



Fife Centre for Equalities

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Kirkcaldy Central Mosque:
A Community Learning Together Case Study



Kirkcaldy Central Mosque - A Community Learning Together Working Case Study

Summary

This case study highlights areas of advice and guidance work Fife Centre for Equalities has been carrying with Kirkcaldy Central Mosque over the past 1 1/2 years. Themes covered include cultivating a culture of openness, community use and relevance, breaking down barriers through language and engagement.

Door to the community: why Open Days matter



Kirkcaldy Central Mosque hosted its first Open Day on Sunday 7 February 2016. It was a truly successful event with approximately 150 people attending from a range of ages and backgrounds¹ and set a clear example of how positive action helps to break down barriers and build community.

On the same weekend, over 150 mosques in the UK also opened their doors to their local community. While several mosques have had a tradition of hosting open days or theme visit days throughout the year, it is only recently that the UK-wide movement of [#VisitMyMosque](#)ⁱ has become more popular and increasingly reported in the media.

'Visit My Mosque' is a UK-wide initiative facilitated by the [Muslim Council of Britain \(MCB\)](#) mosques to hold open days (more or less at the same date and time) to welcome in their neighbours from all faiths and none. It is a growing movement that is becoming recognized in the UK media with 20 mosques taking part in 2015ⁱⁱ, 80 in 2016ⁱⁱⁱ and up to 150 in 2017^{iv}.

As the movement becomes more popular and increasing numbers of mosques participating and people attending, this offers a much needed counter-narrative to the often negative representation of Islam in mainstream media – the messages of which have more often than not has been divisive.



The 'Visit My Mosque' day strapline of 2017 was "No walls, no visas. All welcome"². This was just after the US immigration ban

¹ <http://www.fifetoday.co.uk/news/kirkcaldy-mosque-open-day-hailed-as-success-1-4026791>

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/visit-my-mosque-day-donald-trump-muslim-ban-open-doors-a7564036.html>





on people from seven Muslim-majority and Syrian refugees was put forwards³. The same weekend, the highest ever attendance from the public to the UK-wide events showed that on the ground, within communities, people were keen to make another story heard.

Open Days are opportunities to build bridges and for Muslims to tell the story of their faith directly and positively, without having to work through countering media stereotyping.

As Harun Khan, the Secretary General of the MCB, pointed out that beyond the boxes and narratives of public policy, the story of Muslims “is one of faith, freedom and fairness.”⁴



Developing the mosque as a focal point in the community

The first mosque in the UK was founded in Liverpool over 130 years ago by Abdullah Quilliam⁵ with the intention of being a place of worship and spiritual focal point, but also as actively serving the local community, regardless of faith or background.

Most UK mosques since were started off as small rooms in people’s homes and were used for prayer, to socialize or to ask for support and advice from other community members. Over time, they became buildings funded by community donations with the main focus of prayer. Over the last 10 years, this has changed again and mosques have started to utilise their space for community work as well as spiritual care.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/03/visit-my-mosque-day-open-day-non-muslims>

⁴ <http://www.mcb.org.uk/celebrating-strength-in-working-together-cherishing-diversity-and-unity/>

⁵ <https://www.faith-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/the-mosques-in-communities-project.pdf>



In this vein, Kirkcaldy Central Mosque is currently being built with the vision of being a welcoming community centre for a wide range of age groups. The completed mosque will have a 1200 person capacity prayer room as well as teaching, leisure and IT rooms, crèche, gym and they are also plans for a soup kitchen.

It is a big and also costly project (£1.4 million donation received as of 2017) - which is aligned to the principles of equity, participation and ownership of Islamic Finance⁶. This means that several sources of funding that are usually used for in building community centres are not viable (e.g. Big Lottery, due to restrictions on the proceeds of lottery gambling).

The new [ECO Project](#) will see the introduction of a community garden as part of the range of services and capabilities the mosque can offer to the local community as the garden will serve as an educational tool. The project will also involve learning about low carbon lifestyles, home energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. Imam Mansoor Mahmood describe the mosque's aim of offering this range of these services of become a positive asset to the local community and a way to remove barriers to fostering good relations.



Integration through language: Imams and Female scholars as leaders in community engagement

Since day one of their appointment at Kirkcaldy Central Mosque, the team members (see full profiles at [Imam Mansoor Mahmood](#), [Imam Mohammed Hammad](#), [Ustadha Afeefa Ahmed](#), [Ustadha Iffet Rafeeq](#)) have been involved in a great deal of and self-development.

As Islamic scholars with their respective specialisms (i.e. Tafseer, Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence and Youth issues) and fellow graduates of the [Cambridge Muslim College](#), the current team is more than accustomed to learning. Imam Mohammed Hammad points out 'we keep in contact with our teachers and fellow students working across the UK, it is really important'.

For the team, having the support of their network while going through their first positions as Imams and Female scholars has also been invaluable. Pastoral care or informal counselling (not only on spiritual matters) is becoming more and more important in their role and requires a lot of self-development. Learning to become leaders in these roles is also part of the wide-ranging culture change across mosques the UK, not only as community centres but also in engagement, as Imams are now increasingly English-speaking.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-islamic-finance-in-the-uk>



Alongside with more regular open days, this is removing a big hurdle for local communities to be able to communicate with the mosque leaders and in the case of Kirkcaldy Central Mosque, it has done wonders for an involved community engagement programme^v.

In this journey, Ustadha Afeefa Ahmed and Ustadha Iffet Rafeeq describe that what was really important in working in Fife and particularly Kirkcaldy area was 'to focus on doing outreach and home visiting work'. 'Meeting at home as well is learning languages as Urdu – as this allows you to work with members from Kashmir and Punjab much more easily'.

Next steps: integration and sustainable development

Current work with the Kirkcaldy Central Mosque Board involves advice and guidance in the re-development of the former mosque building into a community use facility. Focusing on the themes of community usage, inclusion, accessibility and above all relevance, Fife Centre for Equalities is working with the mosque Trustees and Imams/Community Leaders to develop a project proposal that not only fits within the local geography and meets community needs but can also help foster greater community cohesion.

Keywords

[#community](#) [#cohesion](#) [#mosque](#) [#engagement](#) [#sustainable](#) [#development](#)
[#inclusion](#)



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*Working with Partners and Communities to make Fife a fair,
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REFERENCES

ⁱ [Visit My Mosque](#) hope to improve community cohesion, by:

1. Encouraging all mosques in Britain to hold an open day at least once per year
2. Fostering better community relations and community cohesion for the good of society as a whole
3. Working for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslims in the wider society
4. Working to reduce misconceptions about Islam and Muslims in Britain.
5. Celebrating the vast array of charitable, outreach and social action projects performed by mosques in Britain.

ⁱⁱ #Visit My Mosque 2015 Media Coverage

- **The Guardian** – [Mosques open their doors for the day to reach out and reassure](#)
- **Independent** – [Visit My Mosque Day: Muslims open doors with tea and cakes for the unbelievers](#)
- **Evening Standard** – [Mosques across London open doors to public in attempt to 'ease tensions'](#)
- **Muslim News** – [Mosques invite neighbours on #visitmymosque day](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ #Visit My Mosque 2016 Media Coverage

- **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'](#)

^{iv} #Visit My Mosque 2017 Media Coverage

- **The Guardian** - [More than 150 UK mosques hold open day for non-Muslims](#)
- **Evening Standard** - [Visit My Mosque Day: Mosques throw open doors amid 'perfect storm of polarisation'](#)
- **Independent** - [As Trump tries to close America's doors, Muslims are opening theirs on Visit My Mosque Day](#)
- **Telegraph & Argus** - ['Doors and hearts' are open to promote harmony during Visit My Mosque Day in Bradford](#)
- **Telegraph** - [Donald Trump thinks Islam is incompatible with the West. Britain's mosques prove otherwise](#)

^v Kirkcaldy Central Mosque – Community Engagement Activity 2016-now, promoted by FCE

- Active social media pages – Facebook and Twitter
- Kirkcaldy Mosque Open Day 2016, 2017
- NHS conference at the mosque
- Weekend Youth Club / children activities and local educational trips
- Diversity Week 2016 – Workshop
- Delivering an Anti-Terrorism workshop at the Citizenship and Community Cohesion Conference
- Carnegie UK – Future of Scotland Consultation
- Fife Health and Social Care Diabetes and Heart Disease Event
- Kirkcaldy Central Mosque ECO Project
- Sponsored Walk Beveridge Gardens
- Fife Interfaith Group Interfaith Lecture 2017
- Fundraiser at the Windmill Community Campus

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