

JOIN US BRISTOL MUSLIM CONFERENCE 2023

Challenges & Opportunities facing Young Muslims in Bristol

Karak chai kindly served by chairwala

SPEAKERS

SEAT UNIQUE STADIUM
GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET
GROUND, NEVIL ROAD, BS7 9EJ

**SAT 4TH
NOV 2023
10AM - 4PM**

Twitter: [BMSLG_GROUP](https://twitter.com/BMSLG_GROUP)
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BRISTOL MUSLIM CONFERENCE 2023

What's Happening?

1. Hear from Keynote speakers
2. Interactive Workshops
3. Networking Lunch & Art Exhibition
4. You Tell Us!
5. Inspirational talk from TikTok famous Twin Dentists

Sign up: bit.ly/bmslg

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Venue: Gloucestershire County Cricket Ground

THE BRISTOL MUSLIM CONFERENCE

4th November 2023

A Focus on the Challenges and Opportunities facing Young Muslims in Bristol

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Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

The 3rd Bristol Muslim Community Conference was fully booked and attended by over 120 delegates from the local community, strategic partners, and service providers.

There was a vibrant atmosphere at the welcome and registration, where delegates could have a cup of chai from Chaiiwala and mix with other delegates, fill in the police survey and browse around the Bristol Muslim Art Gallery. They also could win a prize at the end of the conference by answering a key question.

The conference was held at the Gloucestershire County Cricket Club and delegates were excited by the choice of venue as for many, it was their first ever visit. The Chairman of the GCCC welcomed the delegates in the Premiere Lounge and gave a brief history of the club, including the fact that WG Grace had purchased the original land.

Professor Adeela Shafi then opened the conference and introduced the young vibrant hosts Aziz Deen and Nasra Ayub. They carried out the task with great skill and engagement.

Mark Shelford, Police Commissioner for Avon and Somerset gave an award to Professor Adeela Shafi for the work done for the police force. Mark then encouraged young Muslims to join the police to tackle the rising cyber-crime and was pleased to engage with the Muslim community.

Dr Wajid Akhtar from the Muslim Conference of Great Britain stated that these are difficult times for Muslims and that they have been trying to meet with the community's minister for some time to raise issues regarding Muslims, but have been pushed away. He urged Muslims in Bristol to lobby their MPs to urge the Communities Minister to engage with Muslim communities.

Azeem Rafeeq, former professional cricketer, who faced extensive discrimination, resulting in him challenging the cricket authorities at the Yorkshire County Cricket Club. This resulted in a Parliamentary Review and changes at the YCCC and the England Cricket Board. The message was to fight against discrimination.

Baroness Warsi talked about the conflict in Gaza and the collective punishment being inflicted by the IDF on innocent civilians. She indicated dismay at the inaction of the British government in supporting Palestinians. She urged peaceful demonstration. She also pointed out that there is nothing like the BMSLG in other cities around the UK, emphasising the importance of such a platform to bring the diverse Muslim communities together.

*"There is nothing like
the BMSLG in other
cities around the UK."*
Dr Wajid Akhtar, Muslim
Council of Britain

To emphasise the importance of
our platform in helping the
community.



A range of parallel Workshops were held to discuss the issues facing young Muslims in Bristol and several issues and challenges were discussed at the review of the workshop activities.

New career events were suggested as an outcome of the workshop activities, also getting young Muslims involved in BMSLG.

Local and national trailblazers that are making a difference were highlighted. For example:

Mohamed Sayagle, who is working to move young people away from knife crime through sports, by working with the police and young Muslims in Bristol with the organisation Bristol Somali Youth Voice.

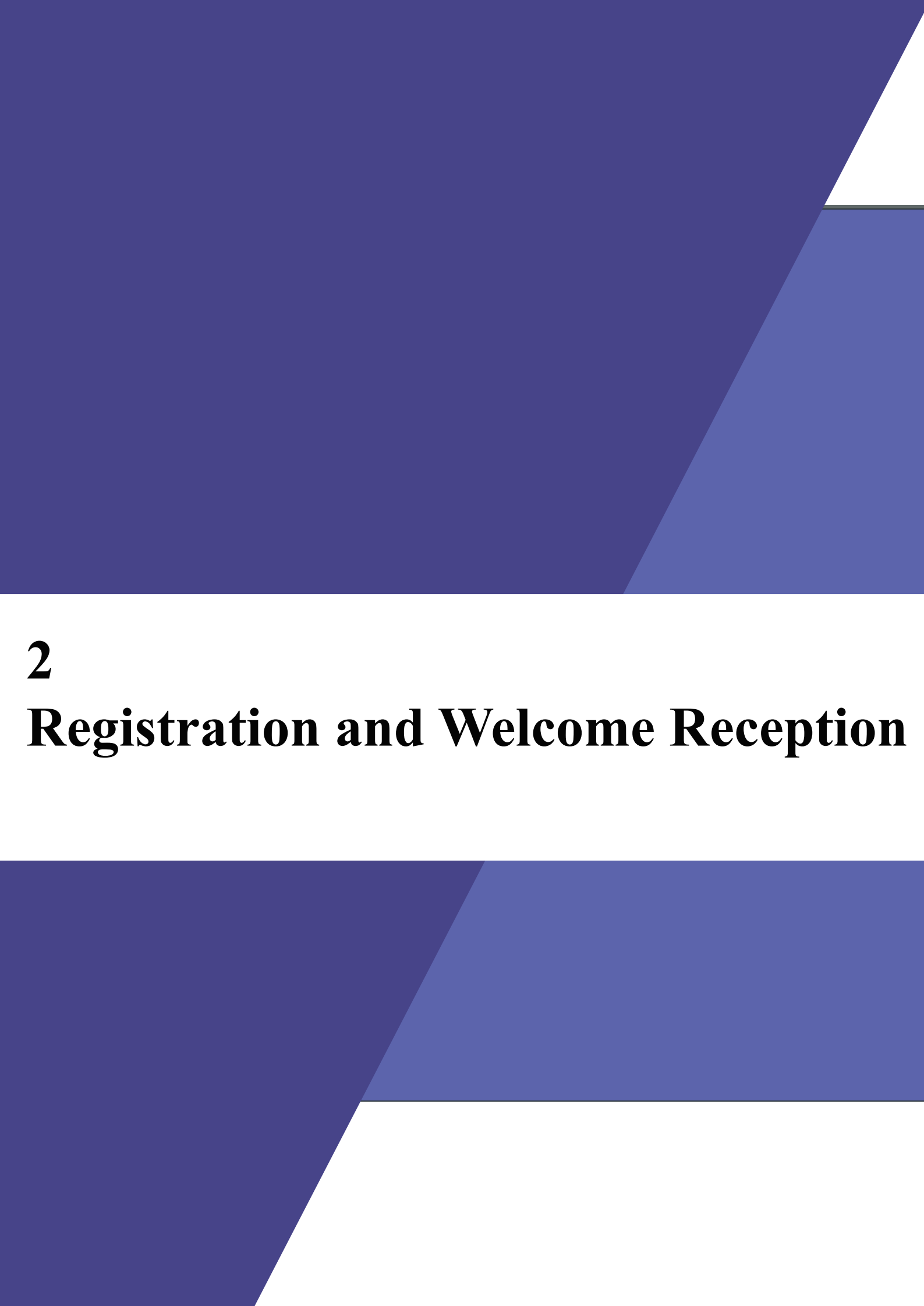
**"Push on with
your dreams
and don't let
anyone tell you
otherwise."
Dr Asha
Mohamed**

Dr Asha Mohammed's story of facing many challenges and obstacles, preventing her from becoming a medical doctor and how she had the tenacity to push and become an award-winning doctor.

Omer Khalief runs Riba Free Foundation which supports young entrepreneurs to finance businesses which are Riba Free. This is a not-for-profit foundation and encourages young Muslims to get training in interest free finance and provide them with details of organisations which meet this.

The competition winner was Fahisa for her answer to the question: *'If I was in charge of Bristol I would...'*

**"Create more easily
accessible
opportunities for
teenagers to engage
them as members of
the community and
keep them out of
trouble."
Fasiha Hussain**



2

Registration and Welcome Reception

2. Welcome Registration and Reception

The Conference was enriched by four distinguished guests:

- Mark Shelford (Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner)
- Dr Wajid Akhtar (Muslim Council of Great Britain)
- Azeem Rafiq (Former Professional Cricketer)
- Baroness Sayeeda Warsi

Guests were welcomed by the BMSLG for registration where they had the opportunity to interact with other guests with their Chai, and walk around the Art exhibition of talented Muslim artists in Bristol.

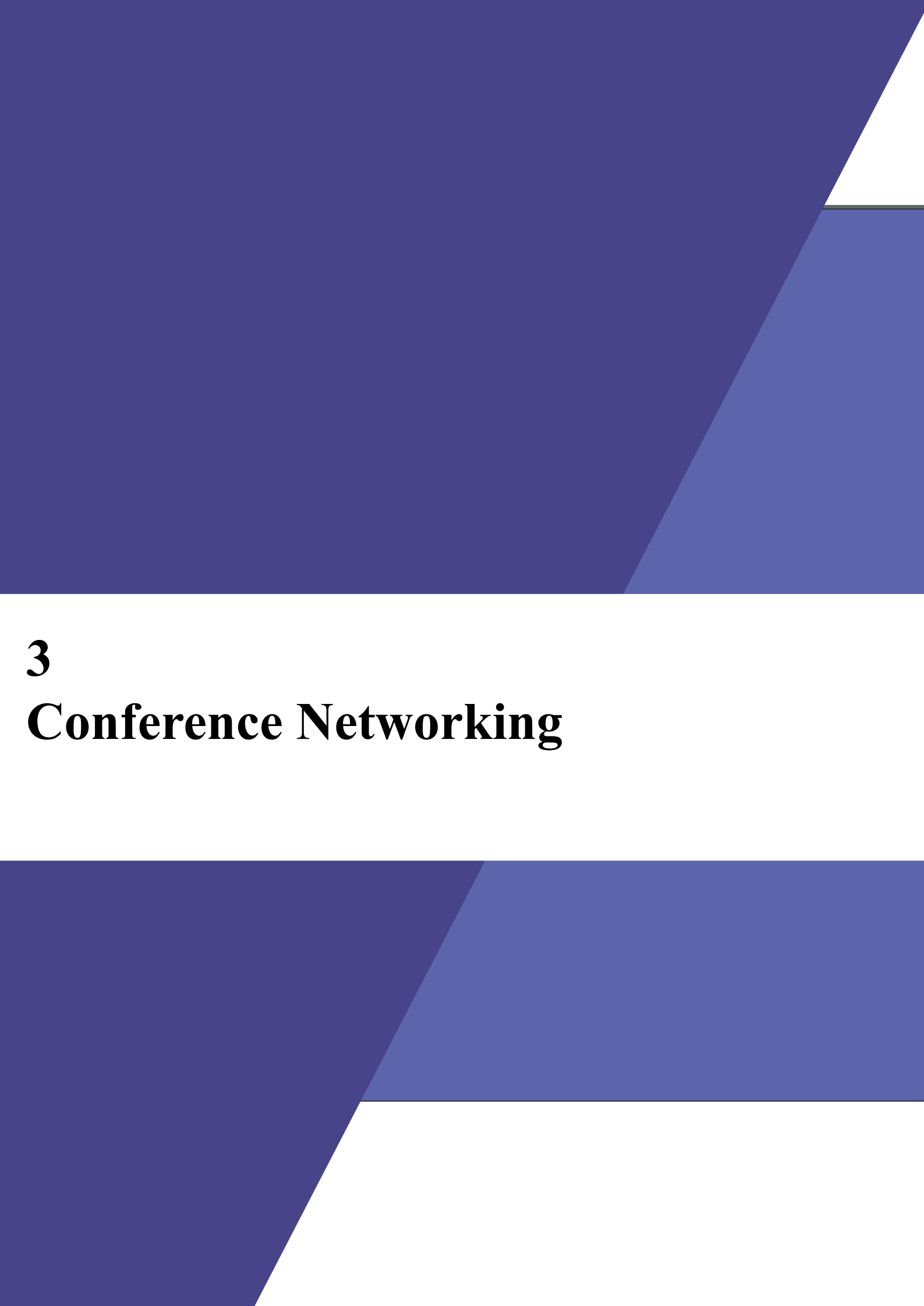
During the reception, guests were asked to participate in the police survey, led by Mohammed Berber. The guests were encouraged to complete the police survey and answer a question which resulted in a prize for a lucky winner.



The reception was very vibrant with a great atmosphere and wonderful engagement between guests.

Partners and service providers set up stalls where individuals could have one to one discussion regarding services provided by the strategic partners.

Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol City Council, NHS, SARI, BSWN and other groups were represented at the conference.



3

Conference Networking

3. Conference delegates having general discussion, meal, and social interaction.





BMSLG

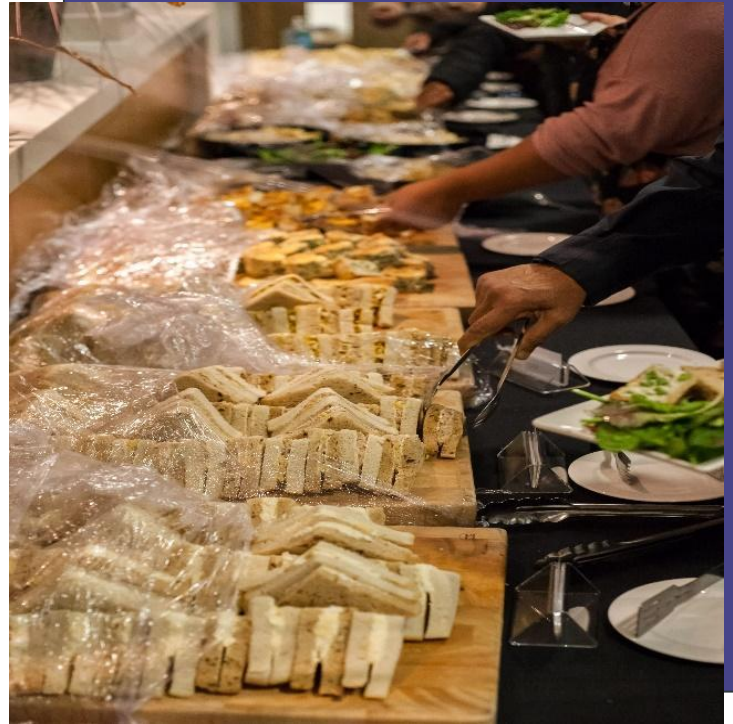
Bristol Muslim Strategic
Leadership Group

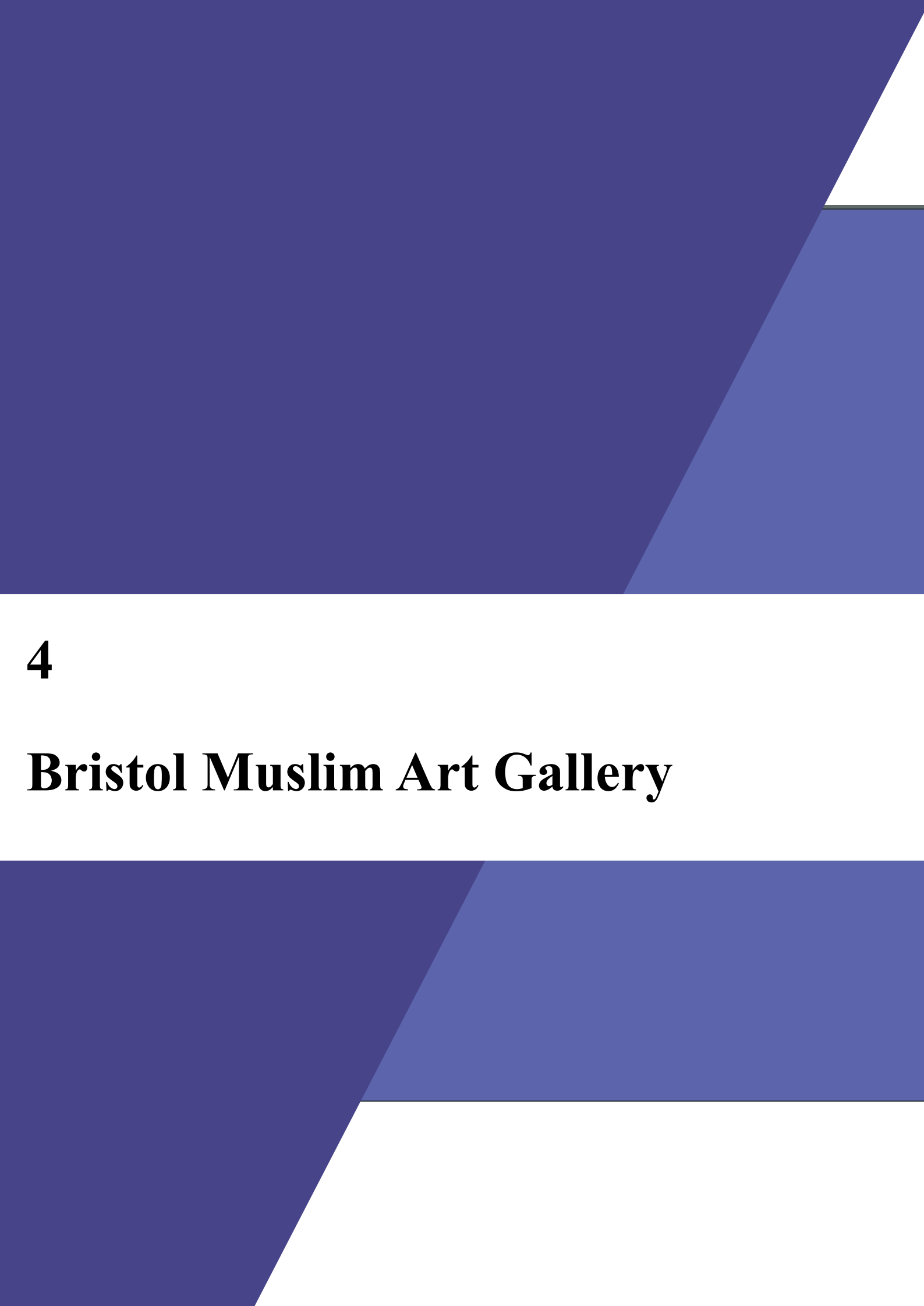


Email: info@bmslg.org



Website: www.bmslg.org



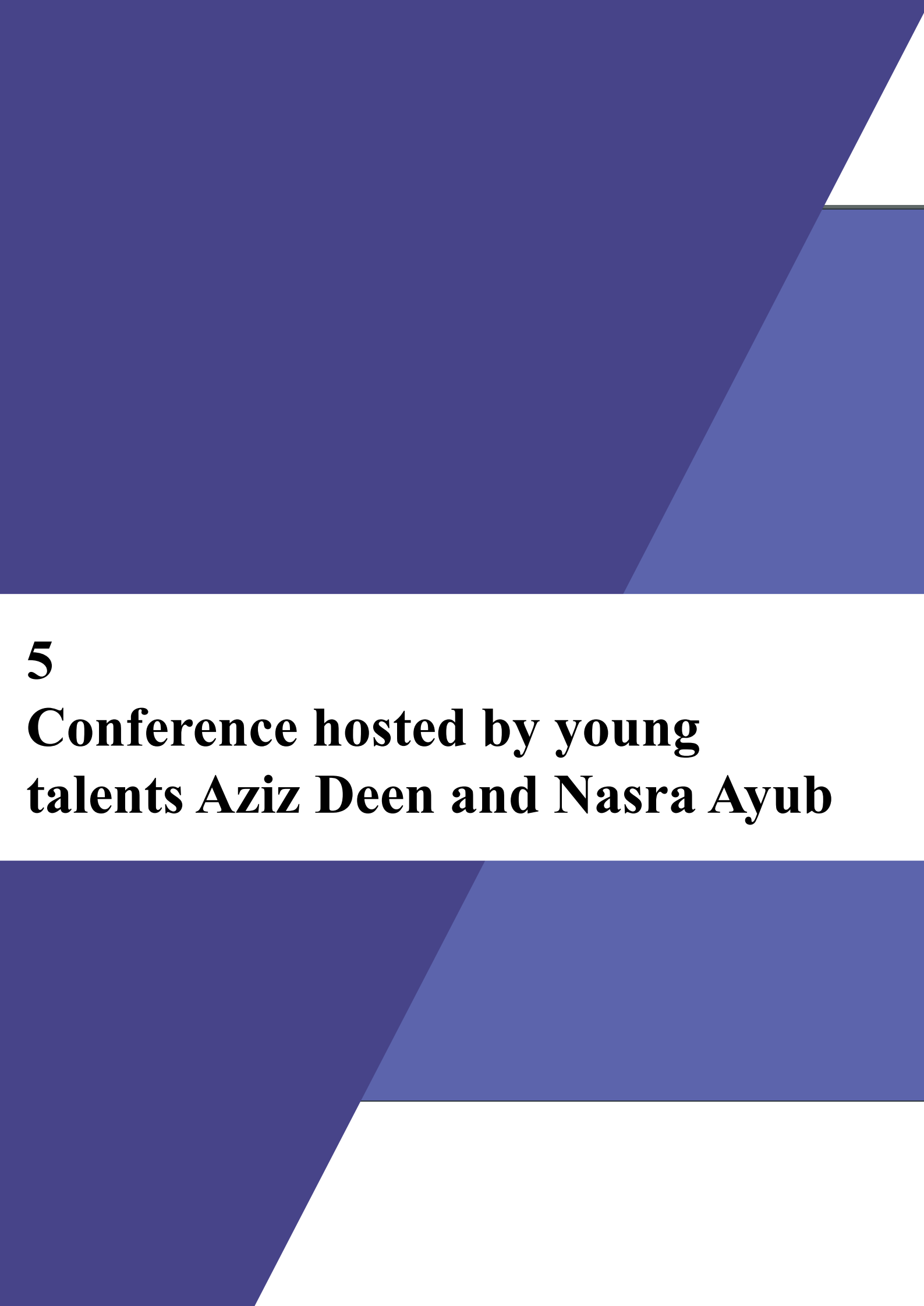


4

Bristol Muslim Art Gallery

4. Bristol Muslim Art Gallery at the conference





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**Conference hosted by young
talents Aziz Deen and Nasra Ayub**



Aziz Deen is a solicitor specialising in Islamic Finance and Commercial Property. He is a committed social activist appearing on BBC Question Time and is a first-class graduate from the University of Manchester Law School. Aziz has been a longstanding supporter of BMSLG since its inception in 2019 and joined the group officially in 2023 after hosting the Bristol Muslim Conference on behalf of BMSLG. Aziz Deen was a very vibrant host, who was engaged with the conference audience and asked challenging questions to the guest speakers.



Nasar Ayub is a Bristol University Graduate in Philosophy and Politics. Multi-award-winning activist, writer and public speaker who is passionate about tackling racism, violence against women and girls and engaging youth in activism and philanthropy. Nasra also writes on topics of social justice issues such as racial injustice and gender inequality. Featured on Channel 4, BBC 1, BBC Three, ITV and has written for Metro UK, gal-dem, Stylist Mag, Dazed and the i paper etc.

Nasra was the Joint host for the BMSLG conference and carried out task very well.

Both Aziz and Nasra representing the young talented Muslims in Bristol. They both elevated the BMSLG conference and reflected the young Muslim talent we have in Bristol!

The host team of Aziz Deen and Nasra Ayub interacted with the guest speakers, by asking them key question on behalf of the Muslim Community of Bristol.





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Conference Main Event



The Conference was opened by Professor Dr Adeela Shafi thanking all for taking part and special thanks to the distinguished guests.



The Chairman of Gloucestershire CCC David Jones welcomed everyone to the venue and how delighted the club was to host the Bristol Muslim Conference. David stated that GCCC supports all communities in Bristol and the conference being held at GCCC will strengthen the relationship between GCCC and the Bristol Muslim community.



Reciting from the Quran by Imam Bilal



Police & Crime Commissioner Mark Shelford thanked Professor Adeela Shafi for her efforts and awarded her with medal of appreciation. Mark went on to say that the relationship with Muslim community is very important and invited young Muslims to join Avon and Somerset Police force and make a difference the community. He highlighted the increase in cyber-crime and young people with talent were needed to fight the online crimes.



Dr Wajid Akhtar (Muslim Council of Great Britain)

Dr Wajid thanked the BMSLG for inviting him to the conference and went on to say that there are not many Muslim organisation like BMSLG in the UK. BMSLG has built up strong relationship with the local service providers.

The Muslim community in Bristol should work with the BMSLG to ensure that their issues are raised with the appropriate authorities.

Dr Wajid stated that there are many challenges faces the Muslim communities in the UK and that the community need to lobby their local MPs to ensure that their voices are heard. Dr Wajid stated that the Muslim Council of Great Britain have been trying to get a meeting with the appropriate minister to discuss the issues facing the Muslim community and they have not been successful.

Azeem Rafiq (Former Professional Cricketer)

Azeem flew in from Dubai especially for the conference and this was appreciated by the BMSLG and Bristolian Muslims

Azeem described his challenges with discrimination at Yorkshire County Cricket Club and why he had to make a stand. He described how his cricket career was ruined by institutionalised racism.

Azeem stated that he was subject to name calling and generally treated badly. Following Azeem's actions, YCCC had to make major changes to address the issue of racism and is still coming to terms with the institutional racism that existed at YCCC. Azeem gave evidence to the House of Commons for the racism he suffered at YCCC. Azeem and his family suffered greatly over the years through the treatment at YCCC.

Azeem encouraged everyone to stand up to racism and his actions have led to changes within the English Cricket Board to address the issue of racism that exists within the game.

Whilst action has taken place to address racism in the game, Azeem feels more needs to done to address the issue of racism.



Azeem Rafiq is an English cricketer who played professionally in England for Yorkshire County Cricket Club. A right-arm off-spin bowler, Rafiq played for the county between 2008 and 2014 and 2016 and 2018, making his senior debut at the age of 17.



Baroness Sayeeda Hussain Warsi is a British lawyer, politician, and member of the House of Lords who served as co-chairwoman of the Conservative Party from 2010 to 2012.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi stated that this forum created by the BMSLG is very important to ensure that issues of Bristol Muslims are communicated to the service providers of Bristol. The strong and trusted relationships built by BMSLG over the years with strategic partners and service providers is a great platform to improve the lives of Bristol Muslims.

The Baroness encouraged the Muslims of Bristol to work with BMSLG to point out issues facing them so that those issues can be raised with the service providers of Bristol.

Baroness Warsi also discussed the ongoing situation in Gaza and the marches planned through London supporting the Palestinian people for a ceasefire and anger caused by then Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who called the marches 'hate marches'.

There was a good interaction between Baroness Warsi and the conference attendees where she did an impromptu lunchtime Q&A on the ongoing war against Gaza. She agreed that the British government has not done enough to help resolve the Palestinian suffering over the years.

Suella wanted the Palestinian march to stop, however the Met Police Commissioner allowed the marches to go ahead. The main march took place on Armistice Day, Saturday the 11th of November. The march organizers respected the importance of the day and its route was changed so that the march did not go anywhere near the remembrance monument. This march with over 300,000 people was peaceful, however the counter march by right wing activists was not so peaceful and many arrests were made. However, the media reported at the Palestinian march over 120 arrests were made. Majority of these were the right-wing counter protestors.

Palestinian March Attendees:
300,000
Arrests: 60
= 0.02%

Right wing counter-march
Attendees: 1000
Arrests: 60
= 6%

Narrative should have been that the Palestinian march was in large very peaceful, the right-wing counter march was very disruptive, and many arrests were made.

Feedback from the Blue Workshop:

"We discussed many key themes and we, as a group, dedicated a lot of time to speaking about the importance of education. We decided that to secure progress for Muslims in Bristol we really needed to start focusing on the youth. The benefits of targeting this demographic were not only social (by providing guidance and hopefully guiding them away from the streets) but also economical (by encouraging them to pursue higher education)."

Workshop Participant

This workshop led to the new Careers event being planned.

Green Room Workshop

The workshop was a success, characterised by active participant engagement and a strong desire to extend the duration of the session. Attendees demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, allowing each other time to express their thoughts and ensuring a respectful environment. Notably, participants exhibited a remarkable level of patience, waiting until the current speaker had finished before posing questions.

The emotional depth of the workshop was evident when participants shared personal stories from the 1980s, recounting their experiences with racism during that period. One individual, in particular, shared a poignant and emotional account, providing a unique perspective that resonated with the entire group. The willingness of participants to open up and share such personal stories contributed to a deeper understanding and connection among the workshop attendees.

In summary, the Workshops successfully fostered an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, where participants actively engaged with the content and with each other. The positive atmosphere and meaningful interactions indicate that the Workshops achieved their goals.





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Conference Workshops

The Diamond 9 Workshop feedback:

"I thought the workshop went really well. We had a mixture of genders and ages discussing opportunities & challenges for young Muslims in Bristol. Everyone was really engaged in discussion which was great to see. Initially some people were hesitant to participate in the discussions as they did not think their contributions would lead to any real change but once I explained that the whole point of the workshops was to try and bring change for the Muslim communities in Bristol, all individuals started to participate in very engaging conversations."

One young person mentioned how they had lived in Bristol for many years but because they had not been born and raised in Bristol, they found it hard to connect with the Muslim communities in Bristol and feel a sense of belonging in the city. We forget that there are a lot of young Muslim people in Bristol who are not born and raised in Bristol and move to the city for many reasons, and that there needs to be means for them to be able to connect with Muslim communities which a lot of them desire. It was mentioned that they see the BMSLG having a role in helping this cohort of young Muslims.



"Create more accessible opportunities for teenagers to engage them as members of the community and keep them out of trouble."

Workshop
Participant



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Trailblazers

Mohamed Sayaqle (Chairman of BSYV and BMSLG member)

A football event was held at the Lockleaze Sports Centre organised by Bristol Somali Youth Voice (BSYV). BSYV is an organisation that advocates and empowers disadvantaged young people in Bristol, predominantly ethnic communities including Somali. Dozens of young people from various backgrounds took part, bringing the community together through sports.

It was organised to raise awareness and address youth violence and knife crime through sports. The event was supported by the Sarah Crew the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police, Sharon Foster, high sheriff of Bristol.

We have lost a significant number of young people through knife crime and it's not those who are in trouble losing their lives through knife crimes, it's the young people who are on the right path.



There is no one who is away from knife crime and in order to stop that, we want to do things together, we need to work collaboratively together with the police. It's not something that only the police can stop.

In order to go forward we need to work together to tackle down the knife crime and we need to think about what we can do personally, like simply reporting the crime.

I want you to do your bit to have safer neighbourhoods and a safer city.

"Bringing the community together is so important, and sport is such a miracle in bringing young people of all ages and communities, from all walks of life, together."

- Mohamed Sayaqle

Dr Asha Mohammed (A young Bristolian Doctor's Journey)



Dr Asha faced many obstacles in becoming a doctor. She wanted to study at the Bristol University Medical School. When she applied to the course, she was having difficulties getting through the entrance exam. The teachers pressured her to take up a different profession. She felt imposter syndrome. However, Dr Asha showed resilience and kept on trying and eventually was enrolled on the to the Bristol University Medical School.

She felt that because of her Somali background she was being discouraged from becoming a doctor.
No one was helping or encouraging Dr Asha.

Now Dr Asha is a Rising Star Winner 2021 medical doctor and activist against gender-based violence. UN Women UK delegate.



Omer Khaliel (Riba Free Foundation)

Omer talked about his background and experience in businesses in the Middle East, Pakistan and UK. He is now the CEO of Riba Free Foundation, which is a not-for-profit organisation.

Riba Free Foundation enables you to understand money, banking, and economics for the true purpose they were created... for the collective betterment of our communities and society.

Omer encouraged Muslim entrepreneurs to engage with Riba Free Foundation and see how they can help.

"The purpose of our organisation is to shine a light on the harmful nature of interest and usury (known as riba) so that people can better understand money, finance and economics through the lens of Riba. We provide riba-free financial training and champion the use of riba-free through marketing and awareness campaigns.

To provide value beyond that we are currently developing a product directory of riba-free businesses and financial institutions that have riba-free products and services. We only ensure that organisations in the product directory have been properly vetted and endorsed to provide real value and commercially driven solutions for the masses."

9

Mentimeter Results

Join at menti.com use code 4144 6975

Mentimeter

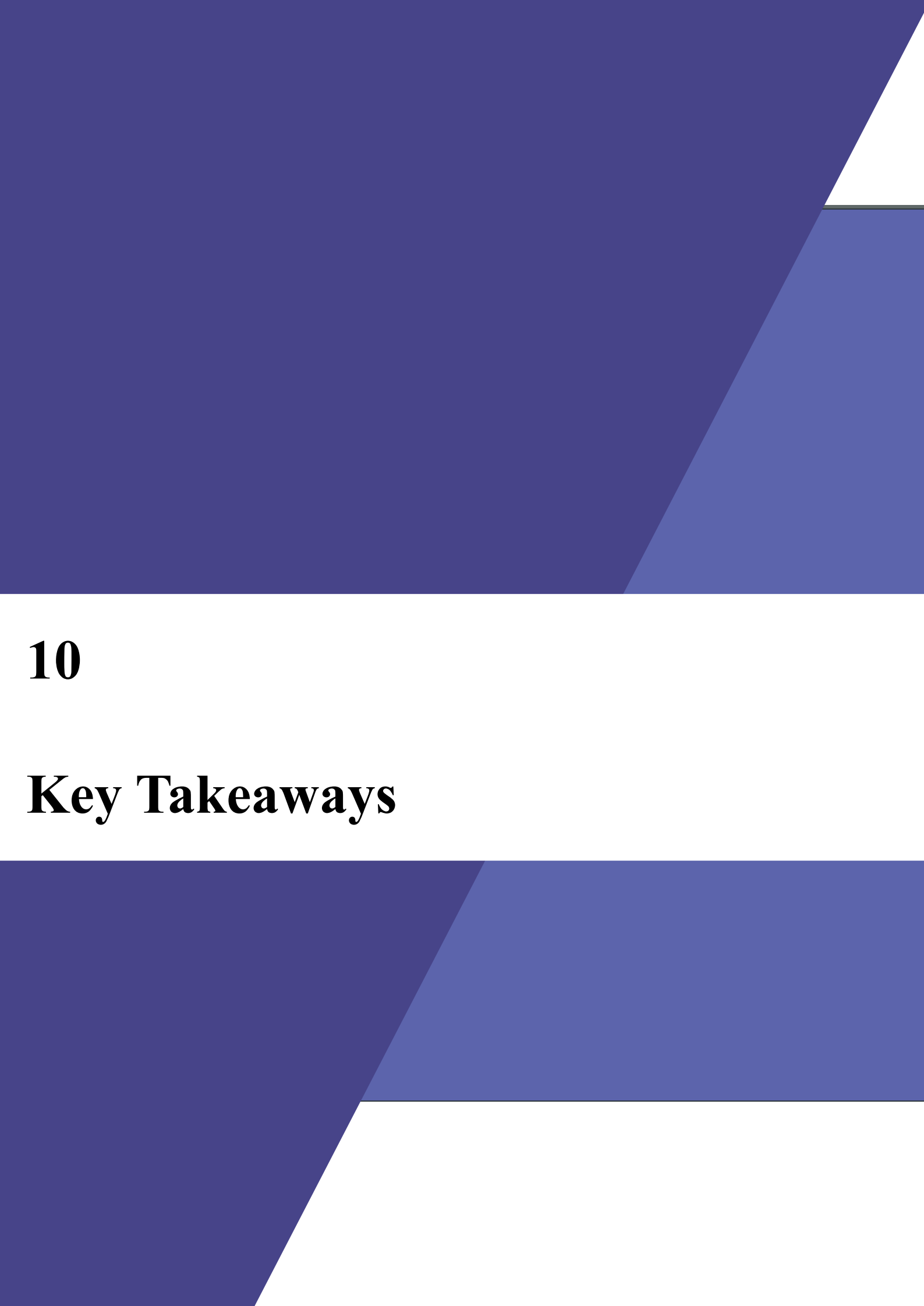
What do you think are the current barriers facing young Muslims in Bristol??

209 responses



Key Challenges for Young Muslims in Bristol

Education	Racism	Opportunities
Employment	Discrimination	Islamophobia
Belonging	Inclusion	Support



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Key Takeaways

Key takeaways from the Bristol Muslim 2023 conference:

- That having an organisation like BMSLG can help bring the diverse Muslim communities together and could be a model for other cities.
- That Muslim communities need to come forward with issues to BMSLG who can raise them with the appropriate strategic partners and service providers within the city of Bristol.
- That there is a need to build trust and engage with the local Muslim communities so that they can come forward with their issues and challenges.
- The development of a new career event planned following one of the workshops.
- BMSLG need to work with young people and should encourage them to join the organisation - 3 new young people have applied and joined BMSLG since the Conference!
- There are many challenges facing Muslim youth, including racism, family relationships and cost of living pressures.
- That BMSLG invite local parliamentary candidates to a meeting, where the Muslim community is present, and they can ask the questions of the candidates. Educate the Muslim community regarding the process of voting etc.



11

Conference Room Photos & BMSLG Team



BMSLG

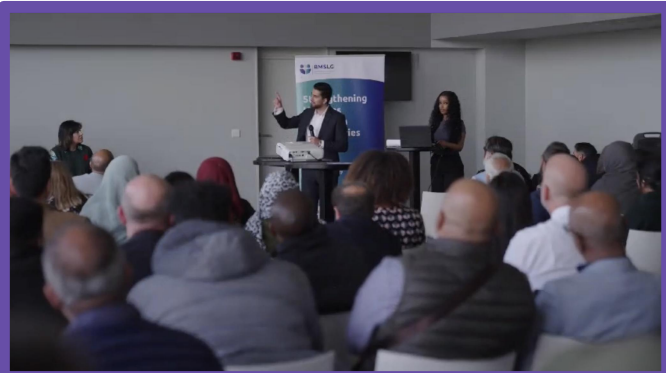
Bristol Muslim Strategic
Leadership Group



Email: info@bmslg.org



Website: www.bmslg.org



Link to Conference video:
<https://www.bmslg.org/bristol-muslim-conference.html>



Thank you to all who came to the conference.



Avon and Somerset
Constabulary



NHS
Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group



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