

# “It takes a community to raise a child”

A Guide To Our Services



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# About Us



My Family Group is a collective of initiatives designed to improve the lives of children in care. We work to ensure every child who comes into care secures a loving and nurturing home that meets their needs, strengthens their identity and prepares them for adult life. My Family Group has steadily grown to include a number of services that meet the often complex needs of Muslim-heritage children in the care system.

Today the My Family Group includes:



**The Muslim Fostering Network** – A bespoke, faith sensitive fostering recruitment service and support network for Muslim foster carers. We provide essential educational resources and training for foster carers in cross cultural placements with Muslim children.

[www.muslimfosternetwork.org.uk](http://www.muslimfosternetwork.org.uk)



**My Foster Family** – A recruitment, training and outreach service dedicated to working with fostering services to help reach individuals from diverse communities to become foster carers.

[www.myfosterfamily.org.uk](http://www.myfosterfamily.org.uk)



**My Adoption Family** – A recruitment, training and outreach service for adoption agencies around their engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and faith communities, as well as a support network for adopters from diverse backgrounds. A member of the National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group (NARSG).

[www.myadoptionfamily.org.uk](http://www.myadoptionfamily.org.uk)

## Who we serve



Social care  
professionals



Foster carer and  
families



Children in  
care

**Building alliances with communities and organisations/  
services to better serve Muslim children in care**



# Our Aims, Vision & Mission

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My Family Group was first set up in 2017, under 'Muslim Foster Network', supported by Mercy Mission UK and Better Community Business Network.

We all share a passion and a common concern to ensure the most disadvantaged children in society get the best chance of achieving successful outcomes.

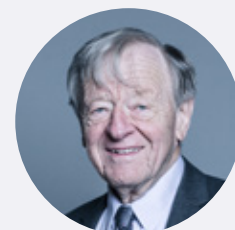
**Our Vision** is to see every child who comes into care secures a loving and nurturing home that meets their needs, strengthens their identity and prepares them for adult life.

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**Our Mission** is to raise awareness and influence policy around fostering and adoption, to support the recruitment of diverse foster carers and adopters and to promote a positive sense of identity that ensures better outcomes for care-experienced people.

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Lord Alfred Dubbs, said:



“My Family Group are doing great work and will continue to do great work.”

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“

Sir Martin Narey, Founding Chairman of My Family Group said:



“Since completing my final report on the care system for the Department for Education, I have been impressed for some time with the imaginative and innovative approach My Family Group have taken to improve recruitment and attract new carers to fostering, particularly those from minority backgrounds.”

# My Family Group

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## Our Values



### Putting People First

We are child and family centred and everything we do is for foster carers, children, and young people



### Celebrating Diversity

We believe that whatever our differences, everyone should be treated with the same respect



### Freeing Potential

We strive to uphold the right of every young person to make the most of his or her life



### Closer Communities

We are committed to building a loving, nurturing home with respect and within a well connected and supported safer community



### Living & Working with Integrity

We will always go out of our way to do the right thing with the best interest of the child at heart



# Our Core Objectives

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**Our core objectives are to:**

1.



## **Raise Awareness**

To raise awareness about the needs and challenges of children in care, the need for more foster carers and adopters from diverse backgrounds and the need to understand and address negative stereotypes, stigmas and barriers at all levels.

2.



## **Support Recruitment**

To raise the profile of fostering and adoption in communities, providing education, training and support for potential foster carers and adopters. To work in partnership with local authorities and fostering and adoption agencies to support the recruitment of foster carers and adopters from diverse backgrounds.

3.



## **Promote Identity**

To enable and support children and young people in care and care leavers to develop a positive sense of identity and belonging. To work with professionals to support foster carers, adopters and the wider community through advice, educational resources, training and peer-led support networks.

4.



## **Influence Policy**

To work with key stakeholders within government and the care sector to promote good practice in order to influence the development of child centred policies and initiatives that would ensure better outcomes for children and young people in care, care leavers and foster carer and adopters.

# Timeline

**2015**

Mercy Mission UK held an roundtable discussion on Muslim children in care. Launching the guide for foster carers looking after Muslim children.



**2016**

Mercy Mission UK with support from BCBN and Islamic Relief UK incubated The Muslim Fostering Project

**March 2017**

Better Communities Business Network (BCBN) Gala Dinner. Muslim Fostering Project launch event.



**May 2017**

Launch of Foster Friday with Muslim Council of Britain

**June 2017**

House of Lords dinner supporting legal safe passage of unaccompanied asylum seeking children



**November 2017**

Highlighted in the Department of Education Report on Safeguarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Strategy

**January 2018**

Launch Arise Mentoring Program

**July 2018**

Highlighted in Department of Education Report on Fostering Better Outcomes

**March 2019**

Launch of My Foster Family at Parliament



## October 2019

Launched Muslim Fostering Project Report with The Fostering Network



## November 2019

Joined the Department of Education National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group

## January 2020

Launch of My Adoption Family



## September 2020

Partnered with Barnado's to deliver the See Hear & Respond Programme

## October 2020

Launch of Adoption Friday during National Adoption Week

## December 2020

Launched Arise Learning and Sports Club



## April 2021

Launch of My Foster Family in Australia and Muslim leaders round table on children in care

## October 2021

Launch of Adoption toolkits at 10 Downing Street event



## March 2022

5 Year Anniversary Event and Launch of My Family Group





# Impact Statement

## Recruitment



**5,000+**

People Engaged At Events



**200,000+**

People Engaged Online



**3,000+**

People Supported Who Are Considering Fostering Or Adoption



**600+**

Referrals Made To Fostering And Adoption Services

## Arise Refugees

**75**



Trained Mentors

**300**

Young People Benefiting



Young People From 7 Countries

**19**



Professions Amongst Mentors



**24**

Legal Cases Funded For Unaccompanied Minors To Make Safe Passage To The UK.



**785**

Opened Legal Safe Routes For Approximately 785 Children

“We will work with the Muslim Fostering Project to promote evidence-based resources on recruiting new Muslim carers.”

Department for Education and Home Office, Safeguarding Strategy (2017)

“There are innovative campaigns targeting under-represented groups and communities, for example, the Muslim Foster Project...[they] are breaking down myths and introducing fostering to new communities.”

Department for Education, Fostering Better Outcomes (2018)

Project partners:



## Education

 **1,200+** Gift Boxes

&

 **3,000+** Carer Guides

to  **35** Local Authorities

## Awareness



Foster and  
Adoption  
Friday  
Campaigns



**200+**  
Mosques Done  
Friday Sermon  
On Fostering  
And Adoption

Foster Friday and Adoption Wednesday Monthly Events

“The information in the box was really useful and the book was very well written. It’s such a good idea that helps children understand their heritage.”

Foster carer

“My Family Group provides an exceptional service and The Muslim Council of Britain is proud to support Foster and Adoption Friday.”

Harun Khan - Secretary General,  
Muslim Council of Britain



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# My Family Group Services



# Research and Advocacy

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We take an informed-approach incorporating data insights, forming consultations, reviews and recommendations to help understand, engage and perform effectively. We seek to identify and address barriers to engagement and representation, facilitating better access and outcomes for minoritised communities in the social care sector.

In 2017, with the support of the Better Community Business Network, we launched the much acclaimed Muslim Fostering Project after recognising the historical shortfall of Muslim foster carers - a situation made worse over the last few years by the high number of UASC coming into care from Muslim countries.

## The research aims:

- To identify the number of Muslim children being fostered at any one time
- To build a picture of the number of Muslim children being placed with non-Muslim foster carers and the reasons for this decision

## This research will provide a comprehensive baseline for:

- Supporting the recruitment and retention of Muslim foster carers
- Improving outcomes for looked after Muslim children

”

‘We will work with the Muslim Fostering Project and The Fostering Network to promote evidence-based resources on recruiting new Muslim carers.’

Department for Education and Home Office, Safeguarding Strategy (2017)



**There are approximately 5,000 Muslim-heritage children in the care sector according to the most recent research.**

This includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children, a staggering 75-95% of whom it is estimated come from a Muslim background, and who have faced unimaginable trauma. For the care system to ensure these children don't face the added disadvantages inevitable from a system which doesn't recognise or understand their faith and cultural heritage, we need to advocate for change.

We are speaking to the care sector and the Muslim community to drive forward these recommendations, and we are calling for greater joined-up working, to Change a Life

Read the 'Roundtable Report on Muslim Heritage Children in Care' here.

## DID YOU KNOW?



**Only 13%**

of children in care attain eight GCSEs, this is in comparison to a 47% national average <sup>1</sup>



**6x**

They are six times more likely to be excluded <sup>2</sup>



**41%**

of children in care are not in education, employment or training, compared to 12% of all 19 – 21 year olds <sup>3</sup>



**4x**

they are four times more likely to be in the youth justice system <sup>4</sup>



**1/4**

almost one quarter of all prisoners have at some time been in care <sup>5</sup>

Sources: Various

1 Explore-Education-statistics.service.gov.uk. (n.d.). "Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting Year 2020". [online]. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-forchildren-in-need-includin-g-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england/2020>

2 Ibid

3 Gov.uk (2020). "Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2021". [online]. explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-includin-g-adoptions/2021>

4 Experiences and pathways of children in care in the youth justice system, (2021) HM Inspectorate of Probation. (n.d.). [online]. Available at: <https://www.justicesectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/09/LL-Academy-Insights-e10-Day.pdf>

5 Berman, G. (2016). Berman 2013. [online]. Source- Prison Population Statistics- UK Parliament (2013) [accessed 2022]. Available at: [http://www.antoniossells.eu/home/Berman\\_2013.pdf](http://www.antoniossells.eu/home/Berman_2013.pdf)

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**‘The Muslim fostering project plays a crucial role not only to help grow the population of Muslim foster carers but also to educate those who are not from a Muslim background so they can provide the right support for Muslims in their care. We are always looking to encourage the recruitment and retention of foster carers in order to meet the needs of every child and it is essential we ensure the fostering community is as diverse and skilled as it possibly can be.’**

**Edward Timpson CBE - Chair of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)**



# Barriers Facing Potential Muslim Foster Carers

We take an informed-approach incorporating data insights, forming consultations, reviews and recommendations to help understand, engage and perform effectively.

We seek to identify and address barriers to engagement and representation, facilitating better access and outcomes for minoritised communities in the social care sector.

Some of the barriers identified include:

- Misunderstanding and mistrust of the role of public agencies
- Eurocentric approach and framework of practice
- Tokenism and lack of genuine engagement or participation with communities
- Lack of faith and cultural competence across services
- Poor recruitment practice
- Economic conditions and the need for a spare room when considering fostering



## Report Recommendations

- Actively seek truly transformative anti-racism, cultural competency and faith-sensitive training from the ground up
- Provide better faith-sensitive support for carers of Muslim-heritage children in care
- Work with Muslim organisations and communities to create regular reflective practice groups for senior, policy making members of the sector to instigate, support and incorporate these measures strategically throughout the sector
- Ofsted to include mandatory recording of child's religion/ belief (protective characteristics, Equality Act 2010.)
- Understanding children's identity and heritage should be at the core of all fostering services
- Faith and cultural literacy across all content and resources
- Adequate training, development and support for professionals
- Community engagement and outreach through Foster Friday campaign and Ramadan & Eid Gift Box for Muslim children in care
- Exploring UASC specialist support
- Increasing representation and engagement; building community partnerships; co-designing content and campaigns, informed by lived experience and minoritised communities
- Wider dissemination of the Guide for Foster Carers Caring for Muslim Children

# Education

## Guide, Gift Box and Events

Our tailored guide for foster carers who look after Muslim children is an informative and practical publication that demystifies basic Islamic beliefs.

In addition to supporting foster carers, so they can better understand the needs of Muslim children in their care, it also supports the work of councils. The British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) has endorsed this publication, acknowledging its value and importance.

The Ramadhan gift box was introduced as a way to connect with non-Muslim carers who are looking after Muslim children. It provides practical information about Ramadhan and fasting, and serves as a reminder that the Muslim community appreciates and supports the work of non-Muslim carers.

Our Eid gift boxes are sponsored by Peacock Supplies - [www.peacocksupplies.com](http://www.peacocksupplies.com).



“

The information in the box was really useful and the book was very well written. It's such a good idea that helps children understand their heritage. Our child is tube-fed so wasn't interested in the sweets, but absolutely loved the lanterns. We shared the information in the box with the child's school and they were really impressed too and used it to help the other children in class understand what being a Muslim means and what Ramadan is about.

Foster carer

# Targeted Recruitment

We provide community consultation and expert advice, forming bespoke packages that meet your organisational requirements and needs.

We help facilitate community outreach, nurturing key relationships, building robust partnerships and grass-root engagement for long-lasting impact.

We run awareness events and deliver recruitment campaigns for a more targeted approach in supporting foster carers and professionals.

Our team can assist with co designing representative and effective content to encourage more Muslims to foster and showcase diversity and inclusivity.

We provide faith and culture sensitive support, advice and information to foster care placements for Muslim children in care, including UASC.



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‘There are innovative campaigns targeting under-represented groups and communities, for example, Mercy Mission and the Fostering Network’s Muslim Foster Project...[they] are breaking down myths and introducing fostering to new communities.’

Department for Education, Fostering Better Outcomes (2018)

“

‘Bradford has a fantastic relationship with My Foster Family. It has really improved the quantity and quality of the foster care we can offer children of Muslim heritage in Bradford.’

Jim Hopkinson, Deputy Director Children’s Social Care with Bradford Council

## Referral process

Community events or targeted online campaigns



Direct engagement



Information & guidance



Referral to agency/ direct agency engagement



# Youth Initiatives & Partnership

**We all have a duty of care in supporting vulnerable children, providing a safe and positive environment for young people to thrive.**

At MFG we execute an ethos of understanding, learning and appreciation for other cultures, where religion or faith and heritage is upheld in the pursuit to nurture identity, wellbeing and purpose within our youth.

We take a multi-agency approach to supporting and advocating for Muslim heritage children in care. We offer a range of services that seek to improve and enhance the culture and practices around supporting children and young people from minoritised communities.

We are open to building partnerships and furthering youth services and community activities to engage young people, providing a sense of community, belonging and empowerment. We seek to broaden their horizon, scope and potential, opening new opportunities and building resilience. We seek partnership opportunities in developing and facilitating youth focussed initiatives, workshops, educational resources and activities, mentorship and community projects.

## **Workshop themes:**

- Personal development
- Money-sense
- Mental health awareness, wellness and positive wellbeing
- Health and nutrition
- Violence, gangs and criminality
- Business skills and entrepreneurship
- Empowerment and building resilience

## **Other services include:**

- Trauma informed and faith/ culture sensitive therapy
- Volunteering and shaping community events and activities, social engagement
- Youth sport and education clubs
- Competitions and tournaments
- School-based project and initiatives
- Mentorship and leadership programmes
- Trips and outings
- Business mentoring
- Skills, scholarship and building start-ups

## **Barnados - Case Study**

See Hear & Respond initiative aimed to work alongside 75 unique delivery partners, who have best reach and knowledge of the families and the issues they face.

The focus was to find the most vulnerable children and young people, not receiving support from statutory organisations and those at risk and/or experiencing adverse impact to their health and wellbeing. The initiative focused on supporting and safeguarding these children, preventing additional harm and ensuring their needs don't escalate to statutory interventions using three different strands of support.

My Foster Family and Bradford Foundation Trust came together to bid for the opportunity to get involved in this initiative.



# Foster Friday



Established in 2017 by the Muslim Foster Network, Foster Friday is the UK's biggest day for raising awareness about fostering within the Muslim community.

We work with Muslim communities across the UK to raise awareness about fostering & Islam. Visit our website for more information and download a resource pack for Mosques and Muslim communities.

A purple poster for Foster Friday. At the top right, a teal circle contains the text '21 MAY'. Below this is a stylized illustration of a mosque with teal domes and minarets. The text 'FOSTERFRIDAY' is written in large, bold, white and teal letters. Below the title, it says 'Sign up your Mosque today to take part in the national #FosterFriday campaign.' and 'Help raise the profile of fostering in the Muslim community by delivering a Friday Sermon on 21st May.' A teal button contains the text 'REGISTER YOUR MOSQUE USING THE LINKED FORM' and 'For further information or enquiries please contact: 0127 404 4587 | 07856 197723 | events@myfosterfamily.com'. At the bottom, it lists supporters: 'My Foster Family', 'MCB The Muslim Council of Britain', and 'The British Board of Scholars &amp; Imams'. Social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are also present, along with the hashtags '#FF21 #FCF21' and '#WhyMuslimsFoster'.



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‘The Muslim Foster Network provides an exceptional service and The Muslim Council of Britain is proud to support ‘Foster Friday’

**Harun Khan - Secretary General,  
Muslim Council of Britain**

# Training & Development

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Over the past seven years, we have provided a number of effective interventions, helping partners improve dialogue with, and recruitment from, the Muslim community.

We offer training to social care professionals, foster carers and adopters to advance their understanding, professionalism and confidence with minoritised communities. Training ranges from entry level understanding of Muslim heritage children in care to processes around fostering and adoption (recruitment, assessment and preparing for panel), to faith and culture sensitive training on identity and wellbeing. We offer practical guidance and support, facilitate partnership opportunities and specialist training to improve service outcomes.

**Our professional trainers and instructors can deliver training programmes designed specifically for your organisation. Building upon a faith equity narrative within Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity frameworks, facilitating understanding and outreach with Muslim communities.**



# Cultural Competency in UASC

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We provide a specialist workshop that explores the cultural identity and norms of children from the Middle East and Africa.

This is an essential workshop for social care professionals who are eager to better understand how they can meet the needs of unaccompanied minors from Middle Eastern or African backgrounds. Exploring religious and cultural norms and nuances will provide a critical insight into how we can understand the needs of these children – and a better understanding of needs will deliver better placements.

This is a great opportunity for new professionals, those managing unaccompanied minors, and veterans who would benefit from a fresh perspective.

“

‘I found the event very informative and have come away with many ideas of how we can support our vulnerable Muslim unaccompanied minors. In addition, there is scope to think about how information can be tailored and delivered to our fostering community so there can be an overall increase in the level of awareness and cultural competence for all involved in the care of Looked After Children.’

**Shanaz Khan - Team manager London borough of Lewisham**



# Our Supporters & Partners



## “It takes a community to raise a child”

“

‘The little one I look after was a bit young to understand what was in the box, but we took a photo of them with all the contents and with the lanterns lit and we’ve put it in the child’s life story book.

The child has potentially been matched to be adopted by a Muslim family, so it was important that the little one was able to take part and have a record of taking part in Ramadan.

The child was too young for the chocolate, so we gave them to another foster carer who is Muslim as a thank you when they looked after the baby for us during Ramadan.’

Foster carer



[myfamilygroup.org.uk](http://myfamilygroup.org.uk)