



# ANNUAL REPORT

## April 2022- March 2023

*Our vision is of a harmonious and diverse society within which Northern Ireland Muslims make an important contribution*



Belfast Islamic Centre (BIC) is not just a place of worship but also a vibrant community hub for the Muslim population in Northern Ireland. Serving as a spiritual and social centre, BIC welcomes hundreds of worshippers weekly. This pivotal role enables BIC to offer various activities that educate and empower Muslims to integrate into the broader society while preserving their Islamic identity.

BIC's mission is to serve both Muslims and non-Muslims by fostering an open and welcoming spirit of Islam, promoting greater awareness and understanding of the faith. BIC aspires to be at the heart of faith, culture, and tradition for Muslims in Northern Ireland, believing that knowledge fosters understanding and opens doors for dialogue and friendship.

The Muslim community in Northern Ireland has rapidly increased in recent years. According to official figures, the percentage of Muslims in Northern Ireland rose from 0.21% in 2011 to 0.57% (approximately 11,000) in 2021 of the total population. However, we believe that the current Muslim population exceeds these figures, with our estimates suggesting that the number has grown to over 12,000, primarily due to an influx of newcomers in the last three years. The majority of this population regularly utilises BIC's facilities. BIC is dedicated to promoting understanding, coexistence, and harmonious relations between Muslims and the broader society.

BIC meets the spiritual, social, and practical needs of Muslims in Northern Ireland, regardless of their ethnic background, gender, country of origin, or age. The Centre offers a range of services, including religious services, educational classes, youth clubs, and a mother and toddler group. These social activities are particularly beneficial to refugees, asylum seekers, and non-working men and women, who may have limited social interaction and opportunities for learning.

Given that the Muslim community remains a small minority in Northern Ireland, many residents have had little to no interaction with Muslims. To address this, BIC maintains an active online presence and practices an open-door policy, welcoming cultural visits from organisations and individuals. Additionally, BIC hosts an annual 'Visit My Mosque Day,' providing the wider community with an opportunity to engage with and learn about Muslim culture, challenging misconceptions and stereotypes.

BIC's diverse membership hails from over 42 different countries. The Centre operates through various subgroups and serves as an umbrella body for groups and organisations such as the Women's Group, Muslim Youth Northern Ireland (MYNI), Muslim Students' Society (QUB ISOC),

Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association (NIMFA), Islamic Centre of Newtownards, Craigavon Mosque, Muslim Association of Coleraine, North West Islamic Centre and other Islamic Centres across Northern Ireland. Numerous minority ethnic and cultural groups also use the Centre as a meeting point for their social activities.

BIC collaborates with local and national organisations, faith groups, and charities to:

- Provide pastoral and social care to the Muslim community in Northern Ireland, enabling them to practice their religion.
- Facilitate the integration of Muslims into wider society, encouraging full participation in public and economic life.
- Increase understanding of Islam and Muslim culture, breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions.
- Promote mutual respect and awareness between people of different ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland.

## 2.0 Vision, Mission, and Values

### Vision

Our vision is a harmonious and diverse society where Northern Irish Muslims make significant contributions.

### Mission

To represent, support, and empower Northern Irish Muslims to achieve their full potential as individuals and as part of the wider community.

### Values

Belfast Islamic Centre is committed to:

- **Respect:** Valuing each other and the broader community.
- **Co-operation:** Working together harmoniously with others.
- **Understanding:** Embracing diverse opinions.
- **Acceptance:** Upholding equality, fairness, and justice.
- **Integrity:** Leading by example.

## 3.0 Belfast Islamic Centre's Strategic Aims

- **To serve the Muslim community:** Addressing their needs and enhancing their sense of belonging.

- **To build networks:** Developing relationships with other organizations and raising awareness of Islam and Muslim culture.
- **To enhance community relations:** Serving the broader community to improve understanding of Islam and Muslim culture.
- **To develop BIC:** Ensuring the Centre meets the needs of its members, the wider Muslim society, and its stakeholders.

## 4.0 Management

### Board of Trustees 2022-2023

- Dr. Muhammad Saleem Khan Tareen
- Dr. Raja Harun
- Dr. Shahid Tariq
- Mr. Louay Majeed
- Dr. Yousef Hannore (In Memoriam)

### The Executive Committee

- **Chairman:** Mr. Mohammad Arshed
- **Vice Chairman:** Dr. Wasif Naeem
- **Treasurer:** Mr. Hassan Farooq
- **Secretary:** Mr. Ameer Ibrahim
- **Members:**
  - Mr. Shoaib Tareen
  - Mr. Imran Yousuf
  - Mr. Nafiu Abu Bakr

### Staff and Administration

Name	Position	Full/Part Time	Volunteer	Start-end	Funded by
Anwar Mady	Project Coordinator	Part time		01-04-2014 – present	EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Amama Azam	Office Admin	Part time		01-08-2022 (on maternity leave).	EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Humaira Khurshid	Office Admin	Part Time		26-06-2023	EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Sumaiyah Amir	General Admin	Part Time		02/01/2022 present	BIC
Muhammad Zulhas Miah	Cleaning	Part time		02/01/2008 – present	BIC

### **5.0 Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

In accordance with Article 62 of the constitution: “The Centre must hold its first AGM within fifteen months after the date of its incorporation. An AGM must be held in each subsequent year, with no more than fifteen months elapsing between successive AGMs.”

Belfast Islamic Centre held its AGM for the year ending on the 31st of March 2021 on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and was chaired by Mr. Mohammad Arshed. After an open and transparent discussion, the following resolutions were approved:

- **Appointment of Minshull & Co as Auditor for BIC**
  - **For: 11**
  - **Against: None**

### **6.0 Belfast Islamic Centre Activities & Services (2022-2023)**

#### **6.1 BIC - The Mosque**

The Mosque serves as the heart of BIC’s activities, playing a crucial role for Muslims in Northern Ireland as both a religious and community centre. It fosters community cohesion, solidarity, unity, and brotherhood, while providing a space for the practice of faith. The Mosque serves both Muslims and non-Muslims, offering the following activities and services:

- **Five Daily Prayers**
- **Two Friday Congregational Prayers:** Attended by around 500 people.
- **Consultations on Religious, Social, and Ritual Matters:** Providing pastoral support, guidance, counselling, and religious Fatwas. We receive approximately 44 queries weekly, either in person or through telecommunications, social media etc.

- **Assistance to Non-Muslims Inquiring About Islam:** Handling around 26 inquiries per month.
- **Support for New Muslims:** Assisting them on their journey to Islam.
- **Family and Marriage Consultations:** Conducting marriage services in accordance with BIC regulations, with 62 marriages conducted last year.
- **Eid Prayers:** Organizing two Eid prayers attended by over 3,000 people.
- **Funeral Services:** Providing washing, white shroud, burial, and funeral prayers. BIC facilitated approximately 22 funerals this year and provided pastoral care during bereavement, especially at the Royal Maternity Hospital. Additionally, funeral costs were subsidised for two vulnerable families.

## 6.2 Women's Group Activities

- **Weekly Mums and Tots Sessions**
- **Weekly Quran Lessons**
- **Weekly Halaqah (Learning Circle for Muslim Women)**
- **Weekly Classes for Younger Girls in the BIC Youth Group**
- **Information Sessions:** Covering women's health, child protection, domestic abuse, and hate crime, with one workshop held annually on each topic.
- **Sports Activities:** Football coaching for juniors and football tournaments.

## 6.3 Ramadan 2022 Report

Ramadan 2022 began on the 2nd of April. BIC resumed its full Ramadan program following the pandemic, concluding with the Eid Day Celebration. Iftar was provided daily for the Muslim congregation at the Mosque, with community members sponsoring the meal costs. An estimated 150-200 people attended Iftar dinners every night throughout Ramadan.

BIC staff, the executive committee, and numerous volunteers worked diligently to create a welcoming atmosphere for the Muslim community. The Centre organised 20 Rakats of Taraweeh prayers, inviting two juniors Huffaz from abroad to help lead the Taraweeh prayer with and under the supervision of the Imam, completing the recitation of the entire Quran during the blessed month. Tahajjud prayers were also organised during the last ten days, with Suhoor (predawn meal) provided for those

observing i'tikaf at the Mosque. Cultural visits during Ramadan were part of our educational program, with meals provided to visiting groups.

#### **6.4 Eid-ul-Fitr 2022 Celebration**

The Muslim community celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadan on the 2nd of May 2022. Two Eid prayers were held at Belfast Islamic Centre, attended by around 1,000 Muslims. The afternoon featured special family celebrations at Dundonald International Ice Bowl, where approximately 300+ people participated in activities such as tenpin bowling, ice skating, and Indiana Land playground. The event received highly positive feedback from attendees.

#### **6.5 Eid-ul-Adha 2022 Celebration**

The Eid-ul-Adha celebration in July at Queen's PEC attracted over 1,000 participants and was followed by activities for children including bouncy castles and other indoor activities. We also organised family activities in the afternoon at Dundonald International Ice Bowl, where around 300+ men, women and children actively participated in activities including tenpin bowling, ice skating, and Indiana Land playground.

#### **6.5 Other Activities and Services Provided by BIC**

##### **6.5.1 Ministerial and Politician Visits**

During this period, the Belfast Islamic Centre (BIC) hosted visits from representatives across all major political parties in South Belfast, including the DUP, Sinn Féin, SDLP, Alliance, and the Green Party. BIC actively represented the Muslim community at the South Belfast Roundtable and the Belfast City Council Migrant Forum. We facilitated meetings between individuals and local MLAs to address equality concerns, with 100 participants engaging in these discussions. Additionally, BIC organised a workshop in collaboration with the Immigration Service NI for the Muslim community and made significant contributions to the Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum, NICRE, and the All-Party Group (APG) on Racial Equality.

##### **6.5.2 Cultural Visits & Awareness Programmes**

As a key information hub about Islam, BIC engaged with a diverse range of groups to promote understanding of Islamic faith, culture, and traditions. Over the past year, BIC hosted 88 cultural visits and awareness programs, reaching approximately 800 individuals. These participants included service providers, members of the PSNI, Belfast City Council, NHS staff, Queen's University Belfast, and numerous primary and secondary schools. Some of these visits included tailored

sessions on professional interactions with Muslims. Meals were provided upon request to enhance the engagement experience.

### **6.5.3 Countersignature and Translation Services**

BIC provided essential translation services for official documents such as birth and marriage certificates, completing 100 translations over the past year. We also offered free interpretation services to those in need, particularly when official interpreters were unavailable. Additionally, BIC provided countersignatures for settlement, naturalisation, and passport applications, with over 200 applications signed in the past year.

### **6.5.4 Support and Guidance to New Arrivals**

BIC continued to offer invaluable support to new arrivals in Northern Ireland, including students, professionals, families, and refugees. Our involvement in the Mears Programme provided essential orientation for newcomers. BIC developed an information booklet outlining available Muslim organizations and services, ensuring a smooth transition and integration for new Muslim families and individuals.

### **6.5.5 Chaplaincy Services**

BIC provided chaplaincy services to Muslim inmates at Maghaberry, Hydebank, and Magilligan prisons, supplying Islamic materials such as Qurans, prayer mats, and religious books. We also offered chaplaincy support to Muslim patients at Royal Victoria Hospital, City Hospital, Musgrave Park Hospital, and Craigavon Area Hospital, ensuring spiritual care and support within the healthcare system.

### **6.5.6 Student Support and Chaplaincy Services**

BIC extended its support to students by offering advice on accommodation and facilities in Belfast, collaborating closely with the International Office at Queen's University Belfast to develop a supportive model for international, including Muslim, students. BIC also provided an official Muslim Chaplain for Queen's University Belfast students, enhancing their university experience.

### **6.5.7 Housing Advice and Assistance**

As an active member of the BME Housing Forum and the Steering Group of the Consultative Forum, BIC played a pivotal role in advocating for the housing needs of Muslims. We assisted newcomers with language barriers, facilitating communication with the Housing Executive through in-person and phone support.

### **6.5.8 Immigration Advice and Legal Support**

BIC provided crucial immigration advice, working closely with the Home Office Community Engagement Team to direct individuals to specialized organizations. As a founding member of the Refugee Action Group, we engaged in numerous meetings and activities related to asylum seekers. Additionally, we coordinated with the Red Cross to facilitate family reunions.

### **6.5.9 English for Beginners**

BIC offered two separate English classes for males and females, held twice a week. These accredited ESOL classes saw 30 individuals successfully passing the level one exam and continuing their English language education.

### **6.5.10 Consultation and Advice to Social Workers and Professionals**

BIC provided expert consultation to social workers, doctors, and other professionals dealing with cases involving Muslim families and children. We delivered at least four training courses annually, benefiting 100 participants from the Health and Social Care sector, PSNI, and the Housing Executive. These sessions aimed to enhance understanding and support for Muslim tenants and clients.

### **6.5.11 Consultation to Other Organizations**

The BIC Executive Committee offered valuable consultations to government departments, private organisations, and community sectors on matters concerning religion and ethnic minorities. We produced and discussed key documents and participated in various consultation meetings, seminars, and workshops.

### **6.5.12 Dialogues, Workshops, and Engagements**

BIC's Executive Committee, staff, and volunteers engaged in numerous formal and informal dialogues on diverse topics including Islam and other religions, Islam and the West, and Islam and human rights. We participated in panel discussions organized by the NI Interfaith Forum and attended meetings and workshops hosted by political parties, city councils, NICRAS, NICRE, CRC, NICVA, PSNI, and various church denominations.

## **6.6 Zakat & Zakat-ul-Fitr**

BIC actively collected and distributed Zakat and Zakat-ul-Fitr throughout the year, addressing the needs of underprivileged members of the Muslim community. We processed over 50 Zakat application forms per week and distributed Zakat-ul-Fitr during Eid, sending contributions to

international charities such as Human Appeal, Interpal, and Action for Humanity. BIC also participated in international fundraising appeals, raising £20,000 for causes including the Save Gaza appeal, Pakistan floods, and the Turkey-Syria earthquake.

### **6.7 Social and Youth Activities**

BIC continued its tradition of organising family support activities for the Muslim community. This year, we successfully resumed our summer program, featuring trips to local attractions such as Belfast Zoo, Lagan Leisureplex, Vertigo, and Let's Go Hydro, with participation from 200+ individuals. We also established a mother and toddler group, which met twice weekly and included 30 participants.

The Muslim youth club for girls was reinstated, and we introduced football coaching sessions for juniors as well as women's basketball sessions. Despite challenges posed by COVID-19, including increased costs for the Duke of Edinburgh Award activity, BIC explored alternative solutions. Notably, we launched the first Muslim Scout Group in Northern Ireland in collaboration with the Agape Centre on Lisburn Road, which has been a significant success for our younger generation.

### **7.0 Financial Report**

Please find attached the Financial Report for the period from April 2022 to 31st March 2023, prepared by Minshull & Co. Chartered Accountants.