sought to comprehensively assess current experiences, perceived threats and fears (both within local neighbourhoods and in Oldham Town Centre) and the broader concerns and aspirations of mosque leadership and their congregations across the borough.

Mosques are typically overseen by volunteer-led management committees who shoulder a wide range of responsibilities. They navigate complex legislative requirements, contribute to safeguarding efforts, strengthen community cohesion and ensure that their facilities remain safe and welcoming spaces for people to practise their faith.

Mosques have evolved significantly over the years, transitioning from modest terraced properties to more suitable and purpose-built facilities. However, a number of smaller Mosques continue to operate from premises that require substantial improvement.

All Mosques are self-funded and rely heavily on voluntary donations from their congregations. As a result, they are continually exploring ways to increase and diversify their income to remain sustainable. The contribution of volunteers is indispensable; without their ongoing commitment, many Mosques would face serious challenges in maintaining day-to-day operations.

2. Objectives of the Report

The primary objectives of this report are to document and analyse the perspectives of mosque representatives, identify shared challenges and opportunities within Oldham's Muslim community and provide actionable recommendations for Oldham Mosques Council and other stakeholders in the town. This contributes to Oldham Mosques Councils overarching aim to strengthen community engagement, address systemic barriers and enhance collaboration between local mosques and wider civic institutions.

The data analysis covers key areas including mosque location, congregation demographics, service provision, gender inclusion, governance structures and policy compliance.

Specifically, the report seeks to:

- Assess the effectiveness of mosque services.
- Understand community needs in areas such as youth engagement, mental health and interfaith relations.
- Identify systemic or social barriers affecting Muslim communities.
- Encourage dialogue and shared solutions among mosque leaders, non-Muslim communities and partner organisations.

This document provides a summary of survey findings from 31 mosques in Oldham, highlighting areas of strength, sharing best practices, identifying challenges and offering recommendations for future action.

3. Geographical Mosque Locations

Survey responses were received from **31 out of 37 mosques** across Oldham. The data reflects a broad geographical spread, with notable concentrations in specific neighbourhoods including Glodwick, Clarksfield, Coppice, Coldhurst.

The distribution chart highlights the percentage of mosques located in each area, revealing clear patterns of concentration and under-representation.

Geographic Area	Percentage (%)
Glodwick	32.3%
Coldhurst/Westwood	19.4%
Coppice	19.4%
Werneth	16.1%
Clarksfield	12.9%
Shaw	3.2%
Roundthorn	3.2%
Chadderton	3.2%
Oldham wide	3.2%
Abbeyhills	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%

Key Findings

- **Glodwick** represents the largest proportion of responses at **32.3%**, indicating a significant cluster of mosques in this locality.
- **Coldhurst/Westwood** and **Coppice** each account for **19.4%**, making them the second-largest clusters.
- **Werneth** contributes **16.1%**, forming another notable segment.
- **Clarksfield** represents **12.9%**, indicating moderate representation.
- **Shaw, Roundthorn, Chadderton and Oldham-wide** each account for **3.2%**.
- **Abbeyhills** recorded **0%**, indicating no responses from this area.

Overall, the data shows that mosque presence is concentrated in a few key neighbourhoods, with some areas significantly underrepresented.

4. Congregational Demographics: Age Range of Attendees

Survey responses indicate that mosques perceive their congregations as diverse in age, with no single age group dominating attendance. The majority of respondents selected the **0–20%** category for age distribution, suggesting a balanced or youthful demographic profile.

Key Findings

- 69.2% (18 out of 26) reported that no age group exceeds 20% of attendees.
- 23.1% (6 out of 26) selected the 20–40% range.
- 7.7% (2 out of 26) indicated a higher concentration of 60–80%.

This suggests that mosques generally view their congregations as mixed-age, with a strong perception of diversity and no dominant age bracket.

5. Mosque Services

Analysis of 31 responses shows strong consistency in the delivery of core religious services and a high level of community engagement.

Key Strengths

- **100%** provide **core prayers** (5 daily prayers, Jummah, Eid), demonstrating universal fulfilment of essential religious duties.
- **100%** offer **community and youth activities**, reflecting a sector-wide commitment to social engagement and inclusivity.
- **50%** provide **specialised services** (e.g., madrassah, funeral services, gender-specific programmes), indicating substantial diversity in service provision.

These findings highlight a robust foundation of religious and community services across Oldham's mosques.

6. Gender Provision

This section analyses gender-based service provision across 31 responses. The data shows overwhelmingly inclusive practice, with most mosques offering services for both men and women.

Key Findings

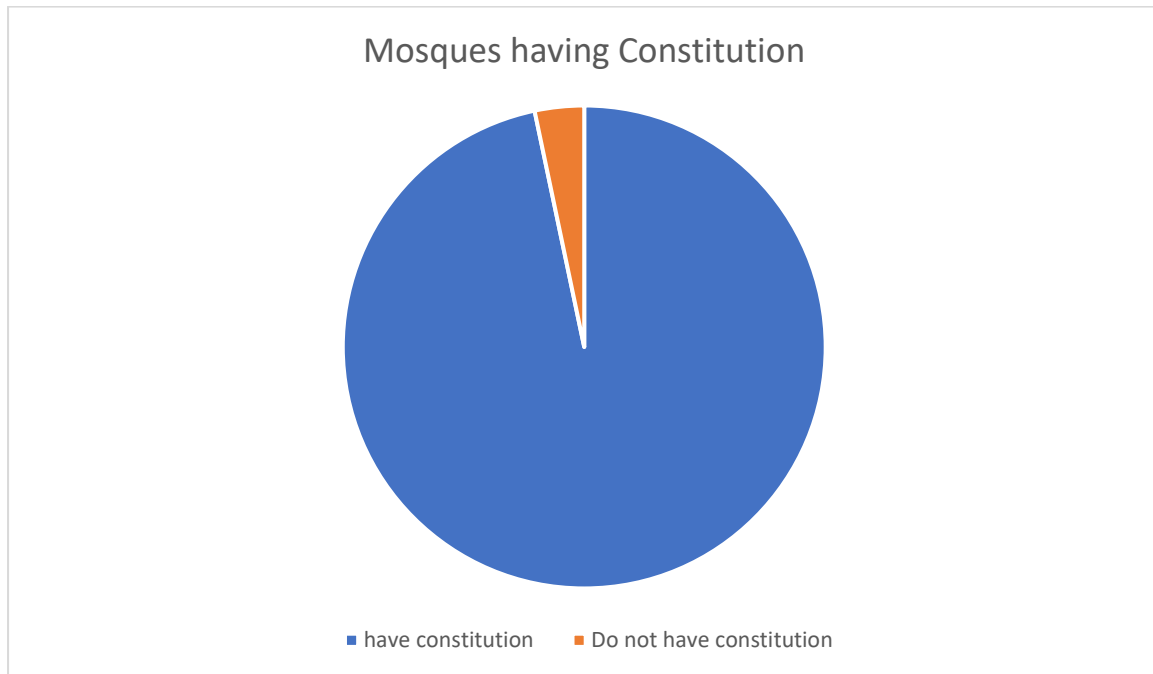
- **100%** provide services for **both men and women**.
- **22.6%** reported targeted **men-only** provision within what they provide.
- **6.5%** reported targeted **women-only** provision within what they provide.

All responding mosques confirmed that they offer **core services for both genders**, delivered through separate and appropriate spaces in line with religious guidelines.

7. Governance & Policies

Constitution

Based on 30 responses, the vast majority of mosques operate with a formal constitution.



Key Findings

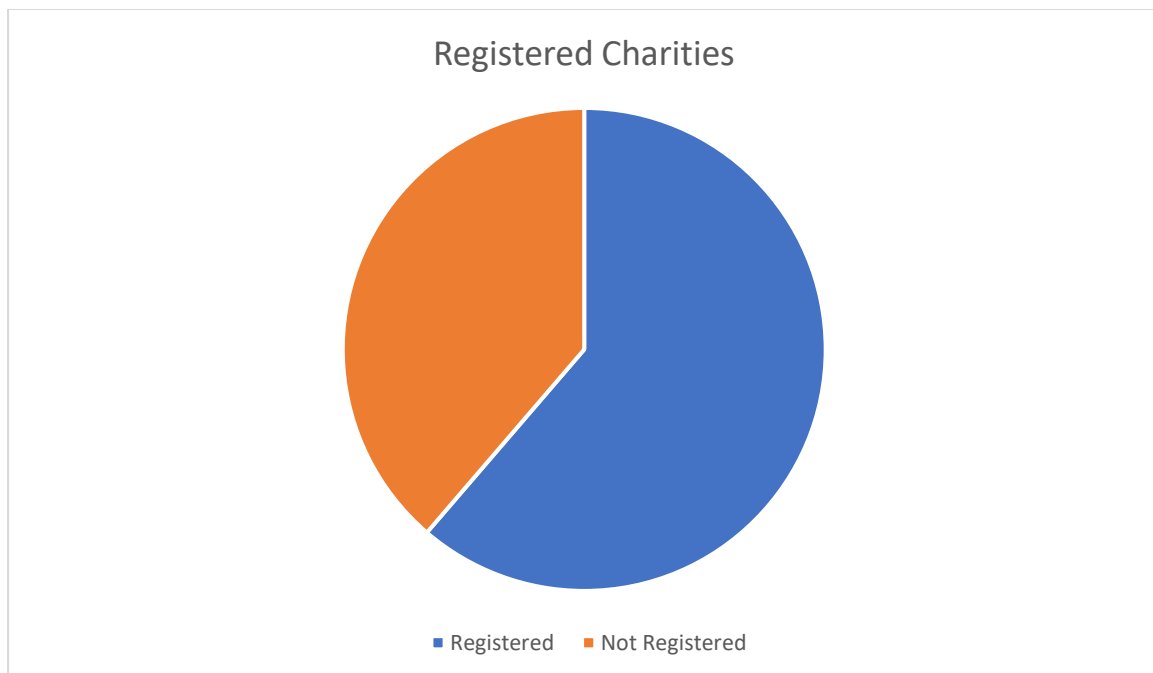
- 96.7% have a constitution.
- 3.3% does not.

Strengths

- Demonstrates strong governance, accountability and structured management.
- Indicates broad compliance with legal and regulatory expectations, even among mosques not formally registered as charities.

8. Charity Registration

Analysis of 31 responses shows that most mosques are registered charities, though a minority are not.



Key Findings

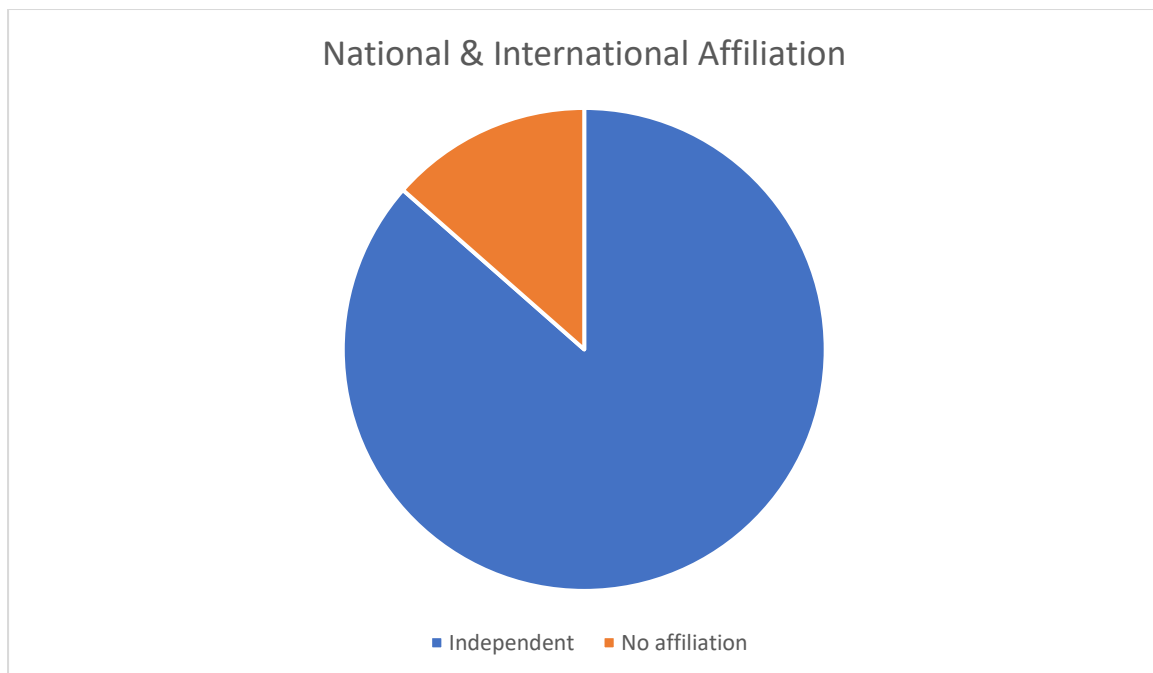
- **61.3%** are registered charities.
- **38.7%** are not.

Key Lessons

- Registered mosques benefit from having rates relief, tax concessions via Gift Aid scheme and on rare occasion access to support funding.
- Even though some of the smaller mosques are not required to register with the Charity Commission owing their income being below the require threshold we encourage them to register as best practice.

9. National and International Affiliation

The data shows that most mosques operate independently, with limited affiliation to national or international bodies.



Key Findings

- 67.7% are independent.
- 12.9% report no affiliation.
- 19.4% report some form of affiliation.

Dominant Local Affiliation

The **Oldham Mosques Council** is the most frequently cited affiliation, representing approximately 41.7% of responses. This reflects strong local coordination rather than national oversight.

10. Policies and Procedures

Analysis of 30 responses shows strong adoption of key safeguarding and operational policies, with some areas requiring further development.

Policy/Procedure	Percentage
Child Protection and Safeguarding	96.7%
Health & Safety Policy	90.0%
Complaints / Grievance Policy	76.7%
Safeguarding Policy for vulnerable...	73.3%
Fundraising P	60.0%
External Speaker Policy	56.7%
Volunteering Policy	46.7%

Observations

- Safeguarding compliance is exceptionally strong.
- Health & Safety policies are widely in place.
- Policies relating to external engagement, fundraising and volunteer management present opportunities for improvement.

11. Employment of Paid Staff

Based on 30 responses, the vast majority of mosques employ paid staff.



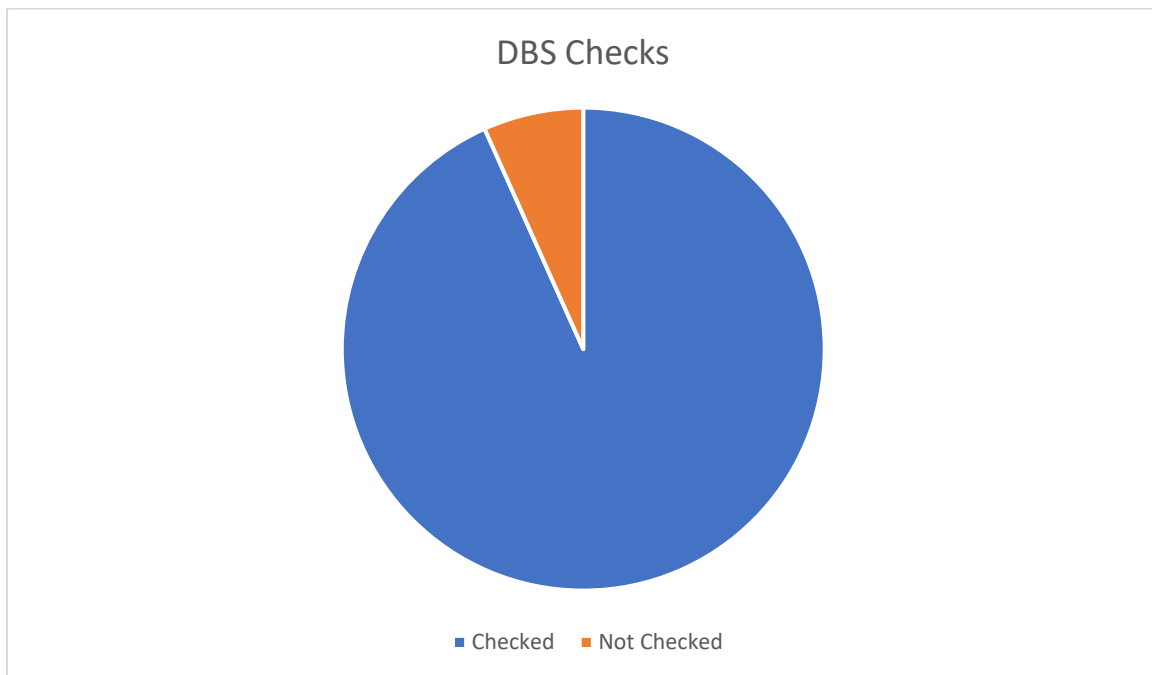
Key Findings

- 96.7% employ paid staff.
- 3.3% do not.

This indicates operational maturity and the capacity to sustain formal staffing structures.

12. DBS Checks for Imams and Teachers

Analysis of 30 responses shows a very high level of DBS compliance.



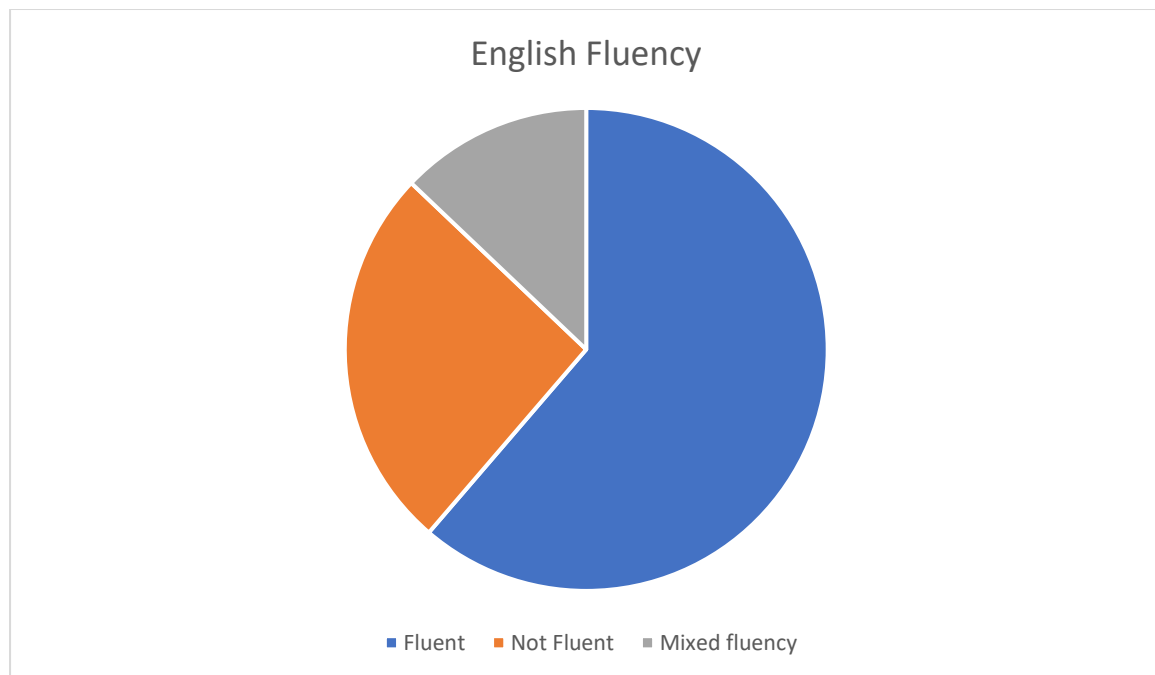
Key Findings

- **93.3%** have DBS-checked Imams and teachers.
- **6.7%** do not.

This reflects strong safeguarding practice, with a small but important gap requiring attention.

13. English Fluency

Based on 31 responses, English fluency among Imams and teachers varies significantly.



Key Findings

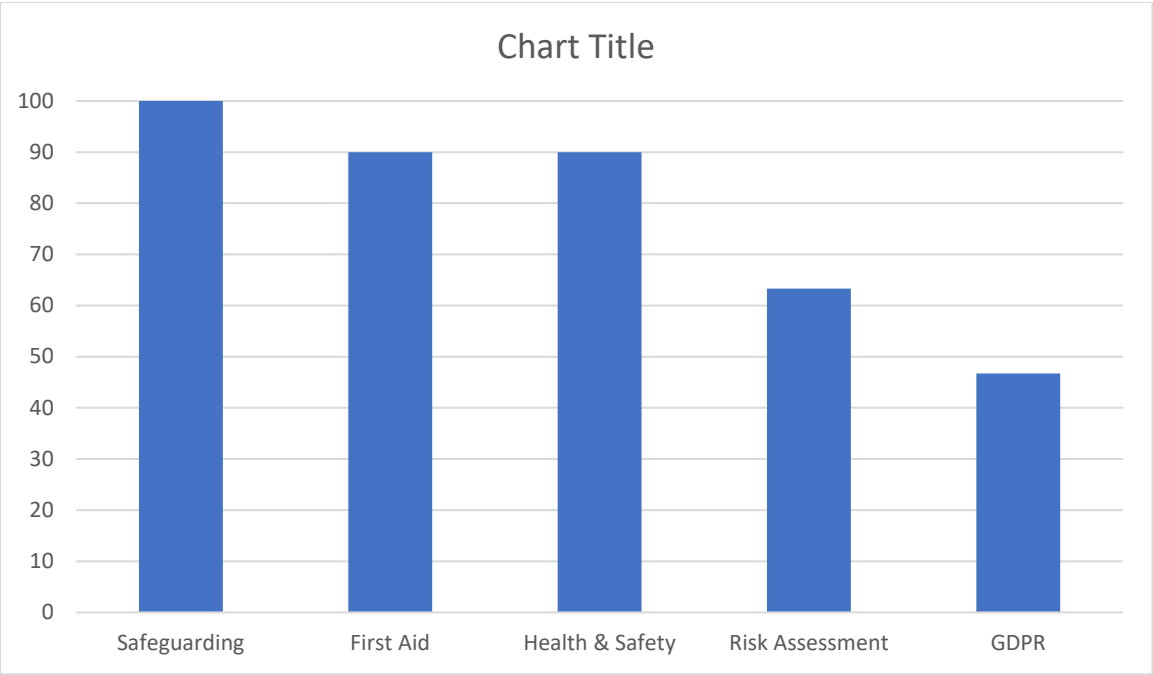
- **61.3%** report full fluency.
- **12.9%** report mixed fluency.
- **25.8%** report no fluency.

This highlights a need for targeted language development to support youth engagement and external communication.

Its worth noting that all mosques have either bilingual and in many cases multi-lingual staff who are able to communicate with their diverse congregation.

14. Staff Training Provisions

Analysis of 30 responses shows strong safeguarding and safety training, but gaps in administrative and compliance training.



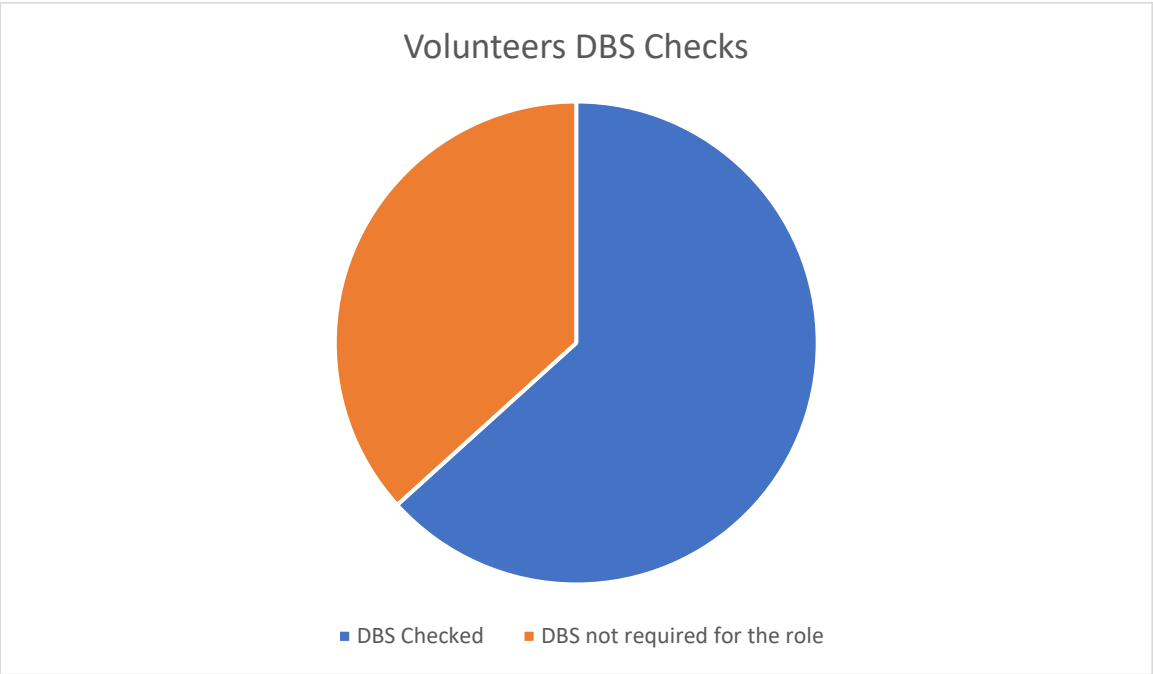
Key Findings

The sector excels in safety-related training but requires further development in risk management and data protection.

15. Volunteers

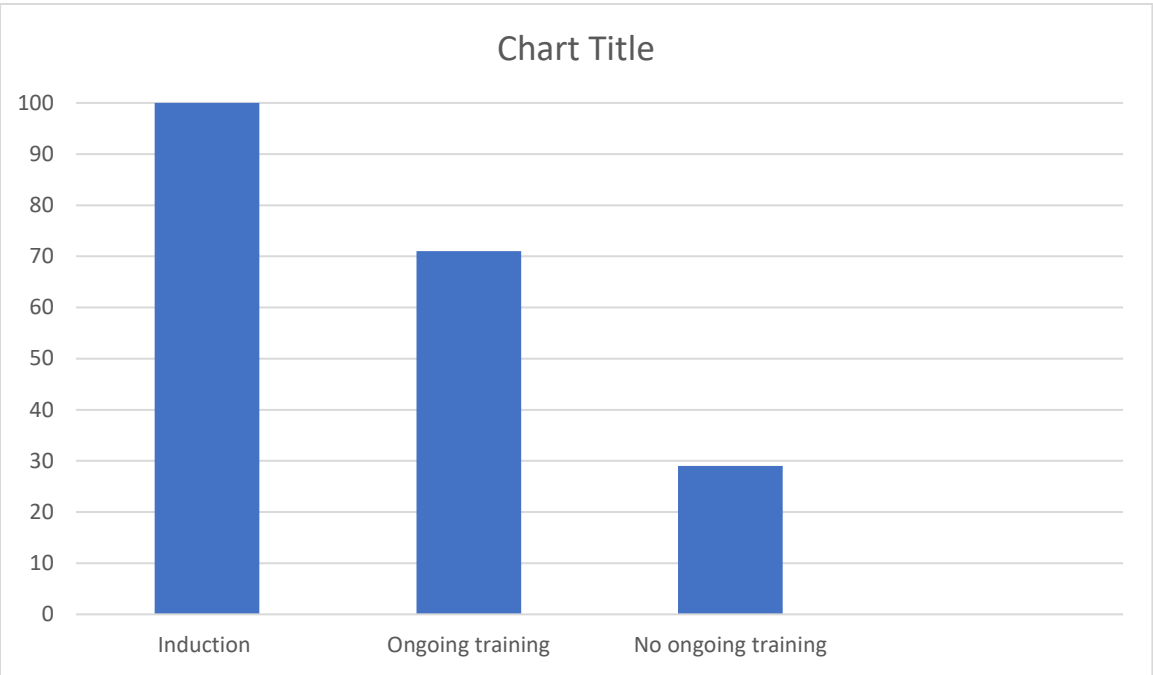
All responding mosques rely on volunteers, demonstrating exceptional community engagement.

DBS Checks for Volunteers



- **63.3%** are DBS checked.
- **36.7%** are not (often due to non-regulated roles).

Volunteer Training



This presents an opportunity to strengthen volunteer professionalism and confidence.

16. Management Committee Training

Analysis of 20 responses shows strong training in safety but gaps in legal and administrative areas.

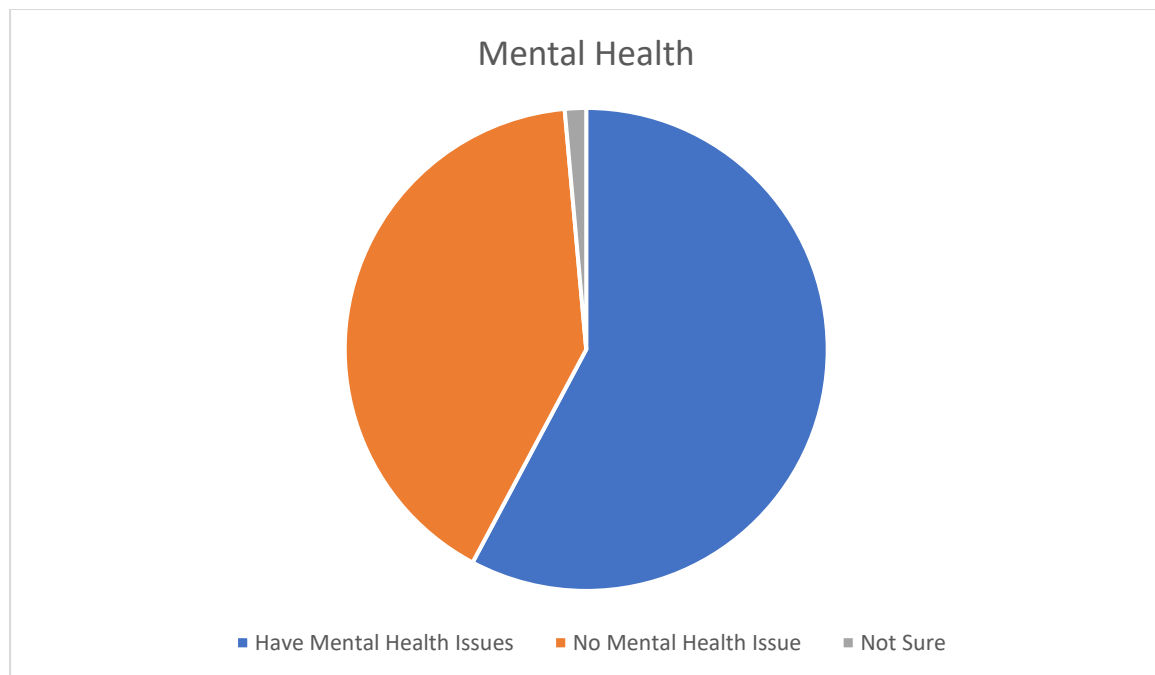


Key Findings

Management Committees demonstrate strong commitment to safety but require further development in compliance and strategic governance.

17. Mental Health Concerns

Based on 30 responses, mental health is recognised as a significant issue in many communities.



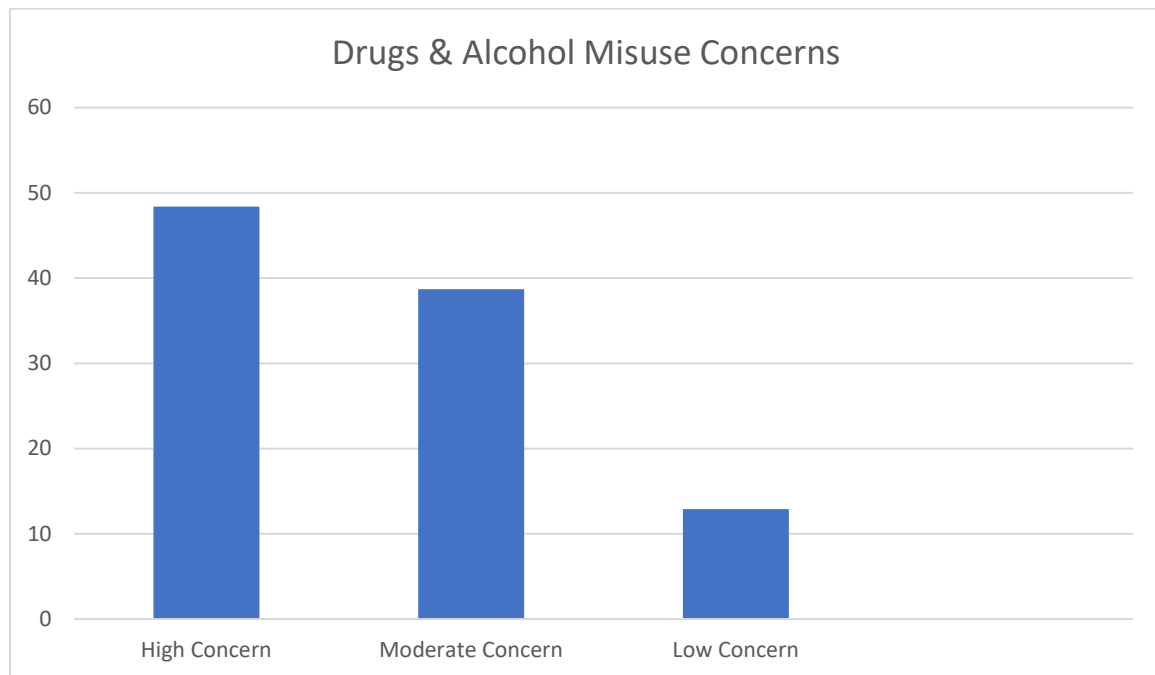
Key Findings

- 56.7% say mental health is an issue.
- 40% say it is not.
- 3.3% are unsure.

The high “No” response may suggest under-recognition rather than absence of need.

18. Drugs and Alcohol Concerns

Analysis of 31 responses shows widespread concern about substance misuse.



Concern Levels

- **High Concern** 48.4%
- **Moderate Concern** 38.7%
- **Low Concern** 12.9%

Common Causes Identified

- Socioeconomic pressures
- Peer influence
- Weak community support structures

Community Responses

Mosques emphasised:

- Education and awareness
- Engagement and support
- Youth activities
- Collaboration with external agencies

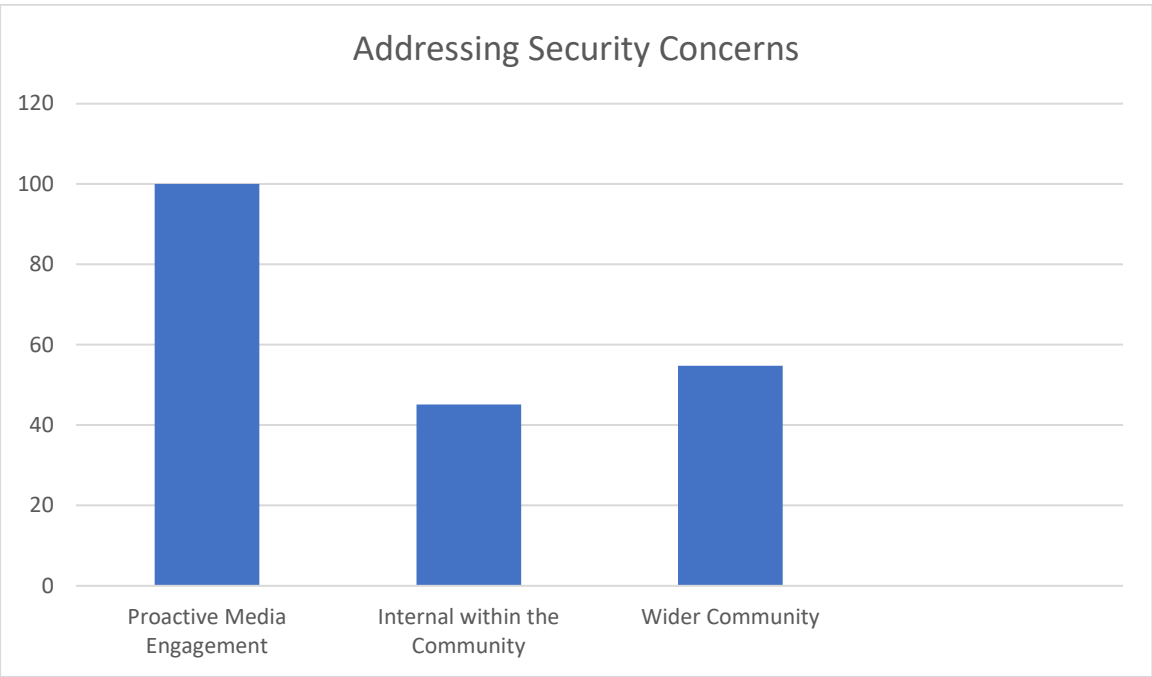
19. Addressing Extremism

A persistent misconception, often amplified by far-right groups and certain segments of right-wing media, suggests that Muslims are disproportionately involved in extremism or grooming. This narrative is not supported by credible evidence and undermines efforts to build cohesive resilient communities.

Research and official statistics consistently demonstrate that such offences are committed by a very small minority of individuals, influenced by complex social, economic and psychological factors rather than by faith, ethnicity or culture. The overwhelming majority of Muslims in the UK lead peaceful, law-abiding lives and make significant contributions to society. They are teachers, doctors, business owners, volunteers and public servants who share the same aspirations for safety, opportunity and well-being as all other residents.

Promoting facts over fear is essential. Stereotyping entire communities based on the actions of a few fosters division, erodes trust and creates barriers to meaningful engagement. By challenging these misconceptions and encouraging informed, evidence-based dialogue, we strengthen social cohesion and ensure that every resident feels valued, respected and included.

This this survey Mosques identified the need to address harmful narratives targeting Muslim communities, particularly around grooming, extremism and immigration.



Scope	Focus
Internally within the community	Building resilience, addressing issues from within and self-scrutiny.
Wider community	Outreach, partnership, public education and combating external narratives.

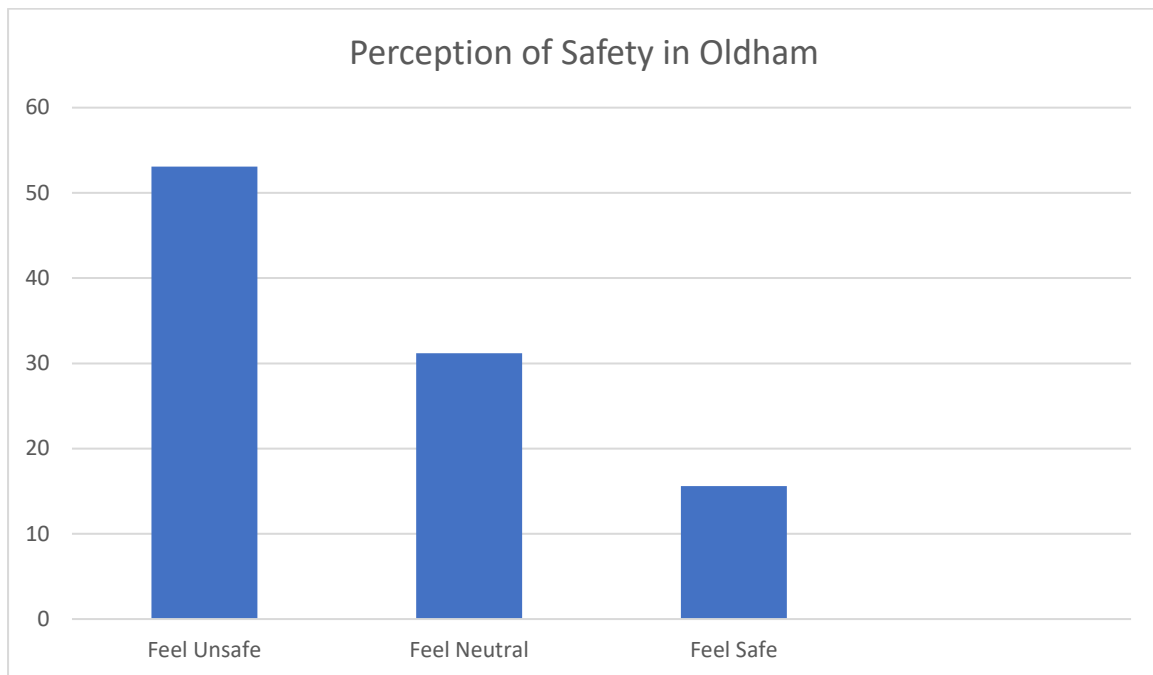
Key Themes

- Proactive fact-checking and media engagement
- Internal community resilience addressing issues from within
- Wider community outreach and partnership working

Responses highlight the need for coordinated action across both internal and external spheres.

20. Perception of Safety in Oldham

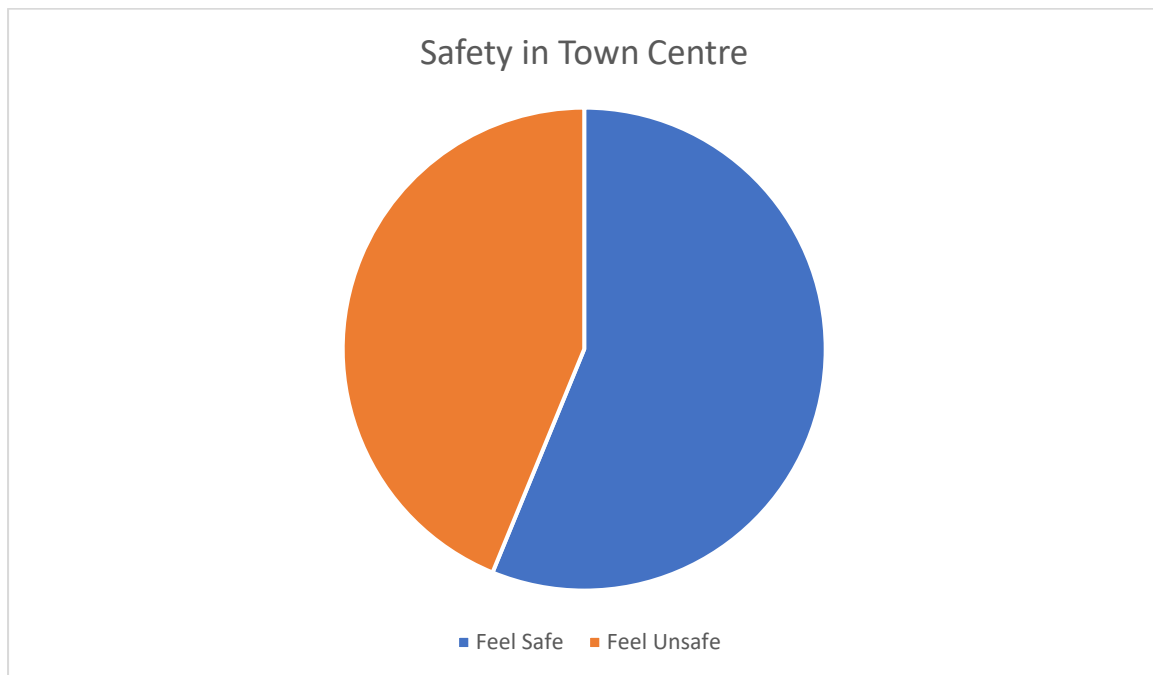
Survey responses (pre-incident) show that many Muslim residents do not feel safe.



Key Findings

- **53.1%** feel unsafe.
- **31.2%** feel neutral.
- **15.6%** feel safe.

21. Safety in the Town Centre



Key Findings

- **56.2%** feel safe.
- **43.8%** do not feel safe.

This indicates a significant need for improved public safety measures and reassurance.

22. Encouragement of Charitable Giving

An overwhelming **96.7% of Mosques in Oldham actively encourage charitable giving** among their congregants. This finding aligns with wider research showing that **Muslims in Oldham donate more than four times the national UK average**, reflecting a deeply rooted culture of generosity and social responsibility.

Charitable giving within the Muslim community is driven by both religious obligation and moral conviction. **Zakat** (obligatory alms) and **Sadaqah** (voluntary charity) form the foundation of this giving culture, supporting a wide range of causes including poverty alleviation, education, humanitarian relief and community welfare. Contributions are made **locally, nationally and internationally**, demonstrating a broad and compassionate outlook.

23. Where Community Donations Go

Mosques in Oldham demonstrate a strong commitment to charitable work, with giving patterns that prioritise the local community while maintaining significant support for national and international causes.

Based on the Mosques that provided financial figures the average **annual charitable contribution exceeds £300,000**. This level of giving highlights the extraordinary generosity of Oldham's Muslim community and its sustained commitment to social welfare and humanitarian support.

24. Awareness of Support Available from Oldham Mosques Council

Mosque leaders expressed a strong need for structured support to ensure their institutions operate safely, legally and effectively. The demand for assistance is both high and consistent across key operational areas.

These findings highlight a strong appetite for capacity-building support and a clear opportunity for Oldham Mosques Council to strengthen governance, compliance and leadership across the sector.

25. Focus Group Findings

To complement the survey data, focus groups were conducted to explore lived experiences, concerns and emerging issues within the community. These discussions revealed several recurring themes that provide essential context to the quantitative findings.

a. **Fear of Hate Incidents**

Participants reported heightened anxiety about rising hate incidents, particularly Islamophobia and racism. Many linked this to national debates on immigration, which they felt had emboldened discriminatory attitudes and increased hostility.

- b. **Perceived Job Competition Driving Racism**
A recurring perception was that resentment towards immigrants - including asylum seekers and long-term residents - is often fuelled by the belief that they are “taking our jobs.” Participants noted that this perception persists despite limited economic evidence, contributing to social tension and racialised narratives.
- c. **Reluctance to Wear Religious or Traditional Dress**
Some individuals reported avoiding visible religious or cultural attire due to fear of harassment. This reflects a worrying restriction on cultural expression and religious identity.
- d. **Impact on the Night Economy and Delivery Workers**
Participants working in the night-time economy — including taxi drivers, takeaway staff and delivery cyclists — described a significant rise in abuse and hostility. Many delivery workers expressed fear of working after dark, highlighting the occupational risks faced by these groups.
- e. **Impact of Austerity on Support Mechanisms**
Cuts to public services and community organisations were seen as weakening essential support structures. Reductions in youth services, community workers and equality-focused roles have increased vulnerability and reduced access to help.
- f. **Under-reporting of Harmful Incidents**
A sense of resignation was evident among some participants, who felt that hate incidents were an unavoidable part of their identity. This has contributed to chronic under-reporting, limiting opportunities for intervention and reducing visibility of the issue.

26. Conclusion

The Our Voice survey reaffirms that the Oldham Mosques Council network is underpinned by an exceptional culture of dedication, stewardship and community service. The findings clearly demonstrate that Oldham’s mosques are mature, well-governed institutions, evidenced by their 100% safeguarding compliance and their continued reliance on committed volunteers who sustain essential services.

At the same time, the report highlights two urgent priorities: strengthening external advocacy and advancing internal professionalisation. The Oldham Mosques Council must take a leading role in addressing the heightened sense of insecurity experienced by Muslim residents and in challenging the harmful effects of misleading or fabricated media narratives. Internally, the sector must accelerate its development by implementing the recommended training programmes to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance organisational capability.

By committing to this dual agenda, the Oldham Mosques Council will reinforce its position as a resilient and forward-thinking organisation supporting the Muslim Community in Oldham and ensuring that affiliated mosques continue to operate in an environment of safety, confidence and trust, ultimately strengthening the wellbeing and cohesion of the entire borough.

27. Strategic Recommendations for Strengthening Oldham's Mosque Sector

This section sets out a comprehensive suite of strategic recommendations aimed at strengthening the operational, educational, governance and community-facing capacity of Oldham's mosques. These recommendations are informed by sector-wide survey findings and reflect the collective priorities, challenges and opportunities identified across the network.

Working alongside individual mosques and external agencies, we can support the development and implementation of tailored action plans that enhance each mosque's ability to provide high-quality services to their congregations. To achieve this, we recommend:

1. **Encouraging all mosques to develop an annual programme of activities** that is broad, inclusive and responsive to the needs of their congregation.
2. **That Oldham Council utilise the survey findings** and other available information to develop an action plan that supports individual mosques and the wider development of the Oldham Mosques Council.
3. **That Greater Manchester Police utilise the survey findings** and other available information to develop an action plan that supports individual mosques and the development of the Oldham Mosques Council.
4. **That the NHS, primary healthcare providers and other healthcare agencies utilise the survey findings** and other available information to develop an action plan that supports individual mosques and the development of the Oldham Mosques Council.
5. **Ensuring all mosques review their legal compliance** and develop action plans to address any identified gaps.
6. **Supporting the development of appropriate training programmes** for management committee members, staff and volunteers.
7. **Encouraging mosques to develop wellbeing support programmes** for their congregations, in collaboration with the NHS, primary healthcare providers and other relevant agencies.
8. **Supporting the establishment of new mosques** in areas where additional facilities are required.
9. **Providing support to mosques experiencing local challenges**, including islamophobia, hate incidents, or compliance-related issues.
10. **Supporting Oldham Mosques Council to develop a comprehensive action plan** based on the survey findings and to work with partners to implement individualised action plans.

Mosques in Oldham

- Abbey Hills Road Masjid
- Al-Falah Academy
- Al-Khazra Masjid
- Al-Madina Jamia Masjid
- Bilal Jamia Masjid
- Chadderton Shahporan Masjid
- Dawatul Islamia
- European Islamic Centre
- Greengate Jamia Masjid
- Hussainia Islamic Mission
- Jalalabad Jamay Masjid
- Jamay Masjid Muhammadia Saifia
- Jamia Ghausia Masjid
- Jamia Masjid Azmat E Islam
- Jamia Mohi-Ul-Islam Siddiqia
- Jamia Mosque, Dar-Ul-Aloom Naqshbandia
- Jamia Qasmia Zahidia
- Jamia Shamsiah Masjid
- Jamiat Ahle Hadith
- Madina Institute & Masjid Community Hub
- Madina Masjid & Islamic Centre 1
- Madina Mosque & Islamic Centre 2
- Madinatul Ilm
- Marqzi Masjid
- Masjid Hayat Un Nabi
- Masjidul Aqsa
- Mohammedia Masjid & Islamic Centre
- Nagina Jamia Masjid
- Nusratul Islam Masjid
- Oldham Central Masjid and Islamic Centre
- Oldham Madani Academy
- Oldham Mosque and Islamic Centre
- Qurtaba Masjid
- Shahjalal Mosque & Islamic Centre
- UKIM Oldham - Noori Islam
- Werneth Jamia Masjid
- Westwood Masjid

Oldham Mosques Council Executive Committee

	Name	Masjid
Chairman	Abdul Karim	Oldham Central Masjid
Vice Chairman	Shakel Ahmed	Madina Masjid (Clysdale Street)
Vice Chairman	Muhammed Tufail	Nusratul Islam Masjid
Vice Chairman	Naveed Afzal	Greengate Street Masjid
Secretary	Tariq Rafique	Dawatul Islamia
Assistant Secretary	Nasim Ashraf	Jamia Masjid Azmat E Islam
Treasurer	Kashef Ferooz	European Islamic Centre
Assistant Treasurer	Shamim Miah	Shahjalal Masjid
Media Officer	Abdul Basit Shah	Nusratul Islam Masjid
Executive Committee Members		
	Raja Zafar Iqbal	Masjid Hayat Un Nabi
	Ch Kurshid Ahmed	Jamia Ghausia Masjid
	Rahel Younis	Al-Madina Jamia Masjid
	Ch Aslam	Bilal Jamia Masjid
	Aklakul Ambia	Masjidul Aqsa
	Arob Ali	Oldham Madani Academy
	Abdul Rahman Malik	Werneth Jamia Masjid
	Abdul Alim	Alkhazra Masjid
	Fiaz Ahmed	Markazi Masjid
	Mashuk Ali	Madina Masjid & Islamic Centre
	Iqbal Bhatti	Jamiat Ahle Hadith
	Usman Anwar	Jamay Masjid Muhammadia Saifia
	Munir Ahmed	Jamia Mohi-UI-Islam Siddiqia
	Liaqat Ali	Jamia Qasmia Zahidia Oldham
	Javid Akhtar	Jamia Shamsiah Masjid
	Amir Ali	Westwood Masjid
	Raja Imran Iqbal	Hussainia Islamic Mission

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