
The Changing Landscape for UK Mosques

New employment law, a changing political climate, a generational shift and the rise of AI: why a new culture of professionalism in people management is now essential.

01 The Employment Rights Act 2025

02 The changing political climate

03 A generational shift in the mosque

04 Technology, AI and the informed employee

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A note before we begin

Mosques are an established part of Britain’s charitable and civic life. They are places of worship, but many also run supplementary schools, youth activities, welfare services and community events and, in doing so, act as employers. Most are run by volunteers who give their time out of devotion and a sense of duty to their community.

This paper is written for those trustees and management committees. It is not a criticism of how mosques have been run. The model of stewardship built by earlier generations, rooted in trust, respect and good faith, built and sustained thousands of institutions with very little outside help. It deserves recognition.

But the environment in which mosques operate is changing quickly, and on several fronts at once. Employment law is undergoing its largest reform in a generation. Mosques face closer political, public and regulatory attention than most charities. A new generation of staff, with more legal rights than before and ready access to tools that explain them, arrives with different expectations of how they should be managed. And artificial intelligence has put detailed, if not always accurate, legal knowledge in every employee’s pocket.

Each of these changes would be manageable on its own. Together, they mean that informal approaches to employing people now carry real legal, financial and reputational risk. Our aim is to set out, using published data, what is changing, why it matters for mosques in particular, and what a practical response looks like.

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Four forces, one conclusion

UK mosques face change on four fronts at once. Each raises the standard of people management that trustees will be held to; together, they make a move from informal, goodwill-based practice to documented, professional systems no longer optional.

6 months Service needed to claim unfair dismissal from 1 January 2027, down from two years	70,000 Single employment tribunal claims awaiting a decision in June 2026, the highest on record	1 in 5 days How often a UK mosque was attacked in the past year (British Muslim Trust): one sign of a changing political climate	34 years Gap between the median age of British Muslims (27) and the average charity trustee (61)
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1. The law is changing

The Employment Rights Act 2025 is the most significant reform of workplace rights in a generation. Statutory sick pay and paternity and unpaid parental leave are now day-one rights. From 1 October 2026, employees will have six months, not three, to bring most tribunal claims. From 30 October 2026, employers must take *all* reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, and must also protect staff from harassment by third parties, which for a mosque means worshippers and visitors. From 1 January 2027, the qualifying period for unfair dismissal falls from two years to six months and the cap on the compensatory award is removed. A teacher who joins a mosque in July 2026 could bring an unfair dismissal claim from January 2027, with no ceiling on compensation.

2. The political climate is changing

The changing political climate reaches mosques in two ways. The first is hostility: police-recorded anti-Muslim hate crime rose 25% between 2019/20 and 2023/24, and a further 19% in 2024/25 on a comparable basis. The second is scrutiny: the Charity Commission has opened a steady run of statutory inquiries into mosques and Muslim charities, which have typically lasted two and a half to three years.

3. The workforce is changing

British Muslims are, on average, 13 years younger than the population as a whole, and increasingly degree-educated. At the same time, staff now have more rights, sooner, and AI makes those rights easy to discover. The result is a better-informed workforce that expects a fair, documented process, and the law, tribunals and regulator share that expectation.

4. AI has changed the employee

AI use is spreading across the workforce: almost a quarter of UK workers use generative AI every week. AI-drafted grievances are now commonplace, and a grievance written with AI is still a grievance. AI also makes gaps in an employer’s process easier to find and challenge.

The conclusion

The risk for mosques is not any single claim or inquiry. It is operating informally in an environment that now expects, records and rewards formal process. Trustees who put robust, documented people-management systems in place now, before the October 2026 and January 2027 deadlines, and treat them with the same seriousness as financial controls and safeguarding, will protect their staff, their congregation, their charity and themselves.

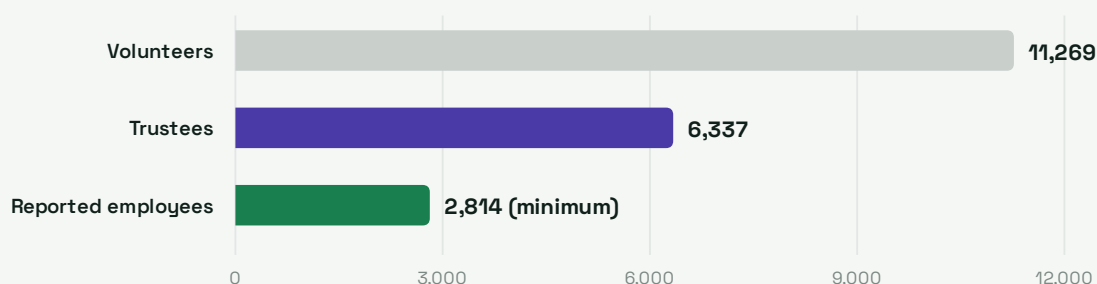
Mosques in Britain today

Mosques are a substantial part of Britain's charitable and civic infrastructure, and most carry the full legal responsibilities of a registered charity and an employer.

The most comprehensive recent study, *Mosques in Britain: A Landmark Study of Faith Infrastructure*, published by the Ayaan Institute in 2025, estimates that there are 1,884 mosques in the UK. Of these, 1,179 (62.5%) are registered charities. Together they hold an estimated £1.5 billion in assets and generate projected annual income of around £450 million, with less than 2% coming from government.¹

The same study provides a rare picture of who actually runs and staffs these institutions. Across charity mosques it identified 6,337 trustees and 11,269 volunteers, whose time it values at almost £55 million a year. It also recorded 2,814 paid employees.¹

Figure 1 People involved in UK charity mosques



Source: Ayaan Institute, *Mosques in Britain* (2025), covering 1,179 charity mosques, 2020–2023. The employee figure is likely to understate paid staff; see text. Chart: Counsl.

That employee figure should be read as a floor, not a full count. It works out at fewer than three employees per charity mosque, yet many larger mosques employ dozens of people across prayer, education, nursery, welfare and facilities roles. The shortfall is itself revealing. Figures of this kind generally capture only people formally recorded as employees. Imams, madrasah teachers and sessional staff are frequently paid as self-employed or casual workers, and the roughly 700 mosques that are not registered charities fall outside the count altogether.

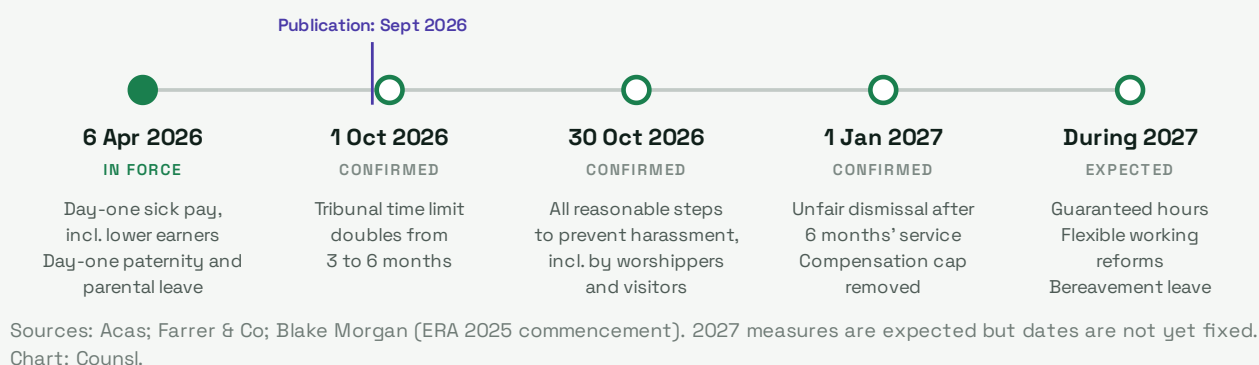
This matters because employment status is decided by the reality of a working relationship, not the label attached to it. A teacher who works set hours, under the mosque's direction, over a long period may well be a worker or an employee in law, whatever the arrangement says. Many mosques may therefore owe employment rights to more people than they realise, and the reforms described in this paper will apply to all of them.

Responsibility for these relationships usually rests with volunteer boards whose members are rarely HR or legal professionals, and who may meet infrequently. None of this is unusual in the charity sector. But the legal duties a mosque owes to its staff are exactly the same as those owed by a commercial business, and, as the rest of this paper shows, they are becoming more demanding.

The largest change to workplace rights in a generation

The Employment Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025. Its reforms are being phased in across 2026 and 2027, and several of the most significant for mosques take effect within weeks of this paper's publication.^{2,3}

Figure 2 When the key reforms take effect



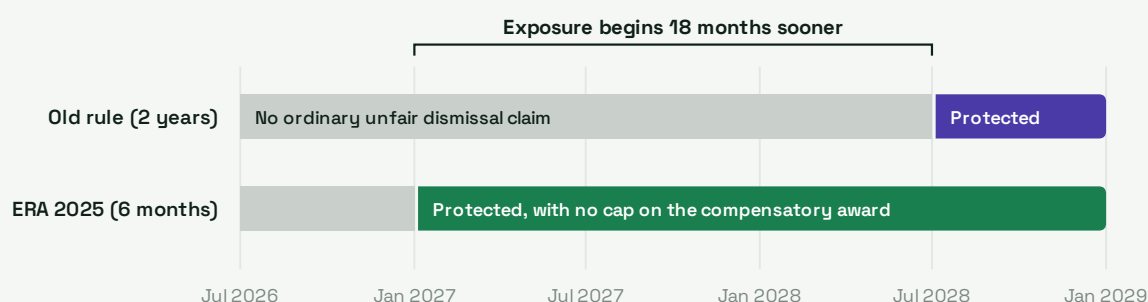
Unfair dismissal after six months, with no cap

For decades, most employees have needed two years' continuous service before they can bring an ordinary unfair dismissal claim. That rule has quietly protected many small employers, including mosques, from the consequences of dismissals carried out without a fair process. From 1 January 2027, the qualifying period falls to six months.^{2,4}

At the same time, the cap on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal, currently the lower of a year's pay or £123,543, is being removed.⁵ Compensation will be based on the employee's actual losses, however large.

The practical effect is best seen through an example. Consider a teacher who joins a mosque's madrasah on 1 July 2026. Under the old rules, she would not have been able to claim ordinary unfair dismissal until July 2028. Under the new rules, she gains that protection on 1 January 2027. The window in which a mosque can end her employment without following a fair and documented process has shrunk from two years to six months.

Figure 3 When a teacher hired in July 2026 becomes protected



Worked example: a madrasah teacher who starts on 1 July 2026. Source: Counsl analysis of ERA 2025 commencement dates. Excludes automatically unfair reasons, such as whistleblowing, which already need no qualifying service.

For many mosques, the first six months of employment will now function as a genuine probationary period. Decisions about whether a new imam, teacher or administrator is right for the role will need to be made, documented and communicated within that period, using a fair process, rather than left to drift.

More time to bring a claim

From 1 October 2026, the time limit for bringing most employment tribunal claims doubles from three months to six.⁴ This matters more than it might first appear. A former employee now has twice as long to reflect, to seek advice, including from AI tools, and to decide whether to act. Records of what happened, and why, will need to be kept and retrievable for longer.

Protecting staff from worshippers and visitors

Since October 2024 employers have had a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their staff. From 30 October 2026 that duty is strengthened to *all* reasonable steps. Alongside it, a new duty requires employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of staff by third parties, covering most protected characteristics, including sex, race, religion or belief and disability.^{4,5}

For most employers, “third parties” means customers or clients. For a mosque, it means worshippers, parents, visitors and members of the community. Few workplaces have such open doors, or such a large and varied public passing through them each week. A female teacher subjected to unwelcome comments by a parent, a young administrator abused by a visitor, or a member of staff harassed because of their race by a congregant: each is now a situation in which the mosque, as employer, may be held responsible if it cannot show it took all reasonable steps to prevent it. That will usually mean a written policy, clear standards of conduct for everyone who uses the building, training for those who supervise staff, and a record of how concerns were handled.

New day-one rights and flexibility

Since 6 April 2026, statutory sick pay has been payable from the first day of absence, and the lower earnings limit has been removed, so lower-paid and part-time staff, such as sessional madrasah teachers, are now entitled. Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave are day-one rights.³ During 2027, further measures are expected: guaranteed-hours rights for zero-hours and low-hours workers, a stricter test for refusing flexible working requests, and a new statutory right to bereavement leave.³ Many mosques rely on sessional, casual or informal working arrangements; these will need to be reviewed.

A system under pressure

These reforms arrive at a time when the employment tribunal system is already stretched. New single claims rose from 34,000 in 2023/24 to 50,000 in 2025/26, an increase of 47% in two years. The number of single claims waiting to be decided more than doubled, from 33,000 in March 2024 to 70,000 in June 2026, the highest level on record.⁶⁻⁹ Acas, which must be contacted before most claims can proceed, handled more than 150,000 early conciliation notifications in 2025/26 and reported a 27% rise in demand for its dispute resolution service.¹⁰

Figure 4 Employment tribunal claims are rising faster than they can be resolved



Source: Ministry of Justice, Tribunal Statistics Quarterly (2024–2026). Figures rounded to the nearest thousand as published.
Chart: Counsl.

Employment specialists expect the January 2027 changes to add further to this volume.¹¹ For a mosque, a backlog is not a comfort. It means that a claim, once made, may hang over the organisation, its trustees and its staff for many months before it is resolved.

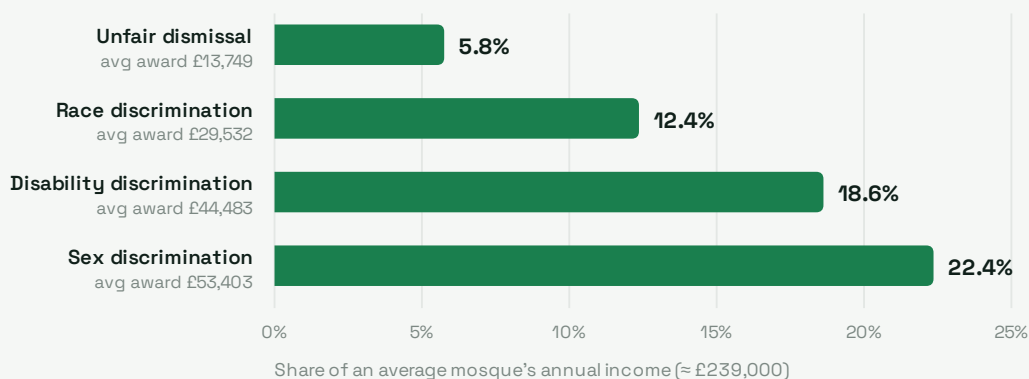
What a single claim can cost a mosque

The financial consequences of a tribunal claim are easy to underestimate. In 2023/24, the average award for unfair dismissal was £13,749, for race discrimination £29,532, for disability discrimination £44,483 and for sex discrimination £53,403.¹²

Yet the award is often not the largest cost. In the employment tribunal, each side normally pays its own legal costs whatever the outcome, so a mosque that successfully defends a claim will usually not recover what it has spent. Legal fees for a claim that goes to a full hearing can run into tens of thousands of pounds. On top of this is the time of trustees and staff: gathering documents, preparing witness statements, attending hearings and managing the dispute over the many months a claim now takes to resolve. For a volunteer-led charity, that time is taken directly from the mosque's work. Many claims settle before a hearing, but a settlement is itself a cost, and it is often agreed simply to bring legal expenses to an end.

To put these figures in context, we compared them with the average income of a UK mosque, calculated from the Ayaan Institute's estimate of £450 million in projected annual income across 1,884 mosques, or roughly £239,000 each.¹

Figure 5 An average tribunal award as a share of an average mosque's annual income



Sources: MoJ employment tribunal award statistics 2023/24 (via MFMac); Ayaan Institute (2025). Counsl analysis. Averages are indicative; many mosques have far lower income than the mean.

A single average discrimination award would consume between an eighth and almost a quarter of an average mosque's annual income, before a penny is spent on the mosque's own legal costs. Because the average is pulled upwards by a small number of large mosques, the impact on a typical smaller mosque would be greater still.

Case study: Wimbledon Mosque

In a 2024 judgment, an employment tribunal ordered Wimbledon Mosque to pay £25,365 to a former employee, Roha Dahir, who had been dismissed in 2021 at the age of 21, after almost four years in what was her first job. The tribunal accepted that there was a potentially fair reason for dismissal, but found that her sex and race had been contributing factors. It described the mosque, which had an annual income of around £140,000, as having taken a “fairly casual approach” to its employment obligations.¹³ The mosque appealed the discrimination findings.

18% of the mosque's annual income, from one claim by one employee, before its own legal costs.

Wimbledon Mosque is not an isolated example. Published tribunal decisions involving mosques include unfair dismissal claims brought by imams against Central Mosque Wembley, which the tribunal dismissed, and Doncaster Jahia Mosque, where the tribunal found the imam had been unfairly dismissed without proper procedure because the mosque wrongly believed he was not an employee. Even a claim that a mosque successfully defends costs time, money and management attention.^{14,15} Employment tribunal judgments are published online and searchable by name, so a finding against a mosque becomes a permanent part of its public record.

As the compensation cap is removed and the qualifying period falls, the number of staff who can bring these claims, and the amounts at stake, will both rise.

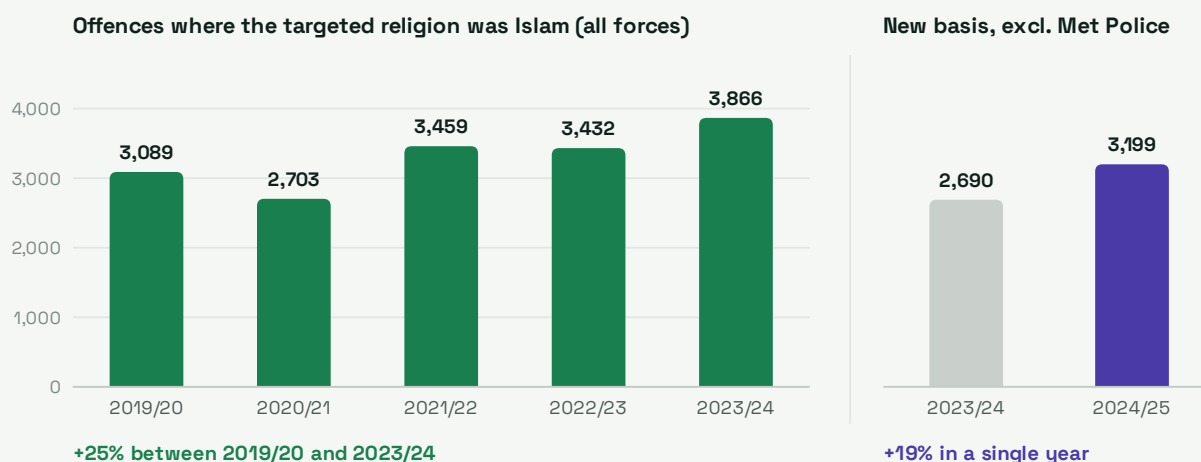
A changing political climate, from hostility to scrutiny

The changing political climate reaches mosques in more than one way. At one level it shows itself as hostility: rising hate crime, including attacks on mosques themselves. At another, it shows itself as scrutiny: closer attention from regulators, the media and political commentators to how mosques are run. Both matter to trustees, and both raise the cost of any failure in governance, including in how staff are treated.

The first form: rising hostility

Police-recorded hate crime in which the targeted religion was Islam rose from 3,089 offences in 2019/20 to 3,866 in 2023/24, an increase of 25%. By number of offences, Muslims have been the most frequently targeted group in religious hate crime throughout this period, accounting for between 38% and 50% of offences where the targeted religion was recorded.^{16–19} The Home Office's 2024/25 figures are not directly comparable because they exclude the Metropolitan Police, but on that new basis anti-Muslim offences rose a further 19% in a single year, from 2,690 to 3,199, with a spike in August 2024.²⁰

Figure 6 Police-recorded anti-Muslim hate crime, England and Wales



Source: Home Office, Hate crime, England and Wales (annual bulletins, 2019/20 to 2024/25). 2024/25 figures exclude the Metropolitan Police and are shown separately with the comparable prior year. Chart: Counsl.

Mosques themselves are frequently the target. The British Muslim Trust, the government's partner for monitoring anti-Muslim hatred, recorded more than 70 attacks on mosques in the year to July 2026, the equivalent of one every five days, ranging from vandalism and intimidation to violence.²¹ In July 2024, a mosque in Southport was attacked by a crowd following false claims circulated online after the murders of three children in the town.²² In February 2026, a man was arrested after entering Manchester Central Mosque armed with an axe during Ramadan prayers attended by around 2,000 people, and mosques in Basildon were daubed with crosses and slogans.²³

The government has recognised the scale of the risk, pledging £40 million for mosque security in 2026/27, although the British Muslim Trust reports that some mosques have waited up to 18 months to access protective security funding.²¹

Hostility is not only a security issue; it is an employment issue too. Mosque staff are often the first to deal with abusive visitors, calls and messages. From 30 October 2026, employers must take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of their staff by third parties, including harassment related to religion or race. Trustees will need to show that they have considered this risk and acted on it.

The second form: closer scrutiny

The same climate shows itself in a second, less visible way. Immigration, integration and Islam are recurring themes in political debate. Whatever view one takes of that debate, its practical consequence for mosques is greater visibility: anything that goes wrong inside them is more likely to attract attention, to be reported and to be used to make wider points. For trustees, the most consequential form of that attention comes from the regulator.

The Charity Commission is the regulator for mosques registered as charities in England and Wales, and most of the UK's 1,179 charity mosques fall within its remit. Its powers are extensive: it can open statutory inquiries, issue official warnings, freeze bank accounts, disqualify trustees and appoint an interim manager to run a charity in place of its board.

Concerns that Muslim charities attract disproportionate regulatory attention are long-standing. Analysis of Commission inquiries between 2012 and 2014 found that Muslim charities accounted for around a quarter of statutory inquiries despite representing roughly 1% of the sector.²⁴ Those figures are now dated, and no comparable analysis has since been published. What is clear from the Commission's own published reports is a steady run of recent regulatory action involving mosques:

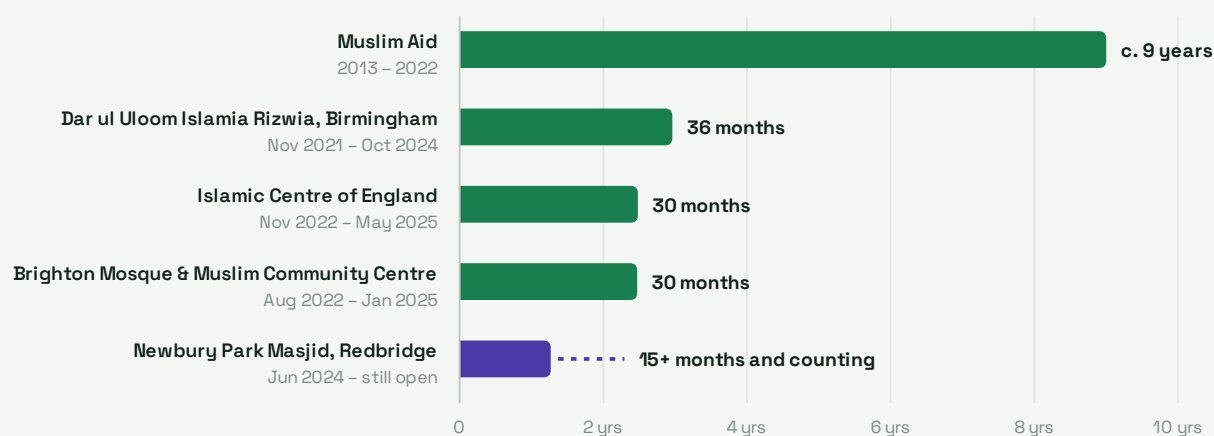
- **East London Mosque Trust** received an Official Warning in 2025 after trustees invested £1 million in a supplier that entered administration, with the loss of the full sum. The Commission found the trustees lacked the oversight it would expect of such a large investment.²⁵
- **Brighton Mosque and Muslim Community Centre** was found in January 2025 to have been “poorly managed” after trustees failed to resolve a serious internal dispute. An interim manager was appointed and a former trustee was disqualified for four and a half years.²⁶
- **Dar ul Uloom Islamia Rizwia** in Birmingham was the subject of an inquiry, concluded in October 2024, that found no safeguarding policies were in place at the time of a 2019 incident at its education centre, alongside missing accounts and poor governance.²⁷
- **Newbury Park Masjid** in Redbridge has been under statutory inquiry since June 2024 over trustees remaining in office beyond their constitutional terms. An interim manager was appointed in August 2025, and the inquiry remained open in October 2025.²⁸
- **A Liverpool mosque** became the subject of a Commission investigation in August 2025 concerning the content of a sermon and social media posts.²⁹

Many of these cases began with governance failings, such as out-of-date trustee elections, unresolved disputes, missing policies or poor record-keeping, rather than any single dramatic event. That is precisely the category into which weak people management falls.

Once opened, inquiries last for years

The published record shows something that is rarely discussed: how long regulatory scrutiny lasts once it begins. We measured the time from the opening of each statutory inquiry to the publication of its conclusion for recent cases involving mosques and Muslim charities.

Figure 7 How long Charity Commission statutory inquiries have lasted



Source: Counsl analysis of Charity Commission announcements and inquiry reports, and press coverage (see references 26–28, 30 and 31). Muslim Aid is a humanitarian charity rather than a mosque, and is included as the longest-running example. Newbury Park Masjid measured to October 2025, when the inquiry was reported as ongoing.

Each of the recently concluded inquiries into mosques took between two and a half and three years. The inquiry into Muslim Aid ran for around nine years, following earlier regulatory engagement from 2010, and closed in 2022 without findings of misconduct or mismanagement.³¹ Throughout that time, trustees face the cost of responding, the uncertainty of an open investigation, and a public record that the charity is under inquiry. In the most serious cases, an interim manager takes over the running of the charity, and its own trustees lose control of the institution they were appointed to protect.

Why this matters for people management

A mosque's people are its biggest governance risk and its most likely source of complaint. A dismissed employee, an unresolved grievance, a safeguarding concern raised by staff, or a public tribunal judgment can each draw the attention of the regulator, the press or political commentators. Trustees who can show a clear, fair and documented process are in a far stronger position than those who cannot. In an environment of heightened scrutiny, good HR practice is not only an employment law issue; it is part of protecting the charity itself.

A generational shift inside the mosque

Many British mosques were founded and are still led by community elders who ran them on the basis of trust, respect and good faith. The people they employ increasingly belong to a different generation, with different expectations.

How mosques have traditionally been run

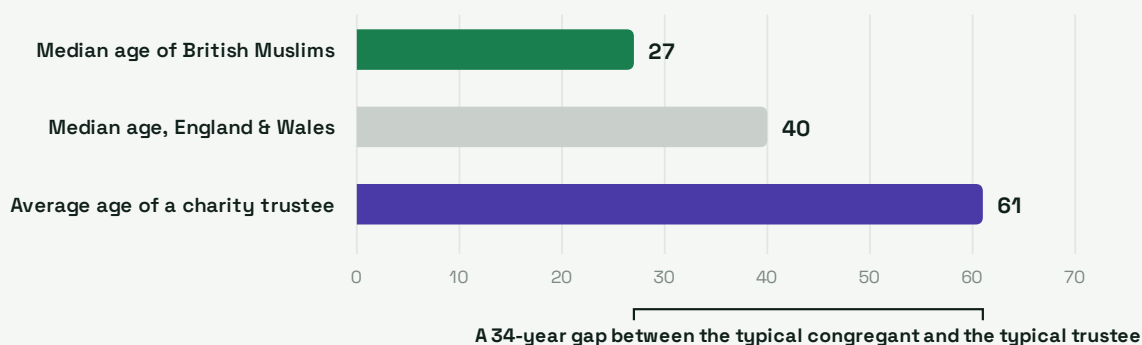
The first generation of mosque founders in Britain built institutions from scratch, often in converted houses and with little money. They were run by people who knew each other, who were bound by shared ties of family, village and faith, and for whom a handshake meant more than a contract. Disagreements were resolved through elders, reputation and personal relationships. Formal policies, written contracts and documented procedures were rarely seen as necessary.

This is not unique to mosques. The Charity Commission's *Taken on Trust* research found that the average charity trustee in England and Wales is 61 years old, that more than half are retired, and that over 70% were recruited informally, through a direct approach from the chair or another board member. More than 8,000 charity boards have an average age above 75.³²

A younger, better-informed workforce

The communities mosques serve look very different. The 2021 Census recorded 3.9 million Muslims in England and Wales, 6.5% of the population, up from 2.7 million in 2011.³³ The median age of British Muslims is 27, compared with 40 for the population as a whole.³⁴ Nearly half are under 25.³⁵

Figure 8 The generational gap at the heart of mosque governance



Sources: ONS Census 2021 (via MCB, *British Muslims: Striving for Fairness*); Charity Commission, *Taken on Trust* (2017). Trustee age is for all charities in England and Wales; no mosque-specific figure has been published. Chart: Counsl.

This younger generation is also more highly educated than any before it. The proportion of Muslims aged 16 and over holding a degree-level qualification rose from 20.6% in 2001 to 32.3% in 2021, and young Muslims now exceed the national average for degree-level attainment.^{34,35} The madrasah teachers, youth workers, administrators and imams whom mosques employ are increasingly drawn from this generation.

What has changed is the combination of factors around mosque staff. The Employment Rights Act 2025 gives staff more rights, and gives them sooner. AI tools, which younger adults are the quickest to adopt, explain those rights in seconds and show people how to assert them (see Source 4). It is this combination of more rights and easier access to them that is producing a more sophisticated and more demanding workforce.

Different expectations, and a growing source of conflict

Today's mosque employees are more likely to have worked elsewhere with written contracts, HR departments and grievance procedures, and can find out within minutes, often with the help of AI, exactly what the law entitles them to. They expect to be told in writing what their job is, how they are paid, what happens if they are ill, and how concerns will be handled. If something goes wrong, they expect a fair, documented process, not a conversation in the car park or a decision announced by a committee they have never met.

Trustees of an older generation may see things very differently. To them, a request for a written contract can feel like a sign of mistrust; a formal grievance can feel like disloyalty to the community; and a complaint about process can seem to miss the point when everyone involved is acting in good faith. Both sides can be acting honestly, and still misunderstand one another entirely.

It is in this gap between expectations that many employment disputes in mosques begin. An informal dismissal that an older trustee regards as a private matter settled between Muslims may, to a well-informed employee, be an unfair dismissal with a remedy in law. The Doncaster case, in which an imam was dismissed without procedure because the mosque believed he was not an employee, illustrates exactly this kind of mismatch.¹⁴

The direction of travel is not in doubt

This is not a disagreement that the older model can win. Employment tribunals judge employers by the standards set out in legislation and the Acas Code of Practice, not by community custom. The Charity Commission expects trustees to manage risks, keep records and follow their own policies. The Employment Rights Act 2025 extends protection to more people, sooner. Every institution that sits in judgment over a mosque's employment practices shares the expectations of this better-informed workforce.

The task for trustees, then, is not to choose between faith-based values and professional process, but to see that they point in the same direction. Justice, fairness, keeping one's word and honouring the rights of those who work for you are principles deeply rooted in Islamic tradition. A written contract, a fair hearing and a documented decision are simply the modern means of honouring them, in a form that the law recognises.

The question for mosques is no longer whether to formalise how they employ people, but whether they do so on their own terms, now, or on someone else's terms after a dispute.

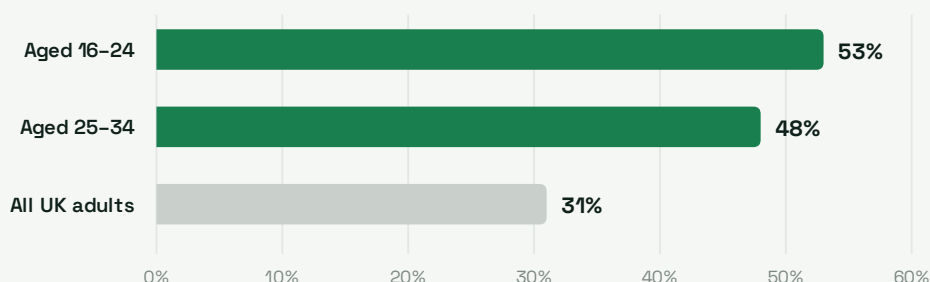
Technology, AI and the better-informed employee

Artificial intelligence has put detailed legal information, and legal-sounding argument, within reach of every employee. It is changing how complaints are raised, how employer decisions are scrutinised and what employees expect to receive.

AI adoption is accelerating across the workforce

AI is becoming an everyday tool at work. A Tony Blair Institute and Ipsos survey in mid-2025 found that almost a quarter (23%) of UK workers use generative AI tools at least once a week.³⁶ According to Ofcom, 31% of UK adults had used AI tools such as ChatGPT or Gemini by 2025, up from 23% in 2023. Among 16- to 24-year-olds the figure was 53%, and among 25- to 34-year-olds 48%.³⁷ Usage is growing rapidly: ChatGPT received 1.8 billion visits from the UK in the first eight months of 2025, compared with 368 million in the same period of 2024.³⁸

Figure 9 Share of UK adults who have used AI tools such as ChatGPT



Source: Ofcom, *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes* (2025). Chart: Counsl.

AI-drafted grievances are now routine

Employers are already feeling the effect. In a survey of HR directors published in February 2026, 95% said they had encountered cases in which employees used AI to prepare grievances or navigate disputes, and 83% had worked with businesses facing AI-related employee issues in the previous year. Some described grievances running to more than ten pages.³⁹ Employment lawyers have reported AI-drafted grievances citing case law that does not exist; in one example, only two of nine cases cited were genuine.⁴⁰

The same pattern is visible in the tribunals. Advisers have reported a significant increase in claims brought by people representing themselves with the help of AI.⁴¹ In September 2026, the Employment Appeal Tribunal warned that litigants in person share the same duty as lawyers to check AI-generated material, after being presented with a 300-page, 132,000-word skeleton argument produced by ChatGPT.⁴¹

95%

of HR directors surveyed had seen employees use AI for grievances or disputes

78%

said AI-generated grievances contained inaccurate information or misrepresentations

Source: The HR Dept survey of HR directors, reported by *People Management*, February 2026.³⁹

An AI-drafted grievance is still a grievance

It can be tempting to dismiss a long, legalistic complaint as “just ChatGPT”. That would be a serious mistake. There is no rule of law that gives less weight to a communication because it was drafted with the help of AI. If an employee sends it, it is their grievance, and the employer must deal with its substance. The Acas Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures applies in the normal way, and a tribunal can increase an award by up to 25% if an employer unreasonably fails to follow it.⁴⁰ Where the content is inaccurate, the answer is a proper investigation that establishes the facts, not a refusal to engage.

AI inflates expectations

AI tools can give employees a confident, and sometimes one-sided, view of the strength of their case and the value of a claim. Generic answers rarely reflect the realities of tribunal practice: in 2023/24, the median unfair dismissal award was £6,746, about half the average of £13,749.⁴² The removal of the compensation cap is likely to fuel still higher expectations. The result is that employees may approach disputes with firmer positions and less appetite for informal resolution, making early, careful handling even more important.

AI scrutinises the employer’s process

Perhaps the most important change is less visible. An employee can now ask an AI tool to review every letter, meeting and decision in their case against the Acas Code, the employer’s own policies and the relevant law. A missed step, an inconsistent explanation, an undocumented decision or a policy that was never followed will be found and highlighted. Informal practices that might once have gone unnoticed are now far more likely to be spotlighted, and to become the basis of a claim.

What this means for mosques

Mosques are increasingly dealing with more sophisticated employees, supported by tools that know the rules and look for gaps. The organisations best placed to respond are those whose processes are already compliant, consistent and documented, so that any scrutiny, human or artificial, finds a fair process properly followed.

AI can also be a powerful tool for employers, but only if it is used properly. Entering staff details, grievances or disciplinary information into general-purpose AI chatbots is likely to breach UK data protection law, particularly where health or other special category data is involved. Used within a secure, purpose-built environment with appropriate safeguards, AI can help volunteer trustees follow a compliant process more quickly and consistently.

When the four forces meet

Each of these changes raises the bar on its own. Their real significance lies in how they reinforce each other.

SOURCE	WHAT IS CHANGING	WHAT IT MEANS FOR TRUSTEES
New employment law	More staff protected, sooner; no compensation cap; longer to claim; duty to prevent harassment by worshippers and visitors	Informal hiring, probation and dismissal practices now carry real financial risk within six months of any appointment
Changing political climate	Rising hostility and hate crime; greater visibility; frequent, lengthy Charity Commission inquiries	Any HR dispute can become a governance, reputational or regulatory issue, and can last for years
Generational change	A younger, better-informed workforce with more legal rights and ready access to AI, expecting documented process	Staff will challenge decisions that older governance norms treated as settled
Technology and AI	Employees use AI to understand rights, draft grievances and audit employer process	Gaps in process will be found; weak procedures will be tested more often and more thoroughly

Consider how they combine in a single, ordinary scenario. A young teacher, hired in the summer of 2026, is let go after eight months following a disagreement with a trustee, without a meeting or a letter explaining why. Under the new law she can claim unfair dismissal, with no cap on compensation, and she has six months to do so. She uses an AI tool to identify every departure from the Acas Code and drafts a detailed claim in an evening. The tribunal judgment, if it goes against the mosque, is published online. In the current climate, it may be picked up by local media or social media, and it may prompt questions from the Charity Commission about how the trustees manage risk.

None of these steps requires anyone to act in bad faith. Each is simply the system working as it is now designed to work. That is why the answer is not to hope that disputes will not arise, but to make sure that when they do, the mosque can show a fair and properly documented process from start to finish.

A new culture of professionalism: what trustees can do now

Professionalism does not mean turning a mosque into a corporation. It means having simple, consistent systems that protect everyone: staff, congregation, trustees and the charity. The following steps are practical, proportionate and achievable for volunteer boards.

1 Know who you employ, and on what terms

List everyone who works for the mosque, paid or unpaid, and establish their status: employee, worker, self-employed or volunteer. Make sure every employee and worker has a written statement of terms. Review sessional, casual and zero-hours arrangements ahead of the 2027 guaranteed-hours reforms.

3 Adopt core policies, and follow them

At a minimum: disciplinary, grievance, anti-harassment (explicitly covering worshippers, parents and visitors), safeguarding, sickness absence, flexible working and whistleblowing. A policy that exists but is not followed can be worse than none.

5 Document every significant decision

Meetings, warnings, outcomes and reasons should be recorded in writing and stored securely, and staff information should never be entered into general-purpose AI tools. With a six-month time limit for claims, and holiday records now required to be kept for six years, good record-keeping is essential.²

7 Make people management a board responsibility

Appoint a named trustee with responsibility for HR, add employment risk to the charity's risk register, and report on it at board meetings. Consider how younger members of the community might strengthen the board.

2 Treat the first six months as a real probation period

From January 2027, set clear expectations at the start of every appointment, hold documented reviews at regular intervals, and make and record decisions about suitability before six months' service is reached.

4 Prepare for 30 October 2026

Carry out a harassment risk assessment, publish a code of conduct for everyone using the building, brief staff on how to report concerns, train those who supervise staff, and record the steps taken. These records are the evidence of "all reasonable steps".

6 Handle every grievance properly, however it is written

Acknowledge it, investigate the substance, hold a meeting, give a reasoned written outcome and offer an appeal, in line with the Acas Code, whether or not AI was used to draft it.

8 Get advice early, not late

Most disputes are far cheaper and easier to resolve at the first sign of trouble. Establish in advance where trustees will go for reliable guidance when an issue arises.

Priorities by date

BY	ACTION
Now	Confirm that statutory sick pay is paid from day one to all eligible staff, including lower-paid and part-time staff; update family leave arrangements; review all contracts and written statements.
1 October 2026	Assume any former employee has six months to bring a claim; make sure records of recent departures are complete and retained.
30 October 2026	Have an anti-harassment policy covering third parties, a code of conduct for worshippers and visitors, and a record of the preventative steps taken.
1 January 2027	Have a documented probation process in place for everyone hired since July 2026, and fair, consistent disciplinary and dismissal procedures ready to use.
During 2027	Review zero-hours and sessional arrangements, flexible working procedures and bereavement leave as the remaining reforms are confirmed.

Closing thoughts

The generation that built Britain's mosques did so through trust, sacrifice and an extraordinary commitment to their communities. The challenge for today's trustees is to protect that legacy in a very different environment: one in which the law expects more of every employer, mosques are watched more closely than most charities, a new generation of staff expects to be treated professionally, and technology makes every gap in process easier to find.

The mosques that thrive over the coming decade will be those that see professional people management not as a bureaucratic burden or a sign of mistrust, but as an expression of the same values of fairness and good stewardship on which they were founded.

ABOUT COUNSL

Counsl helps charity trustees handle HR and employment matters with confidence. We combine employment law expertise with a structured system that guides trustees through each step of the process, from contracts and probation to grievances, discipline and dismissal, so that decisions are fair, consistent and properly documented. Counsl was founded by Bilal Ahmad, an employment solicitor with more than nine years' post-qualification experience, and Thom Barr, who has spent over a decade building legal technology.

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How we produced the figures in this paper

All statistics in this paper are drawn from published sources, listed in the references. Where we present new figures, these are Counsl's own calculations based on those sources, and are labelled as such. In particular:

- **Average mosque income** (Figure 5) is the Ayaan Institute's projected annual income for UK mosques (£450 million) divided by its estimated number of mosques (1,884), giving approximately £239,000. This is a mean; many mosques have much lower income.
- **Award as a share of income** (Figure 5) divides the 2023/24 average tribunal award for each claim type by that average income. Awards exclude legal costs and settlements.
- **Inquiry durations** (Figure 7) are measured from the date each statutory inquiry was opened to the date its conclusion or report was published, as stated in Charity Commission announcements or press coverage. Where only a year is available, durations are approximate.
- **Hate crime figures** (Figure 6) are police-recorded offences where the perceived targeted religion was recorded as Muslim. Because the 2024/25 bulletin excludes the Metropolitan Police, it is shown separately against the comparable 2023/24 figure. Police-recorded crime is affected by recording practice and reporting rates.
- **Mosque employee numbers** (Figure 1) are as published by the Ayaan Institute. We were unable to review its full methodology. The figure appears to cover formally reported employees of charity mosques only, and is likely to exclude self-employed, sessional and casual staff and mosques that are not registered charities. We therefore treat it as a minimum and draw no ratios from it.
- **Trustee age** (Figure 8) is the average for all charities in England and Wales from the Charity Commission's 2017 research. No equivalent figure for mosque trustees has been published.
- **The teacher example** (Figure 3) applies the confirmed commencement date for the six-month qualifying period. Final transitional arrangements should be checked against the commencement regulations.

This paper provides general information on employment law and charity governance in England and Wales as at September 2026. It is not legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Some measures described remain subject to secondary legislation. Trustees should seek specific advice on their own circumstances.

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