

BCOM

BOLTON COUNCIL OF MOSQUES

April 2007 to December 2007

The Bolton Council of Mosques has been engaged in increasing opportunities and services for Muslims in Bolton for the last 15 years. Through partnership development and capacity building, the last year has seen the continuance of the delivery of projects and in participation and engagement with the wider Bolton Family.

Listed within this brief report are just some of the projects and outcomes that the Bolton Council of Mosques have delivered and were working on from April to December 2007.

These have been divided into sections:

- Burial Service
- Communication
- Forums
- BCOM Staff and Infrastructure
- Training
- Interfaith
- Mosques
- Police
- Meetings and Bolton Council Support
- Education
- Health
- Business
- Women
- Sport
- Fundraising

Burial Service

The MRI service is now in place and available for all communities within Bolton. Following the success of the BCOM MRI service, and as a result of detailed discussions with Greater Manchester Coroners, BCoM now co-ordinates MRI's for all Muslims in the Greater Manchester Area and discussions are ongoing to support people of other faiths. We have developed leaflets explaining the MRI service in English, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali and Gujarati. These are to be produced and distributed in the next year.

Over 40 people, both male and female, have been trained in burial procedures, including the handling of the body for MRI purposes throughout the year.

We have continued to hold meetings with the Coroner Jennifer Leeming and her team to further the MRI and burial service.

We have secured a new burial vehicle and registered 16 approved drivers from the different mosques.

The Cemetery Clean up initiative is ongoing every Sunday.

28 Funerals were carried out and 2 MRI scans have been facilitated

Communication

Channels of communication have been maintained with 2 full BCOM meetings every three months involving all 16 mosques, as well as 2 Executive meetings.

Leaflets and information have been disseminated by post and delivered by hand during the year. We are moving towards a more web based system of communication.

The development of the Website is ongoing. The Website domain and registration were secured and the website back-end has been completed and information gathered to provide content for the site. Final completion and launch will be in 2008.

6000 Newsletters were printed and distributed in September 2007 with information from the Bolton Hospitals Trust, BCOM project info. This also included various other articles including the promotion of harmony within Bolton

A number of articles were sent to Bolton Council promoting partnership working.

We have responded to national issues in relation to a Times article which had a major effect on Community Cohesion

We have begun the development of the Annual Review, to be published in March 2008. This has involved collating data, creating diagrams, planning and writing of various drafts

Forums

The Education Forum, Burial Committee, Women's forum, youth forum and health forum have held regular meetings throughout the year and work is ongoing in relation to each area.

Individual Meetings have also taken place with Councillor Safrana Ismail, Councillor Hanif Dervesh, Councillor Akhtar Zaman, and Councillor Hussain in relation to the work of BCOM and providing an update in the first quarter of this financial year. A joint meeting of these Councillors and BCOM took place in the next quarter (July to September.)

BCOM Staff and Infrastructure

We currently have 6 staff and 2 regular volunteers working at BCOM, both in part time and full time capacities and have developed an increasing number of partnerships.

We are in the process of making arrangements to relocate BCOM to a new premises. We are developing the plans for the structure of the new building in conjunction with the building owners. These include developing a costings plan, the physical relocation as well as other logistics. This will be a huge project and significantly impact on the next year.

We have developed Job Specifications and Job Descriptions in partnership with Bolton Council for two community development workers. These have been short-listed and will begin their posts in the new year, along with the Educational Attainment Consultant, who was interviewed and appointed in December 2007.

Training

A workshop to get people into employment took place in May and was very successful. 12 adults from a variety of backgrounds (all looking for employment or wanting to go into business), both male and female took part in a week long training session. 3 of the adults have returned confirming that they are now in employment as a result of the workshops.

BCOM have continued to train people in First Aid throughout the year, with over 76 people being trained in the last year in personalised sessions (for e.g. BCOM provided an all-female session with an Urdu interpreter for a group of Pakistani women).

We held a training session in October for staff and volunteers to improve time-management skills. This course covered planning, setting priorities, decision making, desk and paper management.

BCOM is developing Race and Cultural Awareness training for the BME community. This is currently in development and will be ready in the next year.

Interfaith

We have worked with the Interfaith Council and other faith groups to deliver the Spirit of Bolton Event, as well as continual contribution to the faith trail. We have also conducted over 30 mosque visits within this period and have many more booked in for January 2008 and onwards. We promoted the availability of mosque visits as part of Islam Awareness Week.

The Coroners team and Hospital Mortuary Staff attended a specially organised Mosque Visit and Islamic Workshop.

Officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government have also attended a Mosque Visit

BCOM, in the absence of Carlo the interfaith worker, has been supporting and leading on the interfaith youth ambassadors project with regular meetings of the group at the BCOM offices and other venues.

A foreword has been prepared and sent to the Interfaith Council for the new Interfaith Directory for Bolton.

Leaflets were prepared for the faith packs on Islam and Ramadhan. These are to support the faith trail and for interfaith events and were distributed at various locations.

We have been involved in supporting and developing the Bolton Council Eid Celebration event in partnership with Asian Elders that took place on 25th October 2007. We attended and our volunteers were an integral part of the programme at the Eid event.

We also supported the development of the Bolton Council Diwali event, which took place on the 15th November.

We took part in this years' Genocide Memorial Day as well as the Ordination of Reverend Philip Brooks from the Bolton CCC.

BCOM provided Ramadan guidance for a number of Schools.

A talk was held in Westhoughton in November, an area with a minuscule Muslim population, regarding Islam and Muslims. There was a short presentation, followed by a discussion of various topics and issues were raised regarding relations with Muslims within Bolton.

We have developed a virtual interfaith trail, which features a mosque, a temple and a church. This allows users to virtually view and visit these places of worship from all angles. This will be made available for distribution and general public use to raise awareness of different religious places and especially to remove misconceptions of the internal workings of mosques in the UK. This will be a very exciting, innovative way of working and will be available on our website in the new financial year.

We supported and attended an Interfaith Iftaari event and Eid celebrations at Pikes Lane Community centre

We attended the leaving celebration of Canon Mike Williams, to commemorate his work with the Bolton Interfaith Council.

BCOM participated in the Interfaith Open Forum about religion

Three of our young volunteers delivered 5 days of assemblies at Hayward School regarding Islam and Ramadan. BCOM developed the content and assisted in the delivery.

BCOM representatives have attended the Interfaith Council and Faith workers meetings throughout the year.

We have loaned electronic equipment to members of the Muslim and Hindu community for various events held in Bolton including their National Festival.

Mosques

Over 120 people who are working or are volunteers in Mosques have been processed for CRB checks by BCOM.

We have delivered a series of first aid training session for aapas.

Zakariyya Mosque has been supported, through the use of equipment, to develop a community football initiative for young people on Sunday mornings.

Zakariyya Mosque has been supported through the use of equipment during special events for both males and females.

We are working with the New Madinah mosque to help them establish a curriculum

We have attended meetings regarding the Crompton Quiet room facility and have pledged to raise £1000 towards the costs.

We worked with the New Madinah mosque to help them to secure £12,000 for a computer suite from Extended Services Small Capital Project Funding. They will use this suite to develop and provide courses and programmes in the future for the local community.

We have supported Astley Street Community Centre to secure £45,000 capital funding. This will be used to improve the facilities, ensure that all health and safety regulations are met and to provide disabled access.

BCOM has been liaising with Noorul Islam, regarding issues arising over their constitution.

BCOM has liaised with Darul Quran, regarding a request for a nikah certificate under the Freedom of Information Act.

BCOM is developing material for a Madrassah Poster Project. This will be a series of posters about different issues including terrorism, smoking, drugs, respect etc., which will be used in mosques to highlight both legal and Islamic perspectives on these issues. Our intention is to roll out this initiative nationally,

The first meeting of the Madrassah Development Group was held, who will be working together to create a consortium of mosques, for financial and cultural benefits. They have discussed the creation of uniform standard policies and procedures for all madrassahs, which will meet legal and social requirements.

Police

We have attended meetings, at the beginning of 2007, in relation to anti-Terrorism and the arrests and subsequent charge of Terror suspects in Bolton and have liaised with the Police through the Bolton and GMPA Independent Advisory Groups.

We also attended a meeting with Stephen Hughes around the reporting style and content of The Bolton News. This especially focused on the possibility of monitoring web-based comments to identify racism issues.

We have attended meetings of the racial Harmony Forum, been part of the National Equality Standards process and been present at the Race Tension Monitoring Group. These are in addition to other meetings attended by BCOM.

We have helped co-ordinate and are supporting the Drugs research being carried out by UCLAN

We have attended meetings this quarter and liaised with the Police through the Bolton and GMPA Independent Advisory Groups

We applied for funding to establish a 'working with offenders in Prisons project'. The funding was not approved however we are aiming to start this work by the last quarter of 08

We have attended and taken part in the tackling prostitution project.

We have been present at briefings following the murders of two young Muslim males in separate racist attacks. We advised the police in relation to their media strategies, community engagement strategies and the general investigation.

In partnership with Forbes solicitors, a free legal advice surgery is provided every Saturday.

Meetings and Bolton Council support

We have attended meetings of the racial Harmony Forum and Yaseer conducted a presentation and a Q and A session.

BCOM has been a part of the Joint Area Review process participating in two meetings with the Inspectors

Participated in the CPA inspection meeting with the inspectors

We attended and facilitated at the Bolton Vision Conference. A selection of our young volunteers presented their work, and Khadija Patel was officially recognised for attaining a Platinum Award for her volunteering.

Bolton Council commissioned the Institute of Community Cohesion to undertake research. BCOM attended the release and launch, and was present at previous meetings.

These are in addition to other meetings attended by BCOM, a full list is available on request,

Education

Our Education Forum have been supporting Hayward School in relation to governance issues

We have also supported the Bolton Muslim Girls School in relation to their governance arrangements

We have developed the Job Specification and Job Description as well as advertised the Educational Attainment Consultant post which will be jointly managed by BCOM and Bolton LEA. The Educational Attainment Consultant post was allocated in December. The new consultant will begin to work at BCOM in the next year.

We have led on the Halal foods audit in Schools in Bolton, with inspections currently ongoing and recommendations being developed. The issue of Halal meals was raised with the Council before the holidays. The halal meat meals have been suspended until we are able to certify fully. In the meantime we have audited the vegetarian meals options including all ingredients and supply chain.

Health

Our Health Forum has met a number of times and in partnership with the PCT organised a health check event at Zakariyyah Mosque, with huge success as well as a number of people being newly diagnosed with diabetes. There were a 100 people in attendance.

A Health Check event was also organised at the Mecca Mosque offering free health checks and offering healthy living and healthy eating advice - again with very successful results. 40 people attended this venue.

We have had meetings with the Bolton NHS Hospitals Trust and with the Chief Executive and the Director of Operations to discuss issues related to the Muslim community. These issues included mixed sex wards, halal food, training, appropriate gowns, prayer facilities and communication. We will continue pursuing these matters and changes are being made to surgical gowns, prayer facilities and communication.

The health forum is currently working on a basic audit of service provision around health for the Muslim community

We developed a no smoking campaign during the month of Ramadan with a view to supporting cessation after Ramadan

In conjunction with the Council of British Hajji's, BCOM organised a 'health at hajj' seminar that incorporated a free personal health check by trained medics and doctors for people intending to make a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. 60 men and women attended the event.

We have continued to have an increase in the number of Counselling sessions delivered. We developed leaflets advertising the counselling service in different languages, and we have had referrals from mainstream doctors after further marketing of the service.

Business

We have had meetings with business representatives as well as the Bolton Business Service, to establish a dialogue around supporting corporate social responsibility and opportunities to deprived communities

We have also attended a business networking event organised by the Islamic Bank of Britain.

We have developed a programme for people who wish to engage into business, which will provide support and link them with existing businesses. This will be delivered in three roadshows, targeting 120 people within the first quarter of 2008.

Women

We organised a Women's Sports Day on the 3rd of June at the Bolton Lads and Girls Club and had 180 attendees, 80 of which were new participants from other faiths. The event was a huge success, providing opportunities for young women to engage and take part in sport.

As part of activities in Islam Awareness Week, BCOM held an open discussion forum for women. This will continue throughout the year in the form of a study circle, with monthly meetings within which different topics will be discussed, including both religious and current issues. This is open to women of all religions, although issues will be discussed from an Islamic perspective.

Also, as part of Islam Awareness Week, there was a Women in Islam discussion, which was female only and intended to address the roles of women within Islam. Speeches included, reverting to Islam, the importance of education and the negative stereotypes of women within the media. There was also the opportunity to have discussions regarding these issues, between women of different faiths.

The BCoM Female Youth Worker has worked closely with a small group of Pakistani young women from Great Lever, who have requested support in accessing and applying for work. Some sensitive family issues have been highlighted to the worker who is now looking at the provision of some one- to- one support to the members as well as group support.

Sport

We have assisted Ghosia community centre to provide and advertise indoor Cricket provision for adults.

Fund-raising

BCOM coordinated collections for the victims of the cyclone in Bangladesh at all the member mosques. Currently, they have raised over £20,000.

They have also completed the Housing Programme in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka following the devastation caused by the Tsunami in 2004 and other natural disasters.

Young people

For youth activities and projects, please see the separate report for the Youth Programme.