

B | C Better Community **B | N** Business Network

*in Partnership with the School of Psychology,
University of East London*



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG MUSLIMS IN THE UK

Monday, 29th April 2019

Time: 9:30 - 16:00

University of East London
1 Salway Place, London E15 1NF



Our Delivery Partners



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Introduction

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. People from BAME communities are at increased risk of developing mental health problems and can find accessing help difficult. One of the most significant barriers to seeking advice and care is the stigma associated with mental health; it is still largely misunderstood and considered a taboo subject. There is a lack of understanding amongst public health and mainstream services around the role faith plays in an individual's wellbeing, resulting in a lack of cultural sensitivity which is needed for such a diverse population.

Some people in Muslim communities experience higher rates and longer periods of mental ill-health than other groups. There is evidence to show that services that draw on faith as a resource can help reduce or prevent long-term depression and improve people's quality of life. National healthcare policies state that professionals should take account of cultural identity and provide appropriate healthcare for minority ethnic and religious groups. However, community-based services have little or no impact on mainstream healthcare and reach only a small minority of people. Little evidence and support for professionals has been available about how to develop faith-based approaches for Muslim service users in the UK.

This one-day conference on mental health and wellbeing of young British Muslims brings together multiple sectors including Muslim community leaders, health, social care, education, charitable organisations, academics, researchers and policy makers to:

- Increase awareness of the mental health issues facing Muslim youth and the need for access to culturally and faith appropriate mental health and well-being resources/ services
- Help raise the profile of mental well-being in this population group
- Help decrease the stigma attached to mental illness within the Muslim community by creating dialogue and cross sector engagement
- Share/ support evidence-based research
- Provide a platform for learning, discussion, support and facilitation
- Form a post-conference report, with recommendations for the statutory services, government, researchers, funders and Muslim communities.

¹Mind, Mental Health Facts and Statistics | ²Mental Health Foundation, BAME Communities and Mental Health | ³Narayan Gopalkrishnan Cultural Diversity and Mental Health: Considerations for Policy and Practice | ⁴Dr Ghazala Mir, Addressing Depression in Muslim Communities | ⁵ibid | ⁶ibid

About us

B | C Better Community
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Better Community Business Network (BCBN)

BCBN is a Muslim-led charity, bringing together professionals, key government officials and heads of charities to facilitate community engagement. Since its inception BCBN has raised over £1.4million in funds for community causes and has attracted support from respected figures such as HRH The Prince of Wales; Former Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Nick Clegg; Former Justice Secretary, Rt Hon Chris Grayling; Mayor of London, Rt Hon. Sadiq Khan amongst others. BCBN provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working with deprived communities in the UK, programme areas range from education and poverty to social cohesion, health and well-being. BCBN also works with academic institutions, researchers, think tanks and government, seeking to overcome barriers to a more just and equal society.



University of East London (UEL)

With London campuses in Stratford and Docklands, the UEL is at the heart of the industrial and creative shift east, and a powerful global gateway. Over the past 125 years, the University has prepared graduates for the jobs of the future and has nurtured a longstanding tradition of applying research and knowledge to address issues with real-world relevance seeking to promote collaborative action and drive social cohesion and innovation with local, national and international partners.

Formally established in 1965, the School of Psychology at UEL embodies the aspirations of its founders, and of people everywhere, who regard University education as personally transformative, vocational through high calibre course-provision, purposefully oriented to preparing graduates as able and invested to contribute to social, economic and industry located needs and see these as opportunities to-make-a-difference. Evidence-based Social Justice Agenda sits at the heart of the School's civic engagement projects, with an accomplished record of shaping policy development and setting guidelines for practice. Echoing this applied professional ethos, in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) the School of Psychology was ranked 1st, nationally, for "research impact" (having secured 100% 4* ratings).

www.uel.ac.uk/psychology, @UELPsychLondon

The Programme

09:00 - 09:45	Registration and Coffee (Reception)
	Session 1 (Lecture theatre)
09:45 - 10:00	Introduction & Welcome Speakers: Sabah Gilani, Chief Executive of the Better Community Business Network, Mr Geoff Thompson MBE FRSA DL, Chair of the Board of Governors, University of East London
10:10 - 10:20	'Time for a whole system approach to improving mental health and wellbeing of our muslim youth' Speaker: Nuzhat Ali, Chair of Muslim Health Network
10:20 - 10:30	'How best to understand distress? Recent developments in psychological approaches' Speaker: Dr David Harper, School of Psychology, University of East London
10:30 - 10:40	'Highlighting mental health issues experienced by Muslim youth; Barriers to funding and commissioning research' Speaker: Dr Ghazala Mir, Leeds University
10:40 - 10:50	'Mental health and faith: towards a public health approach' Speaker: Prof. Jim McManus, Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council Vice-President, Association of Directors of Public Health UK Hon. Professor, Schools of Health and Social Work and Life and Medical Sciences, University of Hertfordshire
10:50 - 11:00	'How can the NHS meet the mental health needs of Muslim communities' Speaker: Clare Lyons-Collins, Project Director, Mental Health Innovation and Improvement at NHS Improvement
11:00 - 11:10	'Fear of the institutional gaze: politicising young British Muslims, impeding mental health' Speaker: Dr Tarek Younis, PhD/PsyD
11:10 - 11:30	Break and Refreshments (Catering room, G.19)
	Session 2 (Lecture Theatre)
11:30 - 11:40	'The role of community psychology, cultural psychiatry & social prescription in addressing mental health & wellbeing needs' Speaker: Prof. Rachel Tribe, School of Psychology, University of East London
11:40 - 11:55	'Cultural and faith sensitive therapeutic services addressing Muslim mental health' Speakers: Myira Khan, Founder of the Muslim Counsellor and Psychotherapist Network Aaliyah Shaikh, Founder of Rahmah Wellbeing Counselling Services
11:55 - 12:05	'My story' Speaker: Shalah Akhtar, PwC UK
12:05 - 12:15	'Islamic perspective and religious institution around health & well-being' Speaker: Sheikh Dr Abu Ibrahim
12:15 - 12:45	'A community-centric approach to Muslim mental health needs' Panellists: Dr Omar Shareef, British Islamic Medical Association; Raheel Mohammed, Maslaha; Dr Misbah Ali, Muslim Doctors Association; Talat Baig, Inspired Minds; Zohra Khaku, Muslim Youth Helpline; Kathleen Roche-Nagi, Approachable Parenting; Chair: Shenaz Bunglawala
12:45 - 13:45	Lunch (Catering Room, G.19)
	Session 3 (Discussion Groups & Workshops)
13:45 - 15:15	Discussion group 1: The provision of cultural and faith sensitive resources and services for Muslim youth Discussion group 2: Mental health awareness and reducing stigma in Muslim communities Discussion group 3: Inequalities in mental health: the role of research and development of cultural-sensitive resources Workshop: creative therapies and the storytelling of lived experience of mental health
15:45 - 16:30	Plenary, conclusions & closing remarks (Lecture theatre)
15:45 - 16:30	Networking

Conference Speakers



Professor Jim McManus is Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire County Council, UK.

He is a Chartered Psychologist and Chartered Scientist as well as a registered public health professional. He is a member of the Association of Directors of Public Health UK Board, and visiting Professor of Public Health at the University of Hertfordshire.

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK with the aim of maximising the effectiveness and impact of DsPH as Public Health leaders.



Clare Lyons-Collins Project Director, Mental Health Innovation and Improvement at NHS Improvement. Clare led the development of the national improvement model for mental health. This was co-produced with mental health trusts across England.

She has a long history of transformation in the NHS working across community, acute care and commissioning. She originally trained as an Occupational Therapist, holds a MBA from Henley Business School and was recently invited to become a leadership fellow at St. George's House, Windsor Castle.

NHS Improvement (NHSI) is responsible for overseeing foundation trusts and NHS trusts, as well as independent providers that provide NHS-funded care. It supports providers to give patients consistently safe, high quality, compassionate care within local health systems that are financially sustainable.



Geoff Thompson MBE FRSA DL Chair of Governors at UEL is the Founder and Executive Chair of the Youth Charter, a UK-based international charity and United Nations Non-Governmental Organisation that uses the ethics of sport and artistic excellence to tackle the problems of educational non-attainment, health inequality, anti-social behaviour and crime.

He also chairs Sport England's Advisory Group on Racial Equality in Sport and serving as a member of its grant assessment panel.



Dr Aneta D. Tunariu is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society and the Head of School of Psychology at the University of East London. Her academic expertise, research, consultancy and applied practice in national and international settings are hinged on the Psychology of Relating and closely informed by concepts from social psychology, existential positive psychology, coaching psychology, psychoanalytic theory and counselling psychology.

UEL School of Psychology has been one of UEL's flagship departments for more than half a century. It has an unparalleled range of teaching expertise and its research continues to make a world-class impact (1st in UK for impact of research, REF 2014).



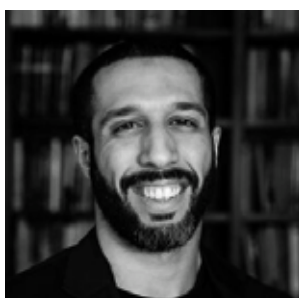
Dr David Harper is a Reader in Clinical Psychology and Programme Director (Academic) of the University of East London's Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. His co-authored book Psychology Mental Health and Distress (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) won the British Psychological Society (BPS) Book prize in 2014.

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Dr Ghazala Mir is an Associate Professor with research interests in health and social inequalities. Her research covers disadvantaged ethnic and faith communities, women and people with learning disability. She is a founder and Chair of the multidisciplinary Inequalities Research Network and has led work to highlight key research priorities in her field.

Leeds Faculty of Medicine and Mental Health has an internationally excellent reputation for the outstanding quality of our teaching and research. This is achieved through their faculty's cutting-edge expertise in medicine and healthcare, and through working collaboratively across the University - notably with physical-mathematical sciences, computation, bioengineering and biosciences.



Dr Tarek Younis is a cultural psychologist with a PhD/PsyD in Clinical Psychology. His research interests revolve around the cultural and political dimensions of mental health - theory and intervention. He teaches on the impact of culture, religion, politics, globalisation and psychologisation on mental health interventions.



Nuzhat Ali has over 25 years of health system leadership experience working across the public and academic sector in England and internationally, from front line clinician and operational delivery to strategist across a range of portfolios. She is passionate about engaging with and mobilizing community stakeholders to tackle health inequalities. Nuzhat is a Trustee and Director for Merton Voluntary Services Council and is also Chair and Founder of Muslim Women of Merton, who aim to engage, inspire and empower women and their families.

Muslim women of Merton's vision (MWM) is a cohesive equitable society that empowers Muslim women to have a compelling voice contributing to positive outcomes for all. Engaging, inspiring and empowering Muslim women to positively impact society through community leadership across South West London. MWM is about outwardly engaging Muslim women who wish to make a difference in their local community by embodying the principles of lived Islam.



Dr Misbah Ali is a GP in Buckinghamshire and is a prison doctor in Oxfordshire. She qualified from King's College London and completed her postgraduate training at John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

The Muslim Doctors Association is a non-profit, voluntary organisation founded in 2004. A team of doctors, dentists and allied health professionals work within local communities to empower and support individuals to lead healthier lives. Their mission, by using faith and culturally sensitive methods, is to inspire physical, spiritual and emotional well-being amongst local communities and, minority populations within the UK



Myira Khan is an Accredited Counsellor, Supervisor and the Founder of the Muslim Counsellor and Psychotherapist Network (MCAPN). Myira was awarded the Mental Health Hero Award (2015) by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. Myira is also a Trustee on the BACP Board of Governors.

The Muslim Counsellor and Psychotherapist Network (MCAPN) was established in April 2013. Its aims are to connect Muslim practitioners (counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists and psychiatrists), to develop best practice, offer support and CPD opportunities and raise the profile of Muslim professionals in mental health services.

Aaliyah Shaikh graduated from University of Cambridge with an MEd in Psychotherapeutic Counselling. Aaliyah founded the counselling service Rahmah Wellbeing. Her research interests are in intergenerational trauma and the impact of early experiences in the womb. She is currently pursuing her PhD Research in Health Psychology at City University.

Rahmah Wellbeing aims to bring together psychotherapeutic skills, neuroscientific knowledge and spiritual insights in creating a sense of wholeness and well-being through counselling and education.



Sheikh Dr Abu Ibrahim completed his PhD in Law. His research focused on British Muslims and the practice of Islamic family law. He has completed his Alim course and holds a BSc, and an MA in Islamic Studies. He is an Imam, khateeb and lecturer; and regularly delivers sermons and lectures throughout the UK.



Dr Omar Shareef is a Consultant Neuropsychiatrist. He has a keen interest in exploring the interconnections between the forms of brain injury and psychiatric and behavioural presentations. Current research interest are use of non-invasive brain stimulation for brain injury, and in neurocognitive and behavioural rehabilitation.

The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA). BIMA is a non-profit, democratic, national membership organisation for Muslim healthcare professionals in the UK. To inspire Muslim healthcare professionals to unite in service of our patients and profession.



Raheel Mohammed is the director and founder of Maslaha. Raheel currently sits on an advisory board to the Ministry of Justice looking at the disproportionate number of young Muslim men in the criminal justice system. A former journalist, he has also been involved in a number of start-ups with a focus on education and the arts.

Maslaha seeks to change and challenge the conditions that create inequalities for Muslim communities in areas such as education, gender, criminal justice, health, negative media coverage and a continued climate of Islamophobia.



Shala Akhter works within PwC's Tax practice with nearly 8 years of experience, having joined the firm as a school leaver. She has since become a mental health advocate particularly for those from a minority or faith based background. She also sits on PwC's mental health steering committee and is Mental Health First Aid qualified.



Kathleen Roche-Nagi is managing director of Approachable Parenting. Kathleen is a qualified Nurse (SRN) and Midwife (SCM) Ireland. She is also a qualified counsellor (BACP), life-coach (AMS) and teacher (QTLS). She has been working with BAME families for over 20 years and hosts a weekly community radio show "Parenting Hour" on Unity FM 93.5 to approx 15,000 listeners.

Approachable Parenting CIC is non-for-profit organisation that provides parenting courses and coaching to BAME families especially Muslim families within the UK. They have been delivering the evidenced based '5 Pillars of Parenting' programmes for 12 year, having positive results in thousands of families in the UK



Talat Baig is a Mathematics and Computer Science graduate from UCL and Imperial College London and currently works as a Data Scientist at a start-up bringing solar powered energy to the developing world. He is the founder of Inspired Minds

Inspired Minds is a faith based, voluntary mental health charity located in London that launched in 2014 with the aim to raise awareness, combat stigmas and provide professional, non-judgemental, confidential support to those with mental health illnesses.



Zohra Khaku spent ten years Volunteering at MYH, first as a telephone counsellor, then a supervisor and eventually served as Vice Chair on the Board of Trustees, until 2009. She has recently taken up the role of Director of MYH, where she hopes to grow the organisation into a true community partner for those in need.

Muslim Youth Helpline is a free, confidential and non-judgemental service, available nationally via the telephone, email and web chat. The service provides emotional support and signposting on issues from anxiety to pornography addiction, every day of the year. MYH also conducts training and research on youth mental health issues.

Discussion groups & workshop sessions



Gulamabbas Lakha is undertaking research and teaches Psychology of Religion at the University of Oxford. His research focusses on how faith-based concepts and practices can be harnessed to improve accessibility and adherence to treatments for depression, such as CBT and mindfulness based approaches, with specific regard to depression in the UK Muslim community.



Dr Ian Tucker is a Reader and Research Leader in the School of Psychology at UEL. He has expertise in digital media, emotion and mental health, and teaches across undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD programmes in these areas.



Professor Rachel Tribe is a Professor of Applied Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of East London and a chartered counselling psychologist. Rachel is an authority on working with interpreters in mental health, migration and, older adults, and social justice. In 2014, she was awarded the British Psychological Society's Ethics Committee's award for Challenging Social Inequalities.

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Shenaz Bunglawala is Deputy Director of the Research and Strategy Unit at Penny Appeal. Before this, she served as Assistant Director at Aziz Foundation where she led programmes in Community Development and Public Engagement. Previously, she was Head of Research and Policy at a leading Muslim civil society organisation where she led research and advocacy on Islamophobia, media portrayals of Islam and Muslims, and the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on Muslim communities. She has written extensively on Islamophobia and its effects on Muslim civil society, and on religion in the public sphere. She is a Director of the Byline Festival Foundation for inclusive journalism, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



Sajda Butt is the Director of SB Training and Consultancy where she develops and delivers bespoke training packages for voluntary and statutory organisations and has experience working with schools, community and local government agencies. Sajda is a Mental Health First Aid instructor and also holds a license to deliver Emotional First Aid.



Sahar Beg has been a Psychotherapist for the last 25 years specialising in Complex trauma. More recently Sahar started to run group sessions on Theatre Therapy with the view that clients can manage their thoughts and behaviours and focusing on the somatic experiences within the body.

MindworksUK is a not for profit organisation and awaiting its charity status. A service provider to Mosques, local borough councils, Schools, GP's, corporate organisations and private referrals this list is not limited. With a team of 19 volunteer counsellors who speak over 9 languages between them, they can cover a range of diverse backgrounds.



Discussion groups and interactive workshops

Discussion group 1: The provision of cultural and faith sensitive resources and services for Muslim youth

This session will showcase examples of service providers who are tailoring their offer to suit the needs of Muslim youth. This is aimed at public health services, local authorities and organisations actively engaging with mental health in BAME/ Muslim communities.

In this session, participants will be asked to discuss:

1. *What are commissioners looking for when commissioning services?*
2. *How can the statutory sector work with cultural and faith sensitive providers?*
3. *What barriers do young people face in reaching out to services, and what can service providers do to overcome them?*
4. *Is there a risk of generalising Muslims into one homogenous group when trying to provide faith sensitive services and how can we avoid this?*
5. *What does good mental health and wellbeing provision look like in your local area/ sector?*
6. *What would a national mental health programme, addressing the needs of the Muslim community look like?*
7. *How can we provide a faith sensitive service (based on Islamic teachings and principles) whilst providing a non-judgmental and safe environment for young people to explore issues that impact their mental health and well-being?*

Below are some of the responses we received from our survey, providing some insight into the mental health struggles of young Muslims in the UK'



"Before I redefined what faith meant to me, I found faith very oppressive mentally. The accountability concept meant that I was always committing sin, with the threat of eternal hell and burning looming over my head. I found faith to be used as a means of control. Also when people use faith to say we must always be happy and grateful, and rob us of our right to experience sadness, anxiety, depression. Islam recognizes these human emotions, but Muslims are convinced these emotions are weakness of faith and sinful".

"As a muslim woman, I feel oppressed from within the home and outside the home equally. Life is hard and muslim communities are not forthcoming at addressing mental health issues, they are usually allowed to get worse. Thanks for trying to bring a change, it means a lot to hope that another generation might have it easier".



"If my therapist was secular they may see me as drinking and having sex as freeing myself when in reality it would be a sign of my mental unhinging"



"I don't think it matters whether they are muslim or not. What matters is their perspective and being muslim doesn't necessarily mean they are better equipped to help".

"The religion of the counsellor doesn't matter to me. i sort of feel like if there is an effort to have specifically Muslim counsellors for muslim patients, i would be concerned about being judged based on my actions from a religious perspective (i understood this would be unlikely in reality as it would be highly unprofessional) but i feel like it would be a concern of mine and cause me to be less open when talking to the counsellor. I'd also be worried about them giving me religious advice when that wouldn't necessarily be what i want".



Discussion group 2: Mental health awareness and reducing stigma in Muslim communities

Raising awareness of mental health issues and reducing associated stigma about mental health. This session will support participants to recognise the signs of deterioration and poor mental well-being in our youth and to discuss interventions to a growing epidemic. This is aimed at Imams, parents, Muslim leaders and organisations.

This session will have 4 groups with the following discussion questions and group exercise:

Group A

1. What is the role of Muslim organisations and mosques in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young Muslims?
2. What are the obstacles or opportunities to closer collaboration between Muslim organisations (mosques) and mental health services?
3. Create a campaign outline which targets young Muslims, focus on one issue that young Muslims struggle with and present key messages that help address/ deal with Self-harm or Suicide

Group B

1. How can we reduce the stigma attached to mental health needs and support of young Muslims?
 2. How can we better educate and de-stigmatize mental health in communities? What kind of programme does this look like?
 3. Create a campaign outline which targets young Muslims, focus on one issue that young Muslims struggle with and present key messages that help address/ deal with one or more of these concerns: Anxiety; Depression; Stress; Personality Disorder
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Group C

1. How can we take into consideration and work with cultural and religious differences when delivering a faith sensitive support service?
2. There is a disparity in the number of Muslims accessing counselling and therapy compared to those who recognise that they have experienced mental health struggles. What are the possible reasons for this? How can we better improve/ facilitate access to these services?
3. Create a campaign outline which targets young Muslims, focus on one issue that young Muslims struggle with and present key messages that help address/ deal with eating disorder.



"I was fasting and had exams to revise for as well as feeling very low. as awful as it sounds i spent the whole month just wishing for the month to be over because i felt i couldn't do anything, i wasn't enjoying life, and considering that i've had eating disorders in the past, the month was very difficult for me. during this time i still turned to Allah for help and my mum could also see that i was struggling but again, i feel like nothing helped me at all"

Group D

1. In taking a holistic approach to bettering mental wellbeing, family and community play a crucial role. What tools are available to Mosques to create a positive impact within these areas, and what has been done so far? What tools / resources need to be created or put in place?
2. Is there a need for a national programme of Muslim mental health to be rolled out, what are the gaps in service provisions? How can we address these?
3. Create a campaign outline which targets young Muslims, focus on one issue that young Muslims struggle from and present key messages that help address/ deal with Islamophobia or Bullying

Discussion group 3: Inequalities in mental health: the role of research and development of culturally-sensitive resources

This session will focus on stimulating the research agenda and influencing policy makers by identifying the key gaps and challenges in health research, with concentration on reducing inequalities in mental health of Muslim youth. This is aimed at researchers, academics, funders and public bodies.

In this session participants will be asked to discuss

- 1. What kind of research is needed now to address the mental health issues faced by young Muslims in the UK?*
- 2. Who can help make this research happen: How can funders, researchers and other stakeholders ensure that research empowers Muslim youth rather than reinforcing the social exclusion they experience?*
- 3. What are the structural factors which impact mental health access for all (e.g. austerity) but which may disproportionately impact young British Muslims?*
- 4. What areas of research into the Muslim community and mental health challenges/ service impact is required?*
- 5. The role of counsellors and therapists - how can we support practitioners to conduct more research or collaborate on research?*
- 6. How can we use the outcomes of research/ sound data to better inform the sector and improve mental health provisions/ services for the Muslim community?*

Workshop: Creative therapies and the storytelling of lived experience of mental health

This session will explore various factors that impact on our mental health using visual imagery to explore the role of physical, mental and social interactions on our wellbeing. Using role play and creative arts, the therapist will demonstrate the use of human sculpturing, voice work and storytelling to explore mental health issues. Through this exploration, participants will learn how to create a sustainable balance between the different factors that impact their life.

The session will help increase self-awareness and offer a creative way for an individual or group to explore and solve personal and social problems. This is for anyone who would like to explore feelings and behaviour with others in a safe environment with professional support. This session is also useful for learning from and engaging with people who have experienced mental health issues, first hand.

Your ticket confirmation and name badges will display the group you have been allocated to. We ask that you kindly keep to your allocated group. Please note that discussion group 1 - 3 will be recorded as part of the report we are compiling for this conference. You can opt-out at anytime by informing the session facilitator.

The report

Working towards improving the mental well-being of Muslim youth in England: challenges, solutions and practical case studies

National healthcare policies state that professionals should take account of cultural identity and provide appropriate healthcare for minority ethnic and religious groups. Professionals receive little practical support to do this, there is also very little research evidence about how to meet the needs of minority faith groups.

The government's five-year mental health plan is aimed at improving access to mental health services nationally. The Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health Programme developed by Public Health England (PHE) seeks to bring together leading Muslim organisations to better understand issues affecting Muslims around mental well-being. The Concordat also looks at how organisations can work together to improve the mental well-being of the community and aims to facilitate local and national action around preventing mental health problems and promoting health and well-being.

The report, commissioned by BCBN will highlight the key findings of the conference, sharing best practice and recommendations on mental health needs within the Muslim community. In doing so, we intend to address and aid the gap in knowledge, access and collaboration between statutory services, institutions and community organisations for a more informed, community-centric approach to the mental health needs and provisions of Muslims in the UK.



The Survey & Case Studies

The Better Community Business Network (BCBN) and the University of East London (UEL), in partnership with Inspired Minds are running a survey until May 2019 into the mental health and wellbeing of young Muslims (between the ages of 18 and 30) living in the UK. We intend to capture data on mental health struggles, barriers to accessing treatment/support and the role played by faith in treatment and wellbeing. If you would like to participate or share the survey, please visit surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Muslimmentalhealth

Case studies

Some of the responses we received from our survey which provide an insight into the mental health struggles of young Muslims in the UK



Female,
East Midlands

I think mental health issues is an important topic to raise concerns about, especially among Muslim and South Asian communities as they are usually seen as 'taboo'. People don't acknowledge mental health issues as a serious problem. Also, mental health issues among young individuals are ignored as older individuals do not recognise their struggles i.e. bullying, stress, sexual harassment etc. They seem to think that as long as we don't need to pay the bills or provide for anyone we can't possibly be struggling.

I also wonder what provisions there are for people like my mum. I know she is depressed. She has told me several times that she feels empty inside regardless of what joy or hardship enters her life, but when she visited the doctor they were dismissive and did not refer her to a therapist. She also struggles with English so I don't know if there would even be a provision available for her to account for that.



Female,
London



Female,
South East
England

I'm a mental health nurse and have seen over and over families involving religious excuses rather than getting to the route of the cause and understanding the science of it.

I felt like my counsellor didn't really understand me and this was due to cultural and religious differences. For example some of the things the counsellor advised me to do were not religiously acceptable. Ultimately I felt that religion and getting closer to God helped me more than my counselling and if my counsellor was a Muslim I feel like I would have been treated a lot quicker.



Female,
North West
England



Female
West Midlands

I feel if I saw someone who is a Muslim they would judge me and since I live in a place where everyone knows each other, so trust can be questionable.

While I personally find peace when I practice my faith more than I usually do, in matters of mental health I only ask that the individual I trust with something so vast and scary and important not err one way or the other through unconscious bias.



Female
London



Female
West Midlands

A lot of the problems I experienced stemmed primarily from learnt cultural behaviours. I'd reckon this would be hard for a non-Muslim to understand. I'd also want the solution to the problem to involve building my Iman (faith), I can't imagine a non-Muslim therapist advising me on how I can get closer to Allah.

I found counselling useless and futile because the underlying assumptions of their analysis, beliefs and worldview are fundamentally opposed to mine. I found the conversations to be very superficial and although some good advice was given, I felt a holistic solution encompassing spiritual and psychological remedies was not offered. This is where I feel a Muslim therapy service would be helpful. However, the extent to which it would help would depend on the practitioner not only being Muslim nominally, but in understanding spiritual stations, and the deep rooted relationship between physical actions, thoughts, intention, spiritual states and psychological well-being.



Male
East Midlands



Female
West Midlands

I wouldn't want Muslim counselling, but a Muslim counsellor would be more aware of the obstacles and worries I would have if I struggled with my mental health. As a practising Muslim there are certain things I would not engage in. If my therapist was secular they may see me as drinking and having sex as freeing myself when in reality it would be a sign of my mental unhinging.

Our religion plays a big part in our lives and we can't just omit that part of our lives when we seek help for mental health. It needs to be part of the process because it is a part of who we are and what shapes us.



Female
London



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