

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – "CHANGES TO PLANNING STRUCTURE"

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

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PRODUCER: Sally Chesworth

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“FILE ON 4”

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ACTUALITY OF SINGING AT MADRASSA

ABRAMS: Each evening, more than a quarter of a million Muslim children go to special classes to learn the Quran. But they don't have the same level of child protection they have at school.

What happened? He came in with the stick in his hand?

BOY: Yes. And he hit all four of us.

ABRAMS: And he hit you on the back. What did you feel? Were you upset?

BOY: Angry, because he hit me.

ABRAMS: Nobody really knows the scale of the problem. But File on 4 has obtained figures which reveal more than four hundred allegations of assault since 2009. And yet only a tiny handful of those cases made it to court. A senior prosecutor tells us it has to stop.

AFZAL: A crime is a crime and I have no doubt whatsoever that if we allow it to continue to happen, then it perpetuates violence in communities.

ABRAMS: And it isn't just physical abuse. Sometimes it's almost impossible for people to accept a revered leader could also be a sexual predator.

WAKAS: One of my brothers rang me and they said that he's been messing around with the boys. I goes, 'What do you mean, messing around with the boys?' He said, 'Well, he's being doing things what he shouldn't have done.' I was in shock, it was very hard to actually take in, it was just unbelievable.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY IN MOSQUE

ABRAMS: We're in a basement at the Bilal mosque in Huddersfield. There are more than two hundred children, some of them only just into primary school, who spend their evenings here learning to read and recite the Quran in Arabic. This room's completely bare and there are between twenty and thirty boys of primary school age, sitting on the floor in traditional Islamic dress. They've all got sections of the Quran open in front of them on little benches. Maulana Muhammad Akram, the Imam, is showing us round.

AKRAM: The class I show you now, they also learning by heart.

ACTUALITY OF REHAN RECITING THE QURAN

REHAN: I don't know exactly what it means, but I do know that it is quite important.

ABRAMS: What's your name?

REHAN: Rehan.

ABRAMS: Rehan. And how old are you?

REHAN: I'm thirteen years old.

ABRAMS: And how often do you come here?

REHAN: I come here every single day except for on Sundays.

ABRAMS: So six days a week?

REHAN: Yes.

ABRAMS: And how much of your Quran have you learned?

REHAN: Five chapters, which is altogether a hundred and thirty-nine pages out of eight hundred and forty-eight. It's good fun, it's quite a good challenge as well, because it gives you something to do, and you know it's going to help you in the hereafter as well, because we believe that this isn't the only life, there's going to be a life after this, and reading this is going to help us in the life after.

ABRAMS: This madrassa is one of sixty in the borough of Kirklees, and they cater for between eight and ten thousand children. They range in size from fewer than fifty learners to more than eight hundred. On the upper floor, there are older children, some of them are in their teens.

HAFEZ: One after another, they're coming to the teacher for the teacher to listen to how accurate their reading and what the level of their pronunciation is, so the teacher's responsibility then is to try and rectify any oversights or any mistakes.

ABRAMS: Shakeel Hafez works for Kirklees Council. It's his job to act as the eyes and ears of the local authority in these madrassas and to make sure their pupils are well cared for. Here at the Bilal mosque it's an easy task. They don't use corporal punishment.

CHILD: We have more fun over here than school because at school we always do work and over here sometimes we get to do colouring.

ABRAMS: You always have more fun here, do you?

CHILD: Yes.

ABRAMS: And what happens when you're naughty?

CHILD: You have to stand up and sometimes, when you're really naughty, you have to stand in the corner.

ABRAMS: Does that sometimes happen to you?

CHILD: Sometimes.

ABRAMS: Sometimes? What sort of naughtiness do you do?

CHILD: Sometimes I talk.

ABRAMS: If you talk too much, you have to go and stand in the corner?

CHILD: Yes.

ABRAMS: Do you mind that?

CHILD: No.

ABRAMS: Kirklees is the only council in the country with a dedicated officer working to improve child protection in madrassas. Most authorities don't even know how many they've got. When we asked them that question, most said it wasn't their responsibility to know. They do, however, have a responsibility to safeguard children. Which is why, for years, Mr Hafez has been pounding the streets of this densely-populated

ABRAMS cont: area of West Yorkshire, seeking out madrassas and trying to make sure their child protection policies, are watertight.

ACTUALITY IN CAR

HAFEZ: Now we're just passing this madrassa here. It used to be a pub ...

ABRAMS: I was going to say it looks like a pub. We're now in the car park and you can see the back of the building.

HAFEZ: So what's happened here is that in this part of Dewsbury the local madrassas are full, so the community has decided to buy this and now there is some modernisation going on to try to make the facilities compatible with their needs.

ABRAMS: What are your concerns when you see a new place opening up? What do you have to do to ensure that it's safe for children?

HAFEZ: When new people establish new places, then it may be necessary to have a much greater input so that they're mindful of their legal duties towards the children who attend the madrassa.

ABRAMS: And is that usually easy?

HAFEZ: I can't say that it's easy, because these people are volunteers and they have families, they have other occupations, they may have business interests, so to try and get them to think about safeguarding children is a challenge, but one that I feel I'm up for it.

ABRAMS: Madrassas fall under the banner of supplementary schools – ones which offer extra education outside mainstream school hours. They include organisations representing a variety of faiths and cultures. But these Islamic schools are by far the biggest group within that category. There are up to three and a half thousand of them. But they're not required to register with any official body. Their volunteers don't need

ABRAMS cont: criminal records checks and they aren't routinely inspected. Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, founder of the Muslim Institute think tank, believes the issue is increasingly pressing.

SIDDIQUI: The Muslim community is a young community, more than half of Muslims are under 25, so you have a Muslim population, youth population is increasing, and as a result more mosques and madrassas are springing up everywhere, to the extent that I hear a lot of people are opening madrassas in their sitting room and garages. Basically we don't know what's happening there to these children. So I think unless we have policies and systems to take care of how children are treated, there's always a danger. Wherever there's a madrassa there should be children safeguarding policies, child protection policies and procedures. Parents ought to know if some incidents happens, there is a person responsible and this whole thing will be investigated and action will be taken against that person to ensure that it's only teaching takes place there and there's no abuse.

BOY: This teacher went out of the class. This boy got up and he started running about and the mosque teacher, he came and hit us all with a stick.

ABRAMS: This eleven year-old was recently assaulted in a madrassa in Lancashire. We've altered his voice to protect his identity. What happened? He came in with the stick in his hand?

BOY: Yes, and he hit us.

ABRAMS: And he hit you on the back. What did you feel? Were you upset?

BOY: Angry, because he hit me, because he's not allowed to touch anyone in the mosque.

ABRAMS: In fact four boys were assaulted, one of whom had learning difficulties. That night they all went home and said nothing about it. But the next day at the local primary school, which three of the boys attended, details started to emerge. The

ABRAMS cont: school called in the police. Julie Cross, a detective sergeant with the Lancashire Police Social Cohesion Team, oversaw the inquiry.

CROSS: The way in which it came through to the police was that the children had been taught religious education at school, at their local primary school. During the class they were asked what happens when they go to Sunday School, what happens when they go to mosque or madrassa, and some of the children had put down that they were hit. So the school made the report to Children's Service. Children's Services contacted us police and we then conducted a joint investigation.

ABRAMS: How serious a case would you say that was?

CROSS: Well, it's very serious on the strength that a weapon or a stick is used. The children didn't have any marks, so the level of the assault is very very minor, but obviously it's just not acceptable for teachers within the madrassa to be using an implement to try and control the classroom. There's obviously other alternative methods that they can use.

ABRAMS: The children were interviewed with their parents, then police went to the mosque. They recovered CCTV footage, which confirmed the children's story. The teacher, Ibrahim Yusuf, was charged with four counts of common assault – to the relief of the boy's older sister.

SISTER: It's not right to do this. How would you feel to be in that situation, to be hit and to be abused? Because as a child you don't know what to do. We are living in the 21st century now, things like this aren't supposed to be happening. He teaches how to read the Quran by heart. For someone to be teaching that you need to have a pure heart to be able to do that, because like you need to be happy, you need to be a nice person to be able to do that and at the end of the day, what he did was wrong

ABRAMS: But it seemed some other families in the area took a different view. The parents of the two other boys who'd complained at school told police they'd changed their minds – they didn't want to take part in a trial after all. Did anyone come to your house to talk to you about it, suggest that you should drop the case?

WOMAN: Yeah, one woman, she was saying that everybody else has dropped the case so she was trying to like, she didn't say to us to do it, but she was trying to say everyone else has done it so you might as well as well.

ABRAMS: And what did you say to that?

WOMAN: I don't know. We just like sat there, kind of ignoring her but yeah, we just sat there nodding our heads. Some people, backward people, they think like oh, they're grassing up the mosque, like you're not supposed to, it's a bit of a sin really, and it's like if you don't like the rules here then go back to wherever you came from. I don't think, no one's said anything to us, but people are saying it behind our backs. You can tell.

ABRAMS: In the end they didn't have to face a trial because Mr Yusuf pleaded guilty. He received a twelve month supervision order and he was made to pay compensation.

ACTUALITY AT MOSQUE

ABRAMS: The Raza Jamia Mosque is set among tightly-packed terraces, just off the main Blackburn to Accrington road. After several letters and phone calls we were invited in for a hasty tour. And the children were learning happily.

SHAH: We've obviously got a junior class here with about twenty pupils, and turn by turn they'll go to the teacher just to go over what progress they need to do within this period of teaching time.

ABRAMS: A member of the Mosque committee, Sarfraz Shah – himself a secondary school science teacher – was nominated to answer our questions. He had quite distinct views about the incident.

SHAH: It was quite clear to us straightaway that there was no clear evidence, you know, of any hitting of that nature. Yes, we saw a teacher from the mosque, as some teachers do quite forcefully, without any physical touches, asking the pupils to sit down as there was a little bit of messing about going on. The actual images that we got

SHAH cont: on the CCTV weren't conclusive in any shape or form that any abuse had been made or there was a clear indication that hitting was evident.

ABRAMS: That clearly isn't the view of the police or the court.

SHAH: In the court the teacher was cleared of any offence.
Our first

ABRAMS: He pleaded guilty.

SHAH: He did plead guilty in the first instance. Now this is what was confusing us more than anything else, because as far as we were concerned, you know, if that had happened, you know, we would suspend the member of staff straight away as per policy. When we asked the teacher of exactly what had happened and he said, 'Look, you know, I went over,' and he had a pointer stick. Now it is very very clear that he did not use the pointer stick to lash out at anybody.

ABRAMS: But why did he even have a stick?

SHAH: He uses the stick as a pointer, okay, very similar to a visual aid. It's not a stick as in a big wooden stick, it's more of a pointer.

ABRAMS: Mr Yusuf was suspended from teaching during the case, but afterwards he was reinstated. Mr Shah felt the whole thing should have been sorted out with much less fuss.

SHAH: Why didn't the pupils and the parents follow the protocols of coming directly to the people in charge at that time of the classes and raise that complaint straightaway? That is what we were disappointed in.

ABRAMS: Could they not have perhaps felt that pressure might be put on them not to go to the police, not to take things outside the mosque?

SHAH: No, I don't think so. I think if people want to go to the police, they will go to the police. I don't think pressure will be applied from any part in the community.

ABRAMS: I gather that Mr Yusuf is now back teaching?

SHAH: Yes, he is.

ABRAMS: And do you think that is appropriate given what has happened?

SHAH: Our version of the events was that we could have him back into work, that was the committee's decision.

ABRAMS: If he had been teaching in a state school, he would not have been back teaching again, would he?

SHAH: Yeah, I agree with that, yeah.

ABRAMS: And yet why is it different here?

SHAH: Well, what we need to get right is that obviously we want to be fair on both sides, so we'd like to give both parties the benefit of the doubt, as well as those pupils were allowed back in as well, into the mosque.

ABRAMS: While the mosque says it is being fair to both sides, the boy we spoke to still felt angry.
What do you think about that now? What do you think about what happened?

BOY: It was wrong. He came back. They should have kicked him out of the mosque.

ABRAMS: Have you been back to mosque since?

BOY: No.

ABRAMS: No. So you don't go to mosque anymore?

BOY: No.

ABRAMS: The case was handled by the Crown Prosecution Service in the North West. Its director, Nazir Afzal, says it's determined to bring cases to court whenever possible.

AFZAL: I'm hoping that the vast majority of the community have taken this message on board and will always support their children and will talk to their children about what happens to them so that if necessary we will get involved and we will prosecute those individuals.

ABRAMS: Do you think that there is a particular problem in certain communities where there's a sort of sense of well, we don't need to involve the authorities, or even some practices are acceptable?

AFZAL: No faith has a monopoly on child abuse, no faith has a monopoly on child protection, but we recognise that there are some communities where individuals in those communities will turn a blind eye to this kind of behaviour. A crime is a crime and in this particular case, what the teacher did went beyond disciplining children, and I have no doubt whatsoever that if we allow it to continue to happen, then it perpetuates violence in communities, and children somehow feel that this is something they should carry on doing when they become adults. So I don't buy into this let it happen, let it carry on, it doesn't really cause any harm. It does cause tremendous harm and we have to ensure that children are protected, whichever community they are part of and whichever learning institution they go to.

ABRAMS: Incidents of this sort are more common than you might think. File on 4 made a Freedom of Information request to all two hundred local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. We asked how many allegations of physical abuse they were aware of. A hundred and eighty responded with information. The total in the past three years

RAZA cont: practice must be stopped immediately and there is not any justification for such punishments within our mosque schools. Our responsibility or our job is to make particularly those who run the mosques realise that we live in a civilised society and this is not acceptable at any cost.

ABRAMS: Although corporal punishment's been barred in state schools for twenty-five years, legally it's still okay in religious settings, so long as it doesn't exceed what's described as 'reasonable chastisement.' Two years ago, the last government asked Sir Roger Singleton, chair of the Independent Safeguarding Authority and at the time chief adviser on child safety, to look into the issue. He says our findings have revealed a disturbing pattern.

SINGLETON: That sort of number does, I think, lend weight to my view that there is something there to be addressed, we're not just dealing with isolated instances. It seemed to me to be something of a nonsense that children could leave school at four o'clock and at five o'clock be in a faith school in receipt of some form of religious education, where there was nothing to prevent the teachers there hitting them. Clearly the law provides some protection if the beatings were severe, but I thought the common sense thing was to say look, outside the framework of the family any form of hitting or slapping is prohibited.

ABRAMS: And so you made this recommendation I think in March 2010?

SINGLETON: Well the recommendation was accepted by the then Government and indeed subsequently I understand by the present Government. My understanding of the situation is that the civil service is looking at ways in which it might be implemented. I understand there are some technical difficulties. But I think there's a line to be drawn somewhere, and in my view that line should be drawn on the side of saying, hitting and smacking of other people's children is not on.

ABRAMS: That sounds simple, doesn't it - if you're not the parent of the child, you're not allowed to smack them. It can't be that hard to extend the law to say that, surely?

SINGLETON: I wouldn't have thought so.

ABRAMS: We wanted to ask the Children and Families Minister, Tim Loughton, why it's taken him nearly a year and a half to work out how to stop adults from smacking other people's children. He wouldn't be interviewed. But in a statement, the Department for Education said it was looking into the issue.

READER IN STUDIO: The Government does not support the use of physical punishment in schools and other children's settings. That's why Ministers have met Sir Roger Singleton and are considering how to respond to the recommendations made in his report on the physical punishment of children.

ABRAMS: The really striking thing about the figures we obtained was that out of all those four hundred allegations, only a very few led to a successful prosecution – or indeed, any prosecution at all. In fact, out of all the physical assault cases we were told about by local councils, we could only identify ten which went to court and two which led to a conviction. The shadow Justice Secretary, Sadiq Khan, says this simply isn't good enough.

KHAN: I am extremely disappointed with those statistics. I mean, there probably already is underreporting to the authorities of these incidents, but if the authorities, once they know about cases, are prosecuting so few, it is hardly giving confidence to other children, other vulnerable people and their parents to come forward. One of the things I think has happened is you have teachers in some of these madrassas who come from a culture and a country where it is acceptable to use corporal punishment and forms of violence to control young people. Cultural practices, not religious practices, cultural practices. Maybe the parents of children think this is normal behaviour. What we need to do is explain it is not acceptable and what we need to do is make sure we weed this out. And once there have been prosecutions which have received publicity, I think the message will spread, and that is why I am even more concerned by the lack of prosecutions when there is evidence.

ABRAMS: And, it isn't just physical abuse that's causing concern. We also asked local councils to tell us how many cases of sexual assault their safeguarding teams had to deal with in relation to mosques and madrassas. They revealed a total of thirty allegations since 2009, leading to three prosecutions and one conviction. And we've discovered that in some cases, where people have previous histories of sexual assault, they're still able to carry on running madrassas.

ACTUALITY IN EAST LONDON

ABRAMS: I'm standing by a rather anonymous four-storey townhouse in the East End of London. The only thing to indicate there's any religious activity going on here are a couple of bits of paper stuck in the window, advertising prayer times and Quran classes for children. This mosque is the headquarters of an educational charity called Hifzul Quran, which offers religious classes for children and teenagers. On the Charity Commission website, it says it offers community service for local people. And the building is owned by the Imam – Mohamed Abdus Subhan. He's been a key figure in the charity since it was launched in 1993- even though, in 1996, he went to prison for four months for sexually abusing a thirteen year old girl.

INWOOD: Mr Subhan was at the time teaching the Quran in a madrassa. In the process of that a thirteen year old girl was inappropriately touched, made a complaint to her family, which was reported to police, and the matter was dealt with very seriously.

ABRAMS: Detective Chief Inspector Sue Inwood from the Metropolitan Police child abuse team says the idea of more regulation is an attractive one.

INWOOD: I think it would have positive outcomes for both myself as a police officer and also those running these sorts of schools. They would fall under the same guidance and advice that mainstream education get, the same governance processes, and they would be known to the local safeguarding children's boards, so that yes, they could be monitored appropriately. And it would get rid of any grey areas, loopholes, and people would be clear that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and that those running these schools have a responsibility. I would support regulation, yes.

ABRAMS: As far as we know, Mr Subhan hasn't faced any further allegations – and he insists he was wrongly convicted. But the fact remains, if he'd been a school teacher, he would have been barred from working with children.

ACTUALITY OUTSIDE MOSQUE

ABRAMS: I've just made contact with Mr Subhan by telephone and he's agreed that we should come into the mosque to talk to him. I'd be very interested to know whether he thinks he is a suitable person to be running a children's charity, to find out whether he's ever had a criminal records check, and whether anyone's ever actually asked him to have one.

SUBHAN: I am in charge of this school, so other teachers teach always.

ABRAMS: When the children are here, you're here?

SUBHAN: Yes. Personally I not teach children.

ABRAMS: And have you ever had a criminal records check?

SUBHAN: No, no.

ABRAMS: Because, of course, I believe that in 1996 you were convicted of an indecent assault on a thirteen year old girl.

SUBHAN: I completely always ignore about this matter, because I am the one in charge of this school and my record not was anything in this way.

ABRAMS: Do you think then, in the light of that, that you're a suitable person to be working with children?

SUBHAN: Yes, now our teachers, they teach our children is very nicely, all is peaceful.

ABRAMS: It seems that even though everyone knows about Mr Subhan's history, they've been willing to turn a blind eye to it. And those who are prepared to speak up about sexual abuse are few and far between. Among them is Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui of the Muslim Institute. He's even published a report on child protection in religious organisations – but he says some people didn't think he should be talking about it at all.

SIDDIQUI: The practice was that if there was child abuse, sexual especially, then they would just push it under the carpet and try to make sure that parents do not make noises. They would pressurise parents that they do not go to police or simply, you know, just keep quiet basically, and I know there are a number of places where parents were very angry that this is not the right thing to happen, especially when people or girls are sexually abused. So there was a lot of pent up frustration and as a result, when our report came out, although of course the clerics opposed this whole report, one person in a debate said, 'You are doing exactly what the enemies of Islam do,' that I am acting as an enemy of Islam.

ABRAMS: Muslim clerics are deeply revered figures in their communities and that can make it very hard for people to accept they could ever sexually abuse a child.

KHAN: As a Muslim, when you call yourself a Muslim, there is a specific duty upon you through your actions, through your verbal behaviour, through your general character on how you should be, how you should behave.

ABRAMS: This is Mohammed Hanif Khan, speaking to the BBC in 2008, soon after he took up a job as Imam – and Quran teacher - at the Capper Street mosque in Stoke on Trent. He brought a strong reputation with him. He'd previously been the first Muslim to be full-time chaplain in a prison, and he'd been to Buckingham Palace to receive an award from Princess Anne. Mohammed Alaam is a community worker in Tunstall,

ABRAMS cont: the former Potteries town which has the Capper Street Mosque at its heart. He says the new Imam really changed things for the better.

ALAAM: He was a British Imam, he was very professional. He seemed to me like a British scholar, and basically they felt more understanding, better communication with Mr Hanif Khan.

ABRAMS: How did that change things?

ALAAM: The mosque came more busier, more people were attracted because of Hanif, for what he was delivering - not just for Stoke on Trent people but people from out of Stoke on Trent were coming as well. So he was basically, he was helping the mosque in a lot of aspects. He was charismatic and inspirational definitely, definitely, and that's really what people saw in him and believed in him.

ABRAMS: For more than a year, there was a real sense this closely-knit community was taking big steps forward. Many families regarded a visit to their home by the preacher as an honour bestowed. Members of the local community would seek him out for spiritual guidance.

WAKAS: I was at a point in my life where I needed a bit of help towards my own faith, and listening to his speeches really helped me. He became someone very important in my life. I used to think he really makes the kids feel dead comfortable – how good is he? He brings himself to what he is and what status he's got, brings himself down to their level.

ABRAMS: Wakas – we've changed his name for legal reasons – was one of those who looked up to Khan. But one day, in October 2009, he received a phone call that brought shocking news.

WAKAS: One of my brothers rang me and said that Hanif Khan, he's been messing round with the boys. I goes, 'What do you mean, messing around with the boys?' He said, 'Well, he's been doing things what he shouldn't have done.' And obviously then my brother explained what he actually had been accused of doing. I was in shock, it was

WAKAS cont: hard to actually take in. It was just unbelievable. What he was, what he taught, what he spoke, what his character was, no way in the world would you put two together. First of all, in my mind, that is impossible.

ABRAMS: Is that what you thought?

WAKAS: That's what I thought. The kids have got to be lying.

ABRAMS: Two of Wakas' young relatives had made allegations against the Imam. One, a fifteen year old boy, said he'd been sexually assaulted on an overnight visit to the preacher's house, but he'd managed to rebuff the older man's advances. The other, who was twelve, said he'd been assaulted repeatedly and raped on at least two occasions after prayers at the mosque. Even within the family, opinions were divided about whether it could possibly be true.

WAKAS: At the beginning, our family members, we were kind of split of between, because we were like, 'Has it happened? And if it has, how could it have happened?' It took us about a few days, a week, before it started actually registering, look, there's got to be some element of truth behind it for the kids to accuse someone like that, someone so high of this. Then seeing how upset they were, how distressed, emotional they were getting, even just when his name was mentioned and even when it just came into the papers and when they just glimpsed the front of the papers and seen his photo, and seeing how distressed and emotional they were getting, that's when we started thinking he's done it, he's definitely done it.

ABRAMS: What was the reaction of the community where you lived?

WAKAS: 99% were against the family. They said it's all a lie, there's probably some other reason behind it, it's just false accusations. It was difficult.

ABRAMS: Khan was found guilty of sexually assaulting the older boy and of twice raping the younger one. He was sent to prison for sixteen years. The Judge, Mrs Justice Dobbs, said it was hard to imagine a more serious breach of trust.

READER IN STUDIO: The boys and their families are being reviled for bringing shame to the community, and the boys are being teased at school and suffering as a result, being made to feel ashamed. Their lives have changed dramatically. The hearts of the families have been torn apart because of the trust that has been broken. They have suffered from threats, backlash and intimidation from the defendant's followers.

ABRAMS: And there was more. Mrs Justice Dobbs revealed something that hadn't come out during the case – that Mohammed Hanif Khan had a history which should have rung warning bells if only the Tunstall community had known about it.

READER IN STUDIO: The court is aware of allegations of sexual harassment which were found to be proved at your workplace and led to your sacking. This was the job you held before going to the mosque. Had the local elders known that you had been sacked or indeed that allegations had been made, I doubt whether they would have given you the job as Imam.

ABRAMS: Khan told worshippers in Stoke he left his job at the privately-run Dovegate prison in Uttoxeter to devote himself more fully to his faith. The company that runs the prison, Serco, told us Capper Street mosque never sought references for Khan. We wanted to ask the mosque committee why it apparently didn't check on his past before employing him, but they refused to be interviewed. They said the committee had now changed and they were trying to put it all behind them. The case has left many people feeling wounded. And Nazir Afzal, the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the North West of England, says it raises serious questions. Muslim communities need to face up to the fact that sexual abuse does happen, he says, so that in future, victims and their families won't be ostracised, like Wakas' family were.

AFZAL: It takes a brave family with tremendous courage on their part, to support their child through this process. I am in awe of them for being able to do so. I understand they still feel shame at having brought this case. Well, they shouldn't feel any shame at all. It is the person who did this to their child that should feel terribly ashamed and the people who supported that person should feel terribly ashamed. There is a desperate need for us to be seen standing shoulder to shoulder with victims and families.

ABRAMS: So it's an issue people have to face up to talking about it?

AFZAL: Denial doesn't tackle the issue, it just prevents it from being tackled. From my perspective, you've got to make sure that victims come forward and eventually you get rid of all these people that are doing this kind of behaviour, and then we save other children. I have no doubt, unfortunately people who are sexual predators are going to have more victims. It's very rare it's just the one victim. And so, if you don't challenge them, your child is at risk. Do you want that to happen?

ABRAMS: Increasingly, the voices calling for external regulation are beginning to be heard. The Government has said that it is prepared to consider a national register of madrassas. But Maulana Shahid Raza, chairman of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, says the mosques deserve a chance to put their own house in order.

RAZA: Within MINAB, we very strongly believe that the Muslim community should be given an opportunity to self-regulate, and I think by engaging with the community institutions and by way of persuading them to deal with these alarming issues, it will be a more fair, transparent and comfortable approach to bring the necessary changes within our institutions.

ABRAMS: There is a concern though, isn't there, that up to now that hasn't happened?

RAZA: I accept that concern and share that concern fully, so we very much hope that MINAB will be able to play a very constructive role in this particular respect.

ABRAMS: As the number of madrassas increases, there are fears the problem can only get bigger. Dr Siddiqui of the Muslim Institute says more people need to stand up and be counted. If they don't, he says, British Islam could end up facing a crisis like the one that's engulfed the Catholic Church.

SIDDIQUI: If we don't sort this out, in ten, twenty years' time, these young people, when they grow up, eventually they will take cases against your mosque and madrassa and, like the Catholic Church, some of these mosques and madrassas will be closed down, because to pay compensation. Are we ready to face that kind of challenge? If not, then do something now.

SIGNATURE TUNE