

Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group

Terms of Reference

Objective

To develop a working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia which is reflective of a wide range of perspectives and priorities for British Muslims.

Background

British Muslims, whilst united by their faith, hold a diverse range of opinions, identities, beliefs, and backgrounds. This diversity helps to enrich the fabric of British society. There are countless examples of Muslim citizens achieving excellence across society - from entrepreneurs to public servants, from sports men and women to musicians and artists. The government's responsibility is to ensure that all British citizens receive equal treatment and can freely express their views, beliefs, and sense of identity. Sadly, this is not always the case; too many British Muslims have faced discrimination and hatred due to their religion. We recognise that anti-Muslim hatred/Islamophobia can also impact communities that are perceived to be Muslim. There are often cultural markers which are adopted by wider faith communities like Sikh, Hindu, Jain and Buddhists which are used to attack communities that are mistakenly identified as Muslim. This is also true of people of no faith.

Output and remit

The purpose of the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition Working Group is to provide advice to the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on appropriate and sensitive language to describe, understand and define unacceptable treatment, prejudice, discrimination and hate targeting Muslims or anyone who is perceived to be Muslim. This should include advice regarding the merits of government adopting a non-statutory definition of unacceptable treatment of Muslims and anyone perceived to be Muslim, including what a proposed definition should be.

The Group's proposed definition will be non-statutory and will provide the government and other relevant bodies with an understanding of unacceptable treatment and prejudice against Muslim communities.

Any proposed definition must be compatible with the unchanging right of British citizens to exercise freedom of speech and expression - which includes the right to criticise, express dislike of, or insult religions and/or the beliefs and practices of adherents.

The Group will make evidence-based recommendations for Ministers to consider. All advice provided by the Group will be private for Ministers and will not be made public.

Duration

The Group will have 6 months to deliver against the set aims of delivering a working definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia.

Structure and membership

The Group will comprise one chair and four members. Members will be technical experts, selected for their ability to deliver against the Group's objectives.

The members will be directly appointed by Ministers for a 6-month period, after which Ministers will review and confirm next steps.

The Group will be chaired by Dominic Grieve KC, who will be responsible for ensuring it meets its aims and objectives. The Chair will agree a work and engagement plan with the Minister for Faith and Communities and will use this as the basis for the work of the Group. The Chair, like all members, will be appointed for a 6-month period.

All members must follow The Seven Principles of Public Life and HMG retains the right to end the relationship if the member does not abide by the principles.

Cadence of meetings

The Group will hold regular meetings. The Chair will meet every month with the Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement and with other nominated Ministers from across government as appropriate. The Chair will meet bi-monthly with officials to discuss their work.

Deconfliction

MHCLG will engage with the Group to facilitate any necessary join-up with other HMG advisory groups and to avoid unnecessary overlap.

Resourcing and remuneration

The Group will be supported by a secretariat based within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This small team of civil servants will provide administrative and organisational support to the Group in the development of agendas, minute taking and to ensure reports and engagement are supported appropriately.

The Group members will not be remunerated but are able to claim expenses for travel and/or costs incurred whilst carrying out their role.

Noting that members will not be remunerated, we do not expect a significant amount of unpaid work will be required (a maximum of 5-10 hours per month). We will ensure this is

kept under review as the workplan for the Group develops. The Group are encouraged to make the best use of the MHCLG secretariat to achieve their objectives.

Termination arrangements

HMG has the right to disband the Group at any point and without notice if they deem that it is no longer meeting its aims and objectives, or if there is no longer a valid business case for the existence of the Group.

Conflicts of interest

Potential conflicts of interest should be raised with MHCLG immediately. As per the Public Appointments process, the Permanent Secretary of MHCLG will be responsible for signing off any conflicts of interest.

Publicity and press

The Group will provide private advice for internal consideration by Ministers only. The work of the Group will not be made public. The Group does not speak on behalf of HMG. While we expect that Group members are likely to comment publicly on issues of relevance to Muslim communities, they should notify MHCLG at least 48 hours in advance of making public comments where they relate to topics being discussed within the Group.

Governance, oversight and accountability

The Group is an independent, non-statutory body that reports and is accountable to the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Members will be required to abide by the [Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies June 2019 - GOV.UK](#)

The Group should work within HMG's published engagement standards [Government's principles of engagement - GOV.UK](#) and inform MHCLG in writing of all external engagement prior to it taking place. MHCLG will support with any due diligence where necessary.

Other government departments will be able to approach MHCLG if they wish to engage the Group.