

'Hidden Survivors, Uncovering the Mental Health Struggles of Young British Muslims' a landmark report

Press Release

Wednesday, 23/06/2021

"For Immediate Release"

BCBN in partnership with the University of East London, School of Psychology yesterday launched a hard-hitting report, **'Hidden Survivors, Uncovering the Mental Health Struggles of Young British Muslims'** following a successful online event on Tuesday 22nd June 2021 attended by over 100 people and hosted by Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP.

Dr Allin-Khan opened the event by saying ***"Even before the pandemic, young people's mental health was in crisis, coronavirus has only deepened the existing problems that previously existed providing a vital insight into the experience of young Muslims who have accessed mental health services."***

This report reminds us very starkly that anyone regardless of background can suffer with their mental health and there really is no one size fits all approach when it comes to support.

Nevertheless as this report emphasises we have to understand the role played by cultural and intersectional identities, as a Polish, Pakistani, Muslim, I can tell you what that is like, and now more than ever it's important that we acknowledge these (intersectional) identities, including religion when understanding those who are struggling with their mental health"

An expert panel in the field of mental health representing various VCS organisations and the author discussed key findings in the report which include:

- 4 in 5 Muslim young people said they had suffered mental health struggles
- 64% disclosing they had experienced suicidal thoughts
- Muslim young people are 3 more times more likely to look for support from friends than accessing services with roughly the same amount of young people then not getting access to therapy
- Three in five young Muslims, (61%), say it is important to them that mental health services display cultural/ faith sensitivity.

Brian Dow, the Deputy Chief Executive of Rethink Mental Illness said in response ***"this is a pretty serious indictment of the gap that is out there"***.

The panel went on to discuss the need to address the causes of poor health outcomes among minority ethnic groups by tackling structural racism and negative experiences that deter Muslims from accessing services, as well the importance of faith and culturally sensitive services to improve health outcomes.

The event finally concluded with questions from the audience with the author Shenaz Bunglawala stating that ***"Families and communities have a valuable role to play...young people learn the tools to practice faith in their communities and mosques, therefore mental health literacy is an important tool so that parents can engage young people in positive conversations, acknowledge young people's feelings and to not diminish their struggles or make young people feel guilty or that their feelings would pass"***

Following the report launch, BCBN will work with key stakeholders and policy holders within government departments, mental health services, VCS organisations and communities to ensure the findings are effectively disseminated and drive forward the recommendations in the report.

Key Recommendations:

1. Training, professional development and religious literacy programmes run by specialist providers; how faith can play a role in recovery and resilience. Encouraging faith and cultural competency training integrated into professional development of the mental health workforce and support services.

2. Mental health charities, voluntary sector organisations and independent providers are components of the wider mental health workforce and recommendations outlined here on recruitment, retention, representation and diversity monitoring should apply equally across these partner organisations.

3. Individual experiences of interacting in communities and social attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in the UK can and do play a role in how effective faith can be to individual strategies on coping and resilience. A more sophisticated discourse on faith and mental health is a necessity not just in the mental health sector but also, crucially, within Muslim communities. Such a discourse should clearly delineate religion from 'culture'.

The event was a huge success bringing together experts and stakeholders across the sector to discuss the report and its uncovering of hidden survivors, that provided the prompt needed for organisations and support services to consider how to embed improving young Muslims' mental health in their future work programmes.

For the report synopsis and full report please go to: <http://bcbn.org.uk/reports/>

A full recording of report launch webinar can be found:

<https://youtu.be/zLhjA8g9DAM>

Social media toolkit and key activities to be regularly updated can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZSIV4DIq1bDLnPSLbLqgnUzBmMA4mPdaJE0I3OV5e0E/edit>

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Notes to Editors

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The Better Community Business Network (BCBN) is a Muslim-led organisation, bringing together businesses, professionals, heads of charities and politicians across the political spectrum to facilitate community engagement. 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 departments, seeking to overcome barriers to a more just and equal society. For further details please visit www.bcbn.org.uk or [view](#) BCBN's journey.

University of East London, School of Psychology, 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.
www.uel.ac.uk/psychology

Launch event panel members profiles: <http://bcbn.org.uk/events/>