

# Register Office - Developing links with the mosque

## ■ Summary



From early 2009 the Register Office's relationship with the Bath Islamic Society has grown from strength to strength. The Society has established its reputation as an independent Muslim authority in the area and represents Bath as a respected member of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Close joint working between Imam Rashad Azami and registrars at the Guildhall has enabled the registrars to improve their own awareness of Islamic culture and traditions, and also helped to identify and address important legal issues for the Muslim community.

## ■ The problems and how we tackled them

Through discussion with the Imam, the Register Office recognised the need to have an 'on call' system so that all Muslims within Bath and North East Somerset are able to register a death within 24 hours, so that their dead may be buried according to the Muslim faith.

It also became apparent that the Muslim community needed to recognise the importance of registering any Muslim marriages which take place in this country, under English law. As Muslim marriage taking place in Britain is currently not legally recognised in this country, the Registrars felt it was important to protect the rights of all of our citizens by assisting the Imam in licensing the Mosque for civil marriages.

## ■ Outcomes and impact

To enable a death to be registered in 24 hours, we now have all managers working on a rotational basis on the weekends and have an emergency number on our website which we can access at all times.

The Register Office is now working alongside the Imam, Rashad Azami to gain a licence for Civil Marriages. Once in place this will give all citizens the option of having a marriage under English law alongside their Muslim marriage.

Imam Rashad Azami is extremely pleased and very welcoming of our growing relationship, which enables us to improve our service, work together and enhance the Muslim communities feeling of integration into society.

## ■ Who was involved?

The Imam invited the Register Office team to the Mosque in January 2010 to provide an insight into the discipline that surrounds Muslim worship and way of life. The registrars also met with the Muslim Women's group to build confidence to approach Local Authority Officers and to advise them of the importance of the registration of their marriage under English law.

## ■ Next steps

Once licensing of civil marriages is achieved, the Register Office will work alongside the Imam to inform all Muslim people throughout the South West region, that they may register their marriage under English law within the Mosque at Bath.

The Muslim Women's group will be invited to the Guildhall to meet Register Office staff to build their trust and ensure that any queries regarding the registering of births and deaths are met.

Register Office staff will continue to develop their understanding of the Muslim faith, its socio - cultural sensitivities, and how we can improve our Citizenship Ceremonies and Nationality Checking Service.

By working together we can protect our Muslim citizen's rights and respect their faith and way of life.