

# Myplace fund overlooks Muslims

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The youth facilities fund has been criticised for not awarding any money to Muslim-led projects.

The chair of the Muslim Youthwork Foundation has criticised the government's multi-million pound Myplace scheme for failing to engage young Muslims in shaping communities.

MG Khan said the £180m funding for 41 youth facilities in England announced earlier this month and the £62m announced last year missed the opportunity to involve young Muslims "in shaping community or youth resources and services".

"This was an opportunity to secure the role of young Muslims in taking a collaborative and equal stake in the crucial conversations, but the government has shied away from enabling this."

Khan added that eight YMCA projects have collectively secured nearly £30m through the fast track and standard track of the Myplace programme.

"The general failure of universal services to work with Muslim young people as Muslim young people has often meant their religious identity has been understood as a divisive factor."

He said that "while being asked to tackle the 'extremists' and show leadership, Muslim organisations are denied the infrastructure deemed necessary for every other provider of services."

Speaking of one failed bid for Harrow Central Mosque in north west London, Khan added: "The bid changed the quality of inter-generational conversations and radically altered the design of the mosque providing a model that could inform involvement of young non-Muslims in these buildings.

But youth work trainer Tafazal Mohammad, managing director of Muslim Youth Skills, said he didn't believe the Muslim youth work community was ready to take on such large-scale projects.

"I understand the foundation's sentiments but the Muslim community is finding its feet when it comes to youth work," he said. "I don't believe the community has the capacity to deal with big pots of funding."

He added that more work needed to be done within the Muslim community to raise awareness of the value of youth work before it would be ready to run large-scale projects.

A spokesman for the Big Lottery Fund said: "The Myplace programme was competitive and over-subscribed. Young people from all backgrounds played a central role in awarding the funding to projects." He added: "Myplace is supporting projects that are working with young Muslims."