

Press release: New process set out to establish a working definition of Islamophobia

- Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP announces a process for establishing a working definition of Islamophobia.
- Two experts will lead this work in close collaboration with the cross-government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group (AMHWG).
- Government to consider advisers' recommendations on an effective definition.

Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP has today (16 May 2019) set out the process for establishing a working definition of Islamophobia.

Speaking during a backbench debate on the issue, Mr Brokenshire said he welcomed the work undertaken by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims to develop a definition but confirmed that the Government will not be adopting their proposed wording.

Speaking at the debate, the Communities Secretary agreed that there needs to be a formal definition of Islamophobia. He made clear that the APPG definition raises practical and legal challenges.

The APPG proposal defines Islamophobia as "a type of racism", which is not in line with the definition enshrined in the Equality Act 2010. The Communities Secretary said that conflating race and religion in conflict with legal definitions could cause confusion, undermine free speech and may not adequately address sectarian hatred.

He announced the government will instead appoint 2 expert advisers to lead a new study in close collaboration with the cross-government [Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group](#).

This new work will build on the definitions of Islamophobia currently being considered, including the APPG definition. It will also draw on a wide range of opinions, to ensure that it commands broad support amongst Muslims.

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I am deeply concerned at hatred which is directed against British Muslims and others because of their faith or heritage. This is utterly unacceptable and does not reflect the values of our country.

To get a firmer grip on the nature of this bigotry and division we agree there needs to be a formal definition of Islamophobia to help

strengthen our efforts.

I know that there are strong feelings on this issue. That's why I'm announcing the appointment of 2 experts to work closely with the cross-government Working Group, to thoroughly examine the options available to us that ensures wide-ranging acceptance and will have the positive effect intended.

Input from the Working Group is an essential part of informing our approach to combatting religiously motivated hatred, supporting victims and holding perpetrators to account. Their work on this important task will be invaluable.

Formed in 2012, the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group comprises independent experts, academics and Muslim community representatives. It provides crucial advice and challenge to the government, to ensure that policies meet the needs of communities.

The process for appointing the 2 advisers will begin shortly.

This government has done more than any other to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. This includes:

- Funding of [Tell MAMA](#), a dedicated third-party reporting organisation that offers victim support. Between 2016 and 2020 we will have provided the organisation with £2.5 million to raise awareness on anti-Muslim hatred and to increase reporting of hate crimes.
- Supporting and refreshing the cross-government working group on anti-Muslim hatred, which includes a broad range of representation of eminent community representatives, academics, and hate crime practitioners to advise and challenge the government on tackling Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime.
- Ensuring for the first time, that police forces, are required to disaggregate religious hate crime data to allow us to better identify Islamophobia.
- Doubling the [Places of Worship Fund](#) to £1.6 million – to physically protect mosques and other places of worship and reassure our communities – and making it easier for people to apply for this funding from July 2019.
- A new £5 million fund to provide security training and a consultation on what more can be done to protect faith communities.