



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1323](#)

Main Petitioner: Syed Ali Naqvi on behalf of the Scottish Shia Muslims

Subject: Community centres for the Scottish Shia Muslims.

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to encourage and facilitate the creation of community centres dedicated for Scottish Shia Muslims

Background

Islam is divided into two major groups, Sunni and Shia (or Shi'ite). Shia Muslims constitute the smaller of these two groups.

An estimate of the relative proportions of Shia and Sunni Muslims in Scotland is not available as the 2001 census form did not distinguish between the different Muslim groups.

According to the 2001 Scottish census statistics, Muslims make up less than 1% of the overall population. However, apart from Christians, they are the largest religious community in Scotland, making up just under half (45%) of the non-Christian religious population.

According to the background information provided by the petitioner, Scottish Shia Muslims,

“do not have any proper dedicated community centre in the whole of Scotland which could provide them a space where they can perform their social and religious performances which is their fundamental right in a democratic country like Scotland”.

However, there is a [Shia Asna Ashari Islamic Centre](#) located in Glasgow and another Islamic Centre, the [Imamia Islamic Mission](#), located in Edinburgh.

Scottish Government Action

Community centres are provided by local authorities rather than central government.

The Scottish Government does provide funding which is designed to improve the lives of minority ethnic and faith communities in Scotland. For example, the Race, Religion and Refugee Integration funding stream provided funding

of £5.5m, from 1 July 2008 to 31 March 2011, for a range of projects working in the race, faith equality and refugee integration field. However the funds appear to deal more with integrating groups in terms of race and religion.

Local Authorities

The petition states that the proposed Community Centre would “provide a platform for the patriotic citizens of Scotland to integrate and co-ordinate which will positively contribute to the prosperity of their country”. This links to the Scottish Government’s [National Outcome 13](#) (NO13) of their Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) with local authorities – “We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity”.

Given that the community centres are most likely to be based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the SOAs of these authorities are relevant. Edinburgh does not have any indicators against NO13 but [states](#) the outcome should be that “All residents including those from minority backgrounds are able to actively participate in the community”.

Glasgow’s [local outcome 23](#) is “Improve residents’ aspirations, confidence, decision making capacity and involvement in community life”. The Glasgow SOA identifies extending English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision in the city to ensure people can fully participate in community life as a way of fulfilling this outcome.

Other Funding Sources

The [Big Lottery fund](#) is another possible source of funding. ‘Awards for All’ gives grants, of between £500 and £10,000, for people to take part in art, sport and community activities. However they will not fund religious activities.

Scottish Parliament Action

There have been no discussions, motions or parliamentary questions on the topic of community centres for specific religious groups.

Francesca McGrath
Senior Research Specialist
22 March 2010

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