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**M**

Just start recording now. Ok. So the first question I have is can you tell me about the last wedding ceremony you conducted in England and Wales specifically focusing on the type of ceremony and location?

**R**

Ok the last one was on February the 14th. I remember the date because it was Valentine’s Day.

**M**

Ok. Uh-huh.

**R**

Yeah, and it was six people in…..it was …it was in [place] in [city], in was in someone’s house, so there was six people and it was literally just a Nikah ceremony so I went in I conducted the Nikah and then I left. I must have been there for over 15 to 20 minutes.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

At the most.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

So that’s the last one, you know.

**M**

So can you tell me a little…so it’s in somebody’s home, can you tell me a little bit about the type of ceremony. So, you know, what exactly did you do?

**R**

Ok, so I went in and I went…they directed me straight upstairs to where the bride was sitting. [*coughs]* excuse me. So I sought her consent in the presence of her brother and two independent witnesses were there but the room also had her mother and her sisters and another female members of the family were there as well. So I sought her consent and then I came downstairs and I sought the consent from the groom, advising the groom that the bride has given her consent and her brother is representing her, her brother’s doing her Wakalah, is her Wali. And we have these two as witnesses. And I sought his consent and the Nikah was finalised. And I made them sign a form which is the Nikah certificate. But before I conduct any Nikah ceremony in England or Wales or anywhere in the UK there’s two pre-requisites, requirements that, you know, we’re very strict on in the Masjid…number one that they have to be British citizens. They have to be British citizens, if they’re not both British citizens then we wouldn’t conduct the Nikah ceremony because it may be that they are not legal in the UK. Yeah. What we do stimulate is that whoever’s having the Nikah done they have their registration done as well with the Council. The Council registration of marriage. So they give us their registration number for the Council’s ceremony which goes on to the Nikah certificate. If they have not done that then we do request them to give us some sort of indication as to have they booked themselves in for a registration in the future and they show us proof of that. The second thing we ask them for is proof of ID, preferably a passport to show that they are both British citizens. Only then will we conduct the Nikah ceremony. Cos what we have found in the past it is, and when I say in the past, maybe five or six years ago, where any Muslims who would approach us we would do their Nikah and we wouldn’t ask for proof of ID and it….it has been the case where more than once the ….the Nikah has not been for the right reasons, they’ve been doing it to apply for British citizenship. So they would get the Nikah certificate from us and that would be another form of, you know, a proof that they are married and they would send that off the Home Office and the Home Office would get in touch with us and, you know, it become a bit of a …..we get into a mess to put it loosely and that’s not something that we want for ourselves. There was approximately two years ago a seminar that was held by local Imams that was headed by ….I’m forgetting their name now, an organisations called MINAB, Ministry of…..MINAB Association and they got Imams together, English-speaking Imams from up and down the UK but the concentration was on the Imams from the East Midlands and they rented a room up Loughborough University and they advised us that if you do ever come across a situation where both the bride, the bride-to-be, and the groom-to-be can’t prove that they are British citizens it’s advised for you not to do their Nikah because it’s…they may be doing it for legal matters just to obtain a visa or citizenship and you could get yourself into…you may not necessarily get into trouble but you would ….you may get questioned about it, the Home Office may get in touch with you. That was the case in our Masjid where a colleague of mine, [name], he had done someone’s Nikah and, you know, they…we didn’t know any better. All we saw was a Muslim man and a Muslim woman and they wanted to do their Nikah so, you know, he done the Nikah, we didn’t see anything …and on behalf of the Masjid we have them a Nikah with a certificate. They both signed it, the Imam signed it, it has the Masjid stamp on it. And the Home Office ended up getting in touch with the Masjid you know….

**M**

Sure.

**R**

….and it just caused a lot of unnecessary headache.

**M**

What…what was….

**R**

And it’s happened to more than once.

**M**

Sorry, what’s…what’s the concern of the Home Office that is was a sham wedding or was it that they just wanted clarification?

**R**

They, initially they questioned us, you know, “did you do the Nikah?” and, you know, we said, “yeah, we did do the Nikah” and they says, “well it’s a sham wedding, our concern is that it’s sham wedding and they’ve not it for the right reasons”. Later on we did hear it wasn’t for the right reasons and you know it was wrong. And talk in the community that this particular couple had done it for the wrong reasons and apparently they’ve done it more than once, you know, under… under different names, you know. So it was a big concern. That, you know, how many times has this happened in our community that we don’t know of. And [inaudible 0:06:49], do you understand Urdu?

**M**

No.

**R**

Ok, Imam will then get into trouble, you know, and the Masjid committee into would get into trouble so, you know, and there’s no need for it. I mean, so yeah, that’s…that’s where we’re at the moment. As far as I know the vast majority of the Mosques in [city] at least, you know, they would only do the ceremony if it was proven that they are both British citizens, they’ve already been registered, they’ve had their registry marriage or they are about to have their registry marriage….

**M**

Ok.

**R**

….and it’s a simple straight forward Nikah.

**M**

What sort of proof would you expect from them with regards to the registration?

**R**

Ideally the registry certificate or if they can provide us with the reference number on the certificate. If they provide us with that reference number then we can check the public records later on to see, you know, that this marriage has taken place.

**M**

Ok, thank you very much, so I’ll move on to the second question. Is it usual to meet or otherwise communicate with the couple before the wedding ceremony?

**R**

I always do. I always do to make sure, you know, that well, they are both thinking on the same wavelength sort of thing. Currently we don’t meet with them, I’d arrange a….I’d asked them to arrange a WhatsApp call, video call or Microsoft Zoom meeting or a Zoom meeting and I’d ask to speak to both of them. Sometimes the brides are reluctant but then I reassure them that the reason I’d like to speak to you beforehand is just to make sure that you are doing it with your own consent and you’re happy to do it and you can usually pick it up with the body language and the responses that you get that they are, they themselves are, you know, wanting to do this marriage, they’re doing it for the right reasons, they’re in love and they, you know, they want to spend the rest of their lives together. But I always, you know, would want to meet or speak to the bride and the groom beforehand.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

And discuss it…discuss the whole ceremony with them. And, you know, just have a casual chat with them and just reassure them that Inshalla you’re gonna be getting married and if there’s any questions, if there’s any support you need and then, you know. I think it’s important that level of communication is important. I…I started doing this, I’ll tell you what happened, it was a very strange but a very pleasant experience for myself. I was approached by a friend I’d say many years ago, over ten years ago now, and you know, I didn’t have any grey hair and I was still a very young Imam back then. A friend of mine who is an academic himself and he is a, I don’t know if you’ve heard of the Cambridge Muslim College?

**M**

Yep.

**R**

So he’s….he’s a lecturer there. Dr [name]. And Dr [name] approached me and said he has a friend who is Algerian and he would like to get married to…he’s met someone and he wants to get married to her and she would like to accept Islam so she can get married. She comes from an aristocratic family, you know, and they’ve got some connections with the British Royal Family. Her father is an Earl or, you know, so would you be willing to conduct the Nikah ceremony? I says, “well yeah, if both of them are happy to do it”. You know, then yeah of course I’ll do the Nikah ceremony. So, he passed on my contact details to them. Now they got in touch with me and they said they’d like to meet me for dinner. So I says, “yeah, ok, why not”. So they came to [city] and we went for dinner to a local restaurant and I sat down with the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be and we had a lovely lunch and they said they just wanted to sit down and discuss the ceremony with me and a chance to meet myself cos I’d be conducting the ceremony. And then they asked would I be ok conducting the ceremony in a Church, but it’s not gonna be in the main Church Hall it’s gonna be in the side hall. And she would like to be become a Muslim and live as a Muslim for a few months before the Nikah ceremony itself happens. And even if she decides not to marry him she would still like to remain a Muslim because she wants to become a Muslim for the religion itself. So I say, you know, “yeah I’m more than happy to do that”. So, we done the Shahada and then it was Gloucestershire I remember; a beautiful, really nice Church, it was a beautiful building and the hall that was joined on to the Church I was invited there to do the Nikah ceremony and I went in and it….it just reminded me of how the bride and the groom…so I stood at the front and the groom was there and he had his best man and his family were sitting to one side and the bride’s family were sitting on the other side. And then the bride came in with her father, it was like a Christian wedding ceremony but the difference was I was doing a Nikah for them. So, I done the Nikah, they, you know, I sought her consent and then her father gave the consent and then he handed her over to the groom and the groom gave his consent, they exchanged rings, and everyone clapped, you know, it was really nice. It was a really nice, beautiful ceremony. I thought this is so nice, it’s just a British Islamic Nikah.

**M**

That’s great, thank you.

**R**

If that makes sense?

**M**

Yeah, no thank you for sharing.

**R**

It was a brilliant, yeah.

**M**

Thank you for sharing that story, that’s fine, that’s lovely.

**R**

So I…so after that I decided that we…every time I’m gonna do someone’s Nikah I’m gonna insist on meeting the bride and groom beforehand and speaking to them.

**M**

Yeah, ok. Now my next question is, are there the ceremonies you conduct, the Nikah ceremonies part of a process towards a legally binding marriage? You’ve sort of already answered this but if you wouldn’t mind just specifically answering it?

**R**

Yeah, I mean I think they are. I mean if they have…if they don’t have Nikah done then in the eyes of Sharia, we wouldn’t consider them to be a husband and a wife. But because of the country and the lands that we are living in and the law of the land it requires the…the registry marriage as well. So, Sharia stipulates that the land that you live in, make sure you abide by the law of the land, don’t break the law of the land, you know, so I think those go together. I would generally like to see where a Nikah ceremony is sufficient, because the same thing happens in a registry office, doesn’t it, they exchange vows and the authority invested in the person conducing the marriage brings them together legally, but isn’t that what the Imam does, you know, so.

**M**

Well we’ll come on…we’ll come on to your views on …on that aspect of legal reform at the end when we discuss the Law Commission proposals. So, the next question is how do you perceive your role in advising couples of the legal status under English law of the ceremony that you conduct?

**R**

I think it’s tremendously important, I think it’s vital if anything…I know there’s a lot of Imams who aren’t aware of the law. Or conduct the Nikah ceremony but they’re not necessarily aware of the legal aspects of the country, of the law of the land. But I think it’s vital because, let’s be honest, Muslims tend to take on what the Imam has to say as law more than anything else. So if it’s in Islamic authority, an Imam advising them. This is what the law of the land says, they are more likely to accept it, you know. They are more likely to abide by it and take it on, so I think it’s important and I think all Imams should be aware of the law of the land and advice accordingly.

**M**

Ok, thank you. So the next question is where do the ceremonies that you conduct generally take place. So for example, registered buildings, place of worship, outdoors, marriage venue?

**R**

Generally the place of worship, is the Masjid. That’s where generally, I’d say 85% of the time they take place there. There is, however, I have seen, you know, in the younger generation they would like the Nikah ceremony to …they prefer it to be in a wedding venue where everyone is present, not just …it’s not just restricted to a certain amount of people or just to the men in the Masjid. I know, our mosque, we have a balcony for ladies to come in as well and then, you know, we do allow ladies to be part Nikah ceremony, even the five time prayer, Jumu’ah prayer, that’s something that I stipulated when I came into the Masjid that I want women to come in as well. Women shouldn’t be deprived of coming into the place of worship and being part of us. We even have a committee of women, you know, who are part and parcel of the decision making, the day to day running of the Masjid. I know Central Mosque – Leicester Central Mosque – has that as well, you know. They have prayer for women and what have you, and women are allowed to come into the Nikah. Yeah, again, the vast majority take place in the place of worship and there is the odd occasion where we’re asked to go to the venue, the wedding venue and do the Nikah there. Currently under lockdown I know a lot of Nikahs are happing in people’s front rooms.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

Yeah, so is a lot, it does happen in people’s front rooms in their houses in restricted numbers.

**M**

Ok, thank you. So, ok, so my next question, have you seen a change in demand for non-legally binding ceremonies, in other words the Nikah in the past ten years and if so what do you think the reasons are. So this could relate to the actual ceremony itself, or the way in which the people are now marrying, have you seen a shift in what that now looks like? Or just in numbers?

**R**

I have. I have seen a demand…an increase in people wanting just a Nikah done. You know I have come across people who would say “I just want the Nikah done” and when we ask them, “are you going to be registered?” and they say, “we’re not interested in that”. So personally I wouldn’t conduct that Nikah then cos I don’t want to get myself into any sort of, you know, legal issues. In all honesty I don’t think everyone, or a lot of Muslims see the importance of the registry marriage, for them the Nikah is the most important thing, a Nikah ceremony, as long as that happens they are happy to live as a married couple even without legally having a ceremony done or legally have themselves be registered as Mr and Mrs. But it is there. It is there, it is happening, yeah.

**M**

Ok. So my next questions is why do you think it’s important to be able to conduct Nikah ceremonies?

**R**

Because people tend to lean towards their…..the rule and regulations and the law of their faith more than the law of the land, that’s the truth of the matter. You know, people tend to lean towards that more than anything. I mean, I’m not saying people are wanting to implement Sharia Law in Britain, far from it, you know, I don’t believe in that. That people are wanting to make Britain into a Sharia Law country or any other. People are not here to change to law of the land, but they want to live their lives according to the law of their religion as does the Jewish community, as does the Hindu community, you know, as any other religious community they like to live their lives according to the law of their religion so it’s the same with Muslims, you know. I mean I know friends from school and college and growing up who are not Muslims, you know, that they’ve got married Sikh families, Hindu families, that they’ve got married in their religious ceremony but they’ve not had a registry marriage either, you know, for them that’s not important. And according, you know, they would say, that there’s no need is there, according to their religion they’re married so that’s efficient enough for us.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

It’s just the way people…it’s the way people think and people live.

**M**

Ok, thank you. So next question is has there been any change in your own role since you began conducting Nikah ceremonies, for example, has there been any change in the form of the ceremony you now conduct? So this is more, what does….what does the ceremony look like?

**R**

We try to keep it as traditional as possible to be honest with you. We try to keep it in line with the way of The Prophet [inaudible 0:20:48] and the way he conducted the Nikah ceremony where we seek the consent of the bride and then she gives her consent, legally speaking in Islamic terminology, Islamic legal terms, if she’s of…if she’s an adult it’s not necessary for there to be a representation on her behalf like for her father or a brother to represent her, she’s allowed to give her consent herself. So as long a she’s of …she’s sane minded as the groom has to be sane minded, as long as you are a sane minded individual and you understand the difference between right and wrong, you know, we seek their consent and we make sure there are witnesses who are present, that’s something that we always stipulate, make sure there’s witnesses to …tomorrow if they’re seen together, you know, and if it’s a taboo in their community for a man and woman to be seen together so witnesses can turn up and say, “well hang on a minute, their married, they’ve given their consent and I’m a witness to it”. You know.

**M**

Ok.

**R**

So we try to keep it as traditional as possible.

**M**

Ok, thank you. So the next question is if you conduct legally binding wedding ceremonies, so actually that’ the first question, do you conduct, are you a registered, are you…sorry, let me start again. Are you an authorised person?

**R**

In British law do you mean?

**M**

Yeah, so under English law?

**R**

No.

**M**

No, you’re not, ok.

**R**

No.

**M**

So let’s leave that question then. So the next question is, is there any particular reason why you aren’t an authorised person, so would you consider becoming authorised so that you can conduct a legally binding ceremony in say the Masjid building that you are working within if that became a registered place?

**R**

I definitely would consider it, yes, in fact I want that because that would mean, you know, Muslims will want to get married and be legally known in British law as a married couple. They can come into the Masjid, have their Nikah done, because the ceremony is exactly the same, you know, my own register marriage that’s happened, I thought, it is a Nikah, we had plenty of witnesses, you know, the whole clan was there, my family, my friends, everyone. So they were all the witnesses, you know, and I accepted her and she accepted me, you know, it was the other way for us actually, she accepted me first and then I accepted her. You know, but it’s the same as the Nikah isn’t it? So, I think it should happen, you know, and it is something that I have actually spoken to Mosque committee members, not only the Mosque at the time with …in Birmingham for example one of the biggest Mosques in the UK if not Europe, the [inaudible 0:23:43] Mosque, you know, the committee members there and the Imams there, were….they are colleagues of mine and we’re friends and I’ve said to them in the past that you should have your Imam and your Masjid registered with British law as a place of marriage. I do know now currently that if a Nikah ceremony takes place they’re allowed to have someone from the registry office present, someone from the registry office …..

**M**

If… if the building is registered for marriage.

**R**

If the building is registered yeah, for marriage, yeah. But I’d like to see that happening in all Mosques, you know.

**M**

So is there any…..

**R**

I wanna….

**M**

So is there any reason why your Mosque hasn’t done this yet?

**R**

I think the main reason our Mosque hasn’t done this yet is because the reluctancy is there because not many Mosques have had this done, you know, and they’re afraid, they’re probably afraid to take the first step and then come into question by members of the community because it’s a small Mosque and it usually runs by what the other bigger Mosques are doing, you know. So if the bigger Mosque they announced for example that [inaudible 0:24:59] then we’d announce it as well. You know, we just sort of follow as oppose to lead. We are only leaders in the sense, the attendees of the Mosque we lead them. But in making decisions like concern the community at large we tend to follow what the bigger Mosques have to say and we take advice from them, you know.

**M**

Ok, thank you. So I don’t need to ask you the next question because I don’t think that’s relevant. So, now we’ll move on then to discussing the Law Commission’s reform proposals, if that’s ok?

**R**

Mmm hmm.

**M**

Sorry, before I do that could I possible just take your leave for a minute, there’s somebody knocking on the door and my daughter’s downstairs, I don’t want her to open it. Would you mind if I just ……

**R**

That’s fine.

**M**

…one moment.

**R**

No, no carry on, carry on

**M**

Yeah, so, ok. So, I’ll just begin to run through the proposals. I did send you a document that just summarised it. But overall, what… so the changes that are being proposed, firstly around giving notice and registration. So, each of the couple would give notice of their intention to marry to the Registration Services. The initial notice could be given online… where are we, online by post or in person. There would then be a 28-day waiting period before they would be issued with the document authorising the marriage. So, do you know much about the notice period at the moment?

**R**

No, I don’t. No.

**M**

Ok. So, essentially, the change that is being proposed, is that instead of having to present in person, they can do this online or through the post. So, it’s reducing that burden a little bit. At the time of giving notice, the couple would inform the Registration Services who would be officiating at their wedding. So, this is the actual individual who will oversee the wedding. And the document authorising the marriage, so they will be given something called a Schedule. That would name the Officiant. So, for example, if you were an Officiant… so, there would be a process for you to become this authorised person called an Officiant. They would name you, and you would be on the Schedule. The couple would then take that document, the wedding schedule, they would take that to their wedding. It would be signed by both of them, it would be signed by the Officiant and by the two witnesses. And then that is then returned to the register office. So, the paper trail is different. So, it’s the couple who now have the document that they need to officially legally marry. And as long as there’s an Officiant present, whatever their ceremony looks like, it can still be something that is legally binding. So, that’s the first part. The second part is related to the Officiant. So, essentially, religious groups would be able to nominate Officiants, to officiate at the weddings. The group making the nomination could be either an overarching organisation or a local group and the minimum proposed in the consultation paper is that 20 members have to be present. So, for example, in a Mosque, there should be 20 regular people who are praying. The names of all nominated Officiants would be on a publicly accessible list, held by the General Register Office. So, the main duties of the Officiant would be to ensure that both parties freely exchanged consent to the marriage in the presence of two witnesses and that the Schedule was signed. The Officiant could also lead the ceremony, however, this is not a requirement of the role and it would be possible for a different person to take responsibility for leading the ceremony, as long as the Officiant is present. So, you, as an Imam, could do both. You could do the ceremony as an Officiant, or you could just be present and maybe one of your other Imams actually oversees the ceremony. So, it’s up to the organisation really how they’d want to do that. It would be an offence to pretend to be an Officiant and deliberately and recklessly mislead a couple about the effect of the ceremony. So, there is that element of criminality where they mislead the couple. However, if there is a failure to comply with the duties of an Officiant, that wouldn’t be an offence, although it might lead to de-authorisation. So, any criminality is fairly limited. And then lastly, with regards to the ceremony, there would be no legal restrictions on the types of places in which marriages could be legally celebrated. So, at the moment, we have limits. It has to be either in a registered building or… well, in a registered building. So, under the proposals, it would be for the Officiant to decide whether the location proposed by the couple was safe and dignified. Religious groups could set their own requirements as to where they wanted marriages to be held. And there would be no requirement to include prescribed words. So, the parties would be able to manifest their consent in words or in actions. And it is the signing of the Schedule which would evidence that they have exchanged consent. So, it’s a pretty radical overhaul which would give, for example, Mosques a lot more control over how they conduct weddings that could then be legally binding. There would be, just as there is now, a requirement for Mosques to engage in that process in order to be able to benefit from it. So, my first question is would the proposed reforms make it easier for the types of ceremonies you perform to be legally binding?

**R**

It definitely would, yeah. It would make it easier. I mean, it would be a step in the right direction I think, you know, it would give us some sort of authority and significance wouldn’t it. It would give us some recognition. It would make us feel as if we are part of the community a lot more. It would make us feel appreciated and then show that, you know, we’re not just a people that live here. We are an important part of the community that live in Islam… you know, I think it’s a step in the right direction, definitely.

**M**

Would you… so, based on your previous answers, would your Mosque engage with this do you think? Would they say yes, you know, let’s nominate an Officiant?

**R**

I think they would, yes. Because, you know… I mean, we have a lot of Nikah ceremonies throughout the year, as any Mosques do. So, I think our Masjid would definitely be… if it was something that we’re able to do, then they would definitely go for it, yeah.

**M**

Ok. Right, so my second question is would any of the proposals give rise to problems for the types of ceremonies you conduct?

**R**

I don’t think they would really, because… I mean, as in the proposal itself, we’re not restricted to the types… the wording or the actions; that’s for us to decide, isn’t it? So, I don’t think it would lead to any problems, no. No.

**M**

Ok. How do you think the proposals might impact on the process of getting married amongst Muslim couples?

**R**

I think it would make life easier for them. It would make like a lot easier for them, you know…. So, they can… as opposed to booking two separate marriages… marriage ceremonies rather, they can just do the one, you know… it would save finances, you know, financially it’d be more feasible and more viable. So, it would encourage… maybe a lot more encouragement there.

**M**

Ok. You mentioned, you know, that there’s increasing numbers of couples saying, “we just want the Nikah…”. Do you think this new process would in any way influence them?

**R**

Yes, definitely. And I think, you know, in the couples who say, “we just want a Nikah done”… Well why? What’s the reason, you know? What’s wrong in wanting to do it legally, unless you’re not doing it for the right reasons? I don’t see any other reason, you know? I mean, I don’t understand, you know, when couples say that they just want a Nikah done. They don’t want the legal ceremony. What’s wrong with the legal ceremony? You know, you’re living in these lands and this is your homeland, this is your country. What’s wrong with wanting to do things legally? If anything, you should be wanting to do things legally, you know…

**M**

Mm hmm...

**R**

…it should be someone who doesn’t mind breaking the law. That doesn’t sit very well with me, I’m afraid. I don’t think it sits very well with any of our Imams hopefully – touch wood! You know…

**M**

Ok, thank you. and then just the final questions… question, sorry, would you like to say anything else about the Law Commission’s proposals?

**R**

I think I would definitely say, you know, try your utmost to make it a reality. You know, do whatever is necessary for this to happen, because it would – as I said – make people who would want Nikah ceremonies to be recognised as a legal marriage in these lands. It would give them and Muslims at large a sense of confidence, if you like, in that we are appreciated and accepted in these lands. I mean, let’s not… let’s speak truthfully, you know, openly. There has been a sort of wave of Islamophobia and many Muslims have felt unwelcome since 9/11 and you know, the different global incidents that have happened. Muslims in these lands have felt some sort of, you know, that we’ve been penalised or there is a wave of hatred towards us, or undisclosed discrimination. I mean, I myself have felt it and I’m not someone who runs by conspiracy theories or, you know, I don’t think like children in a playground. I’m an adult who has lived… who was born here and grew up here, got married, you know, and I myself have experienced it. Without naming individuals or organisations, there was a period where I was finding it very difficult to find a job. And you know, I found a sort of pattern in denials or just refusals or not even acknowledgements of receipt of application. And I made one change in the application process. I removed one thing. And I got three job offers in a matter of 24 hours. Well, interview invites for two of them and one of them was a job offer, and that’s when I really wanted to think, you know, this must be it. Must be it. I removed from my application that I’m a qualified Imam and I’ve worked in Mosques. I removed that and, you know, three applications that I done and all three of them got back to me straight away. Whereas previous to that, I was applying for jobs when I was more than qualified in and had experience in…

**M**

Mmm…

**R**

…and got acknowledged.

**M**

Gosh, that’s interesting. Thank you for sharing that…

**R**

I’m not the only one… yeah, I’m not the only one. I’ll be completely honest with you and I don’t mind this being recorded and being, you know, circulated even, but it’s the truth. I know a lot of Muslims have been through that and a lot of people from the BAME community has been through that. It’s something that does happen, and it has happened. I mean, in my previous post in an educational institute, in [name] College where I was working, I overheard colleagues speaking, you know, and if I had reported them, they would have been as per the rules and regulations and company policy, they would have got held to account for discrimination, but... and these weren’t just colleagues who were on my level, they were Seniors, who knew they were making regular comments towards, you know, beards and hijabs and refusing to partake in certain social events, because of the venue and the type of event it would be. Whereas myself and other colleagues, we’d politely decline but we’d appreciate the invite, you know. We would politely decline but we’d appreciate the invite, “I’m really sorry, I really appreciate…” and we would appreciate that we’d been invited. We’d say, “it’s not something that we partake in” but, you know, “we wish you all the best and let me know how it went”. But then we’d overhear them, “yeah, well they’re never gonna be a part of us, are they”, you know, “maybe if he shaved his beard or something”, it wouldn’t be a problem to be there. But, come on…

**M**

Sure

**R**

…these sort of things… so, it does happen.

**M**

Mmm

**R**

You know…

**M**

Thank you for sharing.

**R**

Yeah, sorry, I just [inaudible 0:14:15]

**M**

No, it’s fine, it’s fine. My final question is just this, is there anything else that you’d like to say about the marriage process?

**R**

I think this should happen, this proposal, you know, giving authority to the Nikah ceremony, to be recognised and to simplify it, you know, my thoughts are giving authority to the Nikah ceremony for it to be recognised as legally binding… you know, legally binding thing, so it would make us feel better.

**M**

Ok. That’s great. Thank you so much. I will stop the recording.

**0:40:44**