



REPORT: BRISTOL MUSLIM STRATEGY CONFERENCE

22nd May 2021 6.00 - 8.30pm via Zoom

ABSTRACT

This Conference brought together Bristol Muslim organisations and stakeholders to discuss priorities to improve the position of Muslims in Bristol. Key points suggest the need for a bi-annual Conference; involvement of wider range of stakeholders and the need to end the working in silos.

Introduction – Why have such a Conference?

Muslims have been part of the fabric of Bristol for many decades and the 2011 census showed 22,016. Muslims in Bristol have a range of backgrounds and ethnicities (see [Muslims in Bristol booklet](#)) and come from all walks of life, but what binds them is their faith and religion. It is a powerful unifying factor given the diversity of backgrounds that Muslims come from.

However, the statistics¹ on the outcomes for Muslims does not make good reading. For example, only 17.9% Muslims are in full time employment than the Bristol average (36.6%). Muslims also have a lower proportion of people in managerial and professional occupations (19.8%) than the city average (43.8%). Furthermore, almost a quarter (23%) of Muslims have never worked or are long-term unemployed (Bristol average 5.5%). Many Muslims (44.4%) live in social rented accommodation, a higher proportion than the population as a whole (19.6%). People from Muslim backgrounds are increasingly in need of mental health and psychological services but struggling to access it.

Issues like these bring together the need for a Bristol Muslim Strategy Conference to discuss them and find solutions for a way to improve the position of Muslims in Bristol, working in collaboration with the City's leaders and communities. The Conference is facilitated by the [Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group \(BMSLG\)](#), a fairly newly formed organisation of volunteers recruited from the diverse backgrounds of Muslims in Bristol to come together to work with the City and its leaders to help make Bristol a better place for all of its citizens. To that end BMSLG have worked throughout its inception to cultivate relationships with statutory partners and Muslim organisations in Bristol in order to hold this first Conference. With a total of 64 registrations with 38 people from a range of organisations attending the online Conference, it is the first time that people from across the diverse communities came together to discuss a range of issues.

The Conference was arranged so that discussions were facilitated through five 2-part workshops where delegates first discussed the issues around the given topic. The second part of each workshop was designed to discuss solutions and tangible actions and next steps.

The table on p.10 outlines the Actions for each set of stakeholders.

We hope that if you were not able to attend the Conference this time, that you will do so next time and be part of the conversation.

¹ See www.bristol.gov.uk/statistics

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions

Prayer

General running of conference

Introduction and Plan for the Conference

- Purpose of conference
- Mayor's video message
- Outline of the Conference

Workshops

1. How is the mental health of Muslims in Bristol?
Led by Dr Koyes Ahmed and Weronika Ozpolat
2. Getting the best out of our young people.
Led by Hibo Mahamoud and Mohamed Sayaqle
3. How can education best work for Muslims in Bristol?
Led by Nadia Haq and Sakariye Syedomar
4. Ending the silos - how can organisations work together?
Led by Abdullahi Farah, Khadeeja Abunajm and Abdul Tariq Samad
5. Our partners – how can we work better?
Led by Sheila el Dieb Raymond and Rizwan Ahmed

Actions and Next Steps

Actions from each group – what do we need?

The way forward – Open Discussion

Police survey slide and appeal for help to distribute - Hibo

Next conference – doodle/Zoom poll whilst in the meeting

Feedback form link

Workshop 1 – Ending the Silos

This workshop had a total of 14 attendees from a range of organisations.

Key discussions focused around how many organisations were doing excellent work in serving their specific communities, but that in doing so, there had developed a culture of working in silos and isolation. The result was that work could be duplicated and opportunities to share good practice was missed. A key point raised was that working together could raise a collective voice on issues of commonality and lend strength to actions that could benefit the entire Muslim community.

A further discussion was raised regarding mosques being one of the oldest community-based organisations in Bristol and which play a central role in community life for many Muslims in Bristol. Frank discussions around this, which included the presence of mosque representatives, were based around the issues of how mosques were often the target of criticism around a range of issues included lack of representation in committees, trust and of working in silos.

Solutions that emerged from this discussion centred around the need for greater understanding of the challenges of mosques in becoming more representative, the challenge of attracting a diverse membership and the need for greater support in training and development to support such changes. There is little opportunity to support mosques in receiving and access management committee training and support. This is an area that should be explored as a community and not placed solely on the shoulders of mosques. However, mosque leaders must lead the way in this.

Actions on ending the Silos workshop

1. To explore what support is available for mosque committee development? What funding is available to support this?
2. To meet regularly as a community to discuss such issues openly and follow up on actions – regular conferences was a key suggestion.
3. To have a Muslim organisation that can help facilitate the ending of silos. Delegates indicated that BMSLG could have a key role to play in this, given their diverse membership and connection with partners.

Workshop 2 – How is the mental health of Muslims in Bristol

A small workshop of 5 people but with some key individuals present.

Discussions focused around the notion that mental health was affecting Muslims in Bristol as much as the rest of the population. However, the key thing was that mental health was still seen as having a stigma within Muslim communities, particularly amongst the adult and older populations. It was felt that the younger generation were much more open about their mental health – perhaps because of a greater degree of ‘online literacy’. This gap between the generations could present as a source of tension between generations which could further impact on mental health and is important to ensure support is provided.

In terms of services, discussions revealed that there was a clear lack of awareness of services and of how to access them. It was felt that limited cultural awareness from service providers contributed to this slow uptake of services even when aware of them.

Actions on mental health for Muslims in Bristol

Actions circulated around a need for **service providers**:

1. To have greater cultural competence training
2. To ensure that communities were made more aware of services that were available through better signposting through e.g. mosques or other community groups as well as GP services.

With regards to **communities** themselves, it was felt that there was a need:

1. To be more open about mental health in general
2. To know more about how to identify whether one is suffering from mental health issues
3. To gain greater awareness of signposting people for support

Workshop 3 – Getting the best out of our young people

This workshop was attended by 6 people including one very articulate young person who helped shape the conversations and was able to express the need for young people needing role models who reflect them in education, employment, political and public life.

Mentoring was another key area of discussion and the need for young people to have good mentors was considered essential in helping and exposing young people to new opportunities and options that they may never have considered before. One way in which this could be achieved was through having greater availability and publicity of shadowing schemes where young people could enter the labour market and see what is available. This would also give greater exposure to work experience opportunities which young people can add to CVs to enhance their employment chances.

Discussions also centred around soft skills and generating confidence in young people to understand the importance of networking and exposure to a range of roles and occupations. It was felt that young people from Muslim communities could suffer from not accessing sports clubs, after-school clubs or other social opportunities which other children access due to cultural differences in participating in such events. Participation in such areas expose young people to other opportunities and social capital – all of which adds to the young persons’ employability.

Actions for getting the best out of our young people:

Communities need to work with families:

1. To reassure parents so that they can ensure young people are encouraged to access opportunities that can enhance their opportunities through extra-curricular activities.
2. To demonstrate that employability is not just through qualifications but a rounded overall experience.

For **education and employment** settings:

1. To be proactive and reach out to young people from Muslim communities to encourage them to take up opportunities for mentorship, shadowing or other work experiences
2. To ensure that extra-curricular activities are accessible to Muslim families and to challenge themselves if they are not accessing them – perhaps they are not deemed culturally appropriate by parents.
3. To work with parents to ensure young people are attending employment fairs and other such opportunities so they can broaden their horizons.

Workshop 4 – How can education best work for Muslims

This workshop was attended by 7 delegates including community members with an academic background.

Key areas of discussion circulated around the need for Muslim communities themselves to be more organised and vocal about their needs to ensure education was accessible and enabled young people to reach their potential.

It was felt there was a need for greater funding and support particularly at FE and HE level to enable young people to continue their education. Where funding is available, greater efforts to ensure people are aware of it is important. One of key areas coming out of this conference is the need for increased awareness of support available and how to access it and also how to mobilise and utilise internal sources of support and expertise from within Bristol Muslim communities for educational ventures. Other discussions in this workshop focused on ensuring that the curriculum reflected voices from around the world – decolonising the curriculum and awareness of knowledge generated from different parts of the world and the cultures that shaped that knowledge.

There was a call for mobilising the community to get organised in ensuring that the Muslim voice is represented at a range of levels. It was suggested that BMSLG could facilitate this.

Actions on education

Educational institutions including schools, colleges and universities should work:

1. To make greater and more proactive efforts to make families aware of the value of extra-curricular activities and to feel supported when accessing other sources of support (for example, dyslexia assessments).
2. To check their effectiveness of this, there should be a monitoring of the uptake of support.
3. To ensure educational establishments should work with Muslim community organisations and families to under what services may be specifically required by Muslim students (eg: prayer facilities).
4. To decolonise curricula to ensure that global knowledge enters the curriculum with the aim of being more inclusive as well as preparing citizens for the global workplace. This should include a more positive history of Islamic contributions to knowledge such as science and art.

Communities need:

1. To be more active and seek support available rather than assume there is nothing.
2. To seek advice and support from agencies such as BMSLG or other organisations if they feel unable to access so their concerns can be raised with Equality & Diversity departments in institutions.
3. To mobilise and utilise internal sources of support and expertise from within Bristol Muslim communities for educational ventures.
4. Develop more awareness of how the education system works so that Muslim children are not disadvantaged

Workshop 5 – working with Statutory Partners

This workshop was attended by 1 delegate and 2 facilitators, although briefly joined by another who was attending multiple workshops. Discussions centred around the need identified by the statutory partner organisation to have regular and quality equality and diversity training embedded within their organisations. That organisations need to understand the requirement for equality and diversity principles built into their systems and processes, with middle range employees being able not only to feed into the process but to hold community events to ensure that the public not only understand that services are of practical use for them but that services are more efficiently tailored so that people are not inadvertently disadvantaged, but feel able to approach and take up the services currently not being used to full potential. It was strongly felt that the current training and knowledge was understood by the senior management but that knowledge was not trickling down to officers working every day with the community service users. Having had access to training after 10 years, the feedback has enabled a better ability to work on a future and day to day basis.

This leads to a fostering of greater understanding of communities and their heterogeneity and a deeper knowledge of cultural nuances during service delivery and service planning.

It was felt that statutory partners and service providers need to work much harder to present the services that communities can tap into. That conferences, such as this one has been of tremendous value to future everyday work and that this type of discussion and exchange of ideas are excellent time investment.

Actions on working with our partners

Statutory partners, organisations and service deliverers need:

1. To focus on genuine and regular cultural and diversity training.
2. To ensure that equality and diversity is not just present in behaviours but also in systems and processes.
3. To make greater efforts to ensure communities are aware of services and;
4. To scrutinise when the take-up of services is low from certain communities in order
5. To challenge their own systems and processes in terms of whether they are understanding that communities cultural need and also reaching efficiently out to those communities.
6. To work much more closely with organisations at the planning and policy level to ensure services meet the needs of all users.

Actions and Decisions - Responsibilities

The 5 workshops and subsequent Open Discussion led to a number of overall actions and decisions. These can be divided into what communities themselves can do and what statutory partners can do in their own services as well as what they can do to support communities to have their own agency and empower themselves to improve the lives of Muslims and other citizens of Bristol.

Actions		
Communities	Statutory Partners (SPs)	BMSLG
<p>1. To take a proactive stance on asking partners or service providers when needs are not being met. How: Muslim organisations can monitor when their communities are struggling with services and raise it on their behalf through e.g. BMSLG.</p>	<p>1. To ensure that all communities are made more aware of their services through greater and more sophisticated outreach work. How: by tailoring materials to reach a wider audience and accessing the medium through which those communities communicate.</p>	<p>1. To arrange and facilitate this Conference as a bi-annual event. How: by arranging and hosting the conference dates and ensuring that a range of organisations and stakeholders get a fair say.</p>
<p>2. To encourage young people to seek out and take up opportunities and experiences which enhance their employment and life opportunities. How: by ensuring they do not limit their opportunities to just schooling but take up extra-curricular opportunities.</p>	<p>2. To monitor and scrutinise when take-up of services is low from e.g. Muslim communities and ask why and what they could be doing better to improve it. How: by having more effective monitoring systems and to scrutinise when the data show low take-up and take action.</p>	<p>2. To work with SPs and support them in their actions from the Conference. How: through the regular BMSLG Task Group meetings and full BMSLG meetings</p>
<p>3. To be critical of oneself and consider where cultural practices might be hindering progress in e.g. education and employment. We know that our faith is not a restraining factor but a liberating one. How: by holding debates and workshops on how to reflect on oneself and one's culture.</p>		<p>3. To support mosques on identifying their training needs for greater equality and diversity in their management and support them in accessing this expertise. How: by working with CBM and other mosques in Bristol to identify what support they need e.g. through a survey. Possibly arranging a city-wide training event.</p>
<p>4. Based on the above to critique and challenge ourselves as Muslim communities and ask 'What is our identity as British Muslims'?</p>		

Conclusions

It was noted that identity and what it means to be a Muslim in Bristol was felt to be an important thread that had run through the discussions in the various workshops.

Ensuring continuity and momentum in initiatives and debate around key issues was another area which was considered important and it was raised more than once, the need for a Network and regular conversations across the different communities.

It was suggested that BMSLG could play an important role in facilitating the discussions as well as maintain the continuity and momentum and be the platform and medium through which the Muslim communities of Bristol and other stakeholders could come together to facilitate the outcomes of this Conference.

A Zoom poll at the end of the Conference showed that 92% of delegates agreed to a bi-annual Conference to ensure actions and decisions were followed up and developed.

Responses by our Partners



Avon & Somerset Constabulary response to BMSLG

Avon and Somerset Constabulary (ASC) is proud to have ‘inclusivity’ as one of its four cornerstone values. Indeed, one of our aspirations is to have the most representative workforce of any police force in the country. That said, to build an inclusive workforce, we must simultaneously work to build trust from communities which have lower levels of confidence in the police. Working with organisations such as BMSLG will help us achieve this because it will allow us learn what we can do to improve the lived experience of Muslims in Bristol, whatever their ethnicity or background, in a policing context. The ultimate goal of course, is to help create a safer, more peaceful society for everyone. This is why we are so grateful that you have reached out to include us in the findings of this year’s conference, which was clearly a great success.

In response, I am delighted to update you on some exciting work which ASC is undertaking in Bristol and elsewhere:

All of our senior leaders from Inspector level and Police staff equivalent have now had Cultural Intelligence & Inclusivity Training. Such is the importance of the subject, we employed the use of an external training provider, which is an expert in this area. The training has been very well received by those who have undertaken it. The training encourages leaders to think broadly about how cultural nuances and differences may affect someone’s approach to a situation or behaviour, including in scenarios involving mental health. (Ref: [Workshop 2, action 1. Workshop 5 action 1](#))

Every officer and member of staff undertakes Equality Act training. This allows a better understanding throughout the organisation of legal and moral obligations in this context. (Ref: [Workshop 2, action 1. Workshop 5, action 1](#))

Starting this month we will be embarking on our ‘Inclusive Policing with Confidence’ lived experience learning workshops provided by various diverse community partners under the lead of SARI. We hope this will provide a fascinating incite for c. 3,000 officers and staff into how people from different communities view the police and what we can do to improve and be more inclusive. The learning takes the forms of sessions spread over several months supported by pre-learning. It will actively engage learners in understanding and appreciating difference from the lived experience of others, case study examples of lessons from service delivery and expert seminars (Ref: [Workshop 2, action 1. Workshop 5 action 1](#))

These pieces of work obviously have a broader scope than just mental health, mentioned in Workshop 2, action 1. However, it still very relevant to this topic. It will allow our staff to think about the wider context when dealing with a person in mental health crisis: Are there cultural issues at play? What barriers do they present? How can I work with others to overcome these?

In line with our Inclusion and Diversity Plan, we have recruited six Outreach Workers who started with us in September 2019. I am delighted that the decision has been taken to make their role permanent. Their role is primarily to support diverse recruitment to ASC. They also act as a link to all of our diverse communities to understand any barriers to recruitment and engagement with our services.

Despite the challenges that the pandemic has presented, throughout the last 18 months, the team have hosted virtual workshops internally with staff and officers titled 'Demystifying Islam and Islamophobia', which have been very well attended and received.

Two of our outreach team are also members of BMSLG and act as a great conduit to ensure that the right scrutiny and inclusive training and culture is fostered in ASC.

I want to highlight some of the work being carried out by the outreach team over the next 3 months. This will include adding information of Police Staff roles specifically to Discovery Workshops to complement our information on traditional uniform roles. They will also hold bespoke sessions within the Muslim and BAME students in schools. The team also hold regular pop up stands outside Bristol Mosques to engage and promote ASC. The team are planning a recruitment event within City Academy to focus specifically on recruitment within the Somali and Muslim communities at the end of November. The outreach team will also be organising local recruitment events across the area of Avon and Somerset over the next 3 months to target our diverse community in 'roadshow' style events to really engage and highlight all of the various opportunities we have within ASP. (Ref: [Workshop 3, action 1](#))

A dedicated community engagement Police Community Support Officer is now also in place, based at Trinity Road Police Station. She supports the outreach workers in their work, but also engages directly with communities and young people through places of worship, including Mosques and other community groups. (Ref [Workshop 3, action 1](#))

ASC Action – Ref: Workshop 3, action 1

Discussion will be had within ASC to highlight specific positions or departments which may be suitable to allow shadowing or work experience. We would also be supportive of working closer to see if there is more that could be done in opening up our volunteer opportunities for young people, particularly our cadets which bring great value to those taking part as well as for us in engagement with young people.

These opportunities could be specifically highlighted by the outreach workers through their contact with the community. We recognise that the use of stop and search by the police is a very divisive issue and a huge barrier to trust. Although it is generally accepted that the tactic has its part to play in removing weapons and drugs from the streets, this will be of little comfort to those young BAME males, including some young Muslims, who feel unfairly targeted by its use. We are committed to using the tactic, proportionately, fairly and with openness and transparency.

In October 2019, the Constabulary established the internal Stop Search and Use of Force Scrutiny Panel. Members of this panel include the chair of the External Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel, our Professional Standards Department, the Independent Chair of the Lammy Review Group and the chair of the Strategic Independent Advisory Group. The purpose of the panel is to ensure the use of Police powers in these areas are scrutinised, so that areas of concern are addressed, best practice is shared and learning identified. The panel uses data and insight to determine themes for quarterly review. Topics covered recently have included the disproportionate use of stop search within our BAME communities, searches based solely on the smell of cannabis and searches of young people. Reviews are completed by a team of over seventy officers, who have volunteered to be a part of improving our use of stop and search. Between 300 and 350 are completed each quarter, which is nearly 20% of all stop searches conducted. Feedback is provided to officers on areas for improvement and good practice is recognised. The reviews also inform training and policy, with recent examples of this being a focus on the mandatory recording of stop searches on body worn video and the sharing of lived experiences of members of the BAME community who have been stopped and searched by the Police. We continue to work hard to ensure our use of stop and search powers are legitimate, so that our communities can place their trust in how we use them, particularly against those who we know are disproportionately affected. (Ref: [Workshop 5, actions 2, 5 & 6](#))

ASC encourages and welcomes innovative ideas from officers and staff in all areas of work, but there are a few areas very worthy of note in the context of the findings of the conference, some which you may already be aware of.

An officer from the Neighbourhood Policing Team at Trinity Road Police station was instrumental in setting up a Gang Prevention Programme which is a joint initiative with Bristol City Football Club and Bristol Horn Youth Concern. The programme works with young people aged 13-19 who are mainly from BAME communities, including young Muslims. Its intention is to divert young people away from crime (especially gang related), encourage them to better themselves and break down barriers between young people and the Police through football. An innovative and practical approach to encourage engagement from the young people is to provide them with a free ticket to watch a Bristol FC match, on the caveat that they attend the workshop first! (Ref [Workshop 3, action 2](#))

You will undoubtedly be aware of the work of the Mosque Independent Advisory group which is supported by Keith Openshaw and Bristol's Police Commander, Mark Runacres. We view this as an invaluable partnership. (Ref: [Workshop 5, action 2, 5 & 6](#))

Although the police's response to hate crime does not necessarily fit into any one Workshop or action, it would be remiss of me not to mention it as it is so influential in the trust and confidence our communities have in us.

As an organisation we recognise that hate crime, including that experienced by the Muslim community, is sadly under reported. By engaging and building trust and confidence in the police, as set out above, we hope to see an upward trend in the reporting of this type of crime.

We know that it has a disproportionate physical, psychological and emotional impact on the victim compared with the equivalent "non-hate" crimes and that those subjected to it are more likely to be repeat victims. A single incident can have far reaching consequences for the wider community. For these reasons, we are absolutely committed to working with partners to take a proactive and positive approach to dealing effectively with hate crime. In short, our commitment includes:

- Building the trust and confidence of individuals and groups affected by hate crime
- Reducing under-reporting of hate crime - Reducing the overall incidence of hate crime
- Reducing the impact of hate crime through high-quality victim support
- Bringing offenders to justice - Promoting community cohesion
- Providing a service that balances a person's right to be free from targeted abuse with rights to Freedom of expression
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those who possess characteristics protected by equality law and those who do not

These commitments influence, in very practical terms, how hate crimes are recorded and investigated and how victims are supported.

One example of how we are tackling the issues of under reporting comes from the work of an officer based in Bristol. She has fantastic links with the Barton Hill Settlement and wider Somali community. She regularly attends women's groups, to build confidence in policing and to encourage the reporting of hate crime. ([Ref Workshop 4, action 1](#))

Various partners have helped shape our response to hate crime and so our hope is that this strategy is relatively well known.

We have also started monitoring our workforce representation by faith and religion as well as by ethnicity, which means we now have some trend data in relation to our Muslim representation. In August 2019 we had 28 members of our workforce identifying as Muslim, which included 7 officers. In 2021 whilst we would like to see even more progress we are pleased to see this has risen by 18% to 33 overall, with a significant rise in the period for officers to a total of 13 police officers. We are committed to the ongoing engagement, attraction and recruitment of members of the Muslim community into the police service in order to improve our service to the public and keen to continue work with BMSLG on this. We welcome your continuing proactive help and support in promoting opportunities to join the service to community members.

All of the work mentioned above will continue and be reviewed as it progresses to ensure that the cultural learning has been embedded and that we continue to work with and listen to all of our communities through all avenues including the Outreach Team. This will be supported by our annual community engagement event at Rose Green Centre in November to update on improvements and engage communities in how they view ASP and what more can be done to support communities.

Yours sincerely,
Sarah Crew
T/Chief Constable



Bristol City Council response to BMSLG September 2021

In recent years the Council has been on a significant improvement journey from a low baseline towards ambitious aims to be a model employee and service provider, and among national leaders in the field of equality, diversity and inclusion. Our Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2018 – 2023 sets out our overall objectives, what we will do to achieve them, and how we will measure this.

Our latest Annual Report for 2020-21 details our recent progress against these objectives year in a time in which the stark inequalities that Bristol is tackling were brought into even sharper focus; both through the disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on various equality groups and also the global profile attached to the toppling of the Colston statue.

Among the improvements we have made recently are a refreshed Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy, a new corporate equality governance structure, the relaunch of our internal staff-led groups, an updated equality impact assessment process, improved diversity monitoring and reporting, an updated Workforce Strategy, and several new Positive Action initiatives.

We have also made significant progress against an Equality and Inclusion Action Plan with many discrete actions based around the themes of ‘strategy changes’, ‘recruitment’, ‘leadership’, and ‘other activities’. As recommended by our recent Local Government Association’s Equality Framework for Local Government peer review we will use a coordinated approach to ensure our various strands of equality and inclusion work are managed as a coherent programme.

Internally we provide a workforce diversity dashboard showing differences in representation and outcomes for our staff based on sensitive information they provide about their protected characteristics, which can be used to inform positive action activities. This is updated monthly and provides statistics for Headcount, Sickness, Starters and Leavers etc. We have recently increased the level of detail in our diversity reporting for e.g. ethnicity, and faith groups as these had historically been aggregated into broader categories.

Council services also ask citizens confidential equalities questions to make sure that everyone can access services they're entitled to, and no-one is discriminated against unlawfully. This includes the protected characteristics and subgroups which help us to identify particular differences for people. We analyse the results from equalities monitoring to help us understand who contacts us and uses our services, who is underrepresented, and if there are differences between groups or changing trends over time. We also use this information when we might need to target specific communities or groups to reduce barriers to accessing our services or information.

All Council service areas produce an annual Equality Action Plan to prioritise relevant equality issues for their area of work. Recent progress reports on these plans show the council is progressing well overall in relation to organisational and workforce development, and community and partnership work, although COVID-19 measures have delayed some projects and services from being delivered as planned.

COVID-19 has dominated our work with citizens and communities during the past year. Working in partnership with community and voluntary sector partners we established a network of community hubs and organisations to get practical help and support to Bristolians wherever they live. A freephone helpline 'We Are Bristol' provided a single point of access to anyone who needed help. We will continue working with partners in neighbourhoods across Bristol to build communities – facilitating connections between neighbours and communities who may not otherwise come together to take action on shared interests including: one to one conversations with focus on residents who are not involved in their neighbourhood; facilitating residents to take action in their neighbourhood; connecting residents into opportunities within their neighbourhood and the city such as learning, education employment and wellbeing activities etc.

We are also committed to continue working closely with BMSLG as a strategic partner to help achieve our aims and support project led by them, including sharing key messages via video in a range of community languages, such as those needed during the coronavirus pandemic, Ramadan and other important occasions; co-producing the updated Muslims in Bristol and Britain guidance document; and working to establish multi-faith prayer spaces in the city.

For more information on our Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy, and relevant progress reports please see [Equalities policy - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/equalities-policy)



**STAND AGAINST
RACISM & INEQUALITY**

SARI (Stand Against Racism & Inequality)

Alex Raikes MBE DL LLD (Hons)

SARI Response to Bristol Muslim Strategy Conference

How is the mental health of Muslims in Bristol?

1. To have greater cultural competence training

- SARI has a contract with AWP as Diversity and Cultural Competency Advisor to Bristol Mental Health. We do lots for this – training, awareness, consultancy and strategic work – always promoting the specific needs and challenges for Muslim communities and staff.
- We have other contracts and deliver training to range of providers who support people with mental health needs e.g. BrisDoc; Homelessness Pathways; Milestone Trust and many others. We always promote awareness of the needs and experiences of Muslim people and will continue to do so.
- We also involve Mosques and BMCS in delivering a section of our Cultural Awareness Tours on the needs of Muslim communities and ensuring professionals, practitioners and agencies understand Islam and key cultural observations as well as barriers. AWP send the Bristol Mental Health services staff on this as do many other local agencies providing mental health and other linked services.

To ensure that communities were made more aware of services that were available through better signposting through e.g. mosques or other community groups as well as GP services.

With regards to communities themselves, it was felt that there was a need:

1. To be more open about mental health in general

- We run a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Workers Group for Bristol Mental Health and a WhatsApp Group for BAME staff in Bristol Mental Health and do all we can to support these staff and to ensure mental health.
- We have a contract with Bristol Drugs Project and work with them to ensure their Drugs and Alcohol Services are promoted to Muslim communities and they are made accessible and culturally sensitive and appropriate. This includes working in partnership with local Mosques, Muslim organisations; Muslim women's organisations and Muslim local

- practitioners to skill them up so they are knowledgeable and are safe eyes and ears for Muslim community members who have addiction/ issues with drugs or alcohol – we know the problem is ubiquitous despite it frowned upon in the communities. We have had dedicated and safe workshops with different community reps so the difficult topics can be openly discussed and solutions found with service providers.
- We have coordinated lots of workshops for Faith communities knowing that these can be difficult and shameful topics for some community members. We aim to try and stop people feeling shameful and to have the courage to get support and help when needed.
- SARI's casework service for victims of racism and hate crime is holistic and aims to signpost people to the right services for the outcomes they are looking for. We talk openly with our clients about their mental health and wellbeing needs. We do loads to encourage people to feel safe to open up and to make sure they get the right service – culturally and therapeutically for their needs. We have excellent links with local mental health, wellbeing and talking therapy services. This approach is something we think should be encouraged in all agencies who are supporting faith communities as it will really help.
- TIWG is a forum that does loads to raise awareness re: issues including mental health – it has key Muslim community reps attending jointly we a range of service providers including mental health providers/ agencies such as CASS, Bristol City Council, the Police etc. This leads to increased knowledge all round.

2. To know more about how to identify whether one is suffering from mental health issues

See above.

3. To gain greater awareness of signposting people for support

- See above. We do lots to promote awareness of signposting to Muslim organisations, Mosques and professionals/ practitioners.
- We are a place that many community members will turn to for advice about a huge range of topics and needs.
- We also do all we can to get statutory agencies to be aware of wealth of resources, expertise and support being delivered by and within Muslim communities.
- We requested and supported the updating of the Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet – bringing together all the expertise and support needed to make this happen. This booklet is a great aid to many of the above objectives.
- TIWG is a forum that does loads to raise awareness of signposting – it has key Muslim community reps attending jointly we a range of service providers. This leads to increased knowledge all round.

Getting the best out of our young people.

Communities need to work with families:

1. **To reassure parents so that they can ensure young people are encouraged to access opportunities that can enhance their opportunities through extra-curricular activities.**
 - SARI's casework service is holistic. Whilst we are there to respond to and tackle hate crime and to support victims, we also do all we can to get people accessed into other services we need. Over 1/3 of our caseload are Muslim people and families. We do make sure parents are encouraged to access opportunities.
 - We are a place that many local Muslim parents come to for advice, support and contacts – we will always do what we can.
 - We employ a number of Muslim staff and have Muslim Board members. These staff/ Board members are role models and each do what they can to make a difference including re: the above.
 - We run an education service for schools, colleges and universities and this aims to tackle inequality for BAME and faith student communities – this helps with the above objective too. This offers assemblies, staff and governor training, classroom sessions and 121 mentoring sessions.

2. **To demonstrate that employability is not just through qualifications but a rounded overall experience.**
 - Again, this is a stance we promote via our casework and above services.
 - We host volunteers and placements when we can (and have had many Muslim young people through our doors).
 - We support research, career development projects young Muslim people come to us for support with.
 - We have Muslim staff – and have seen many use SARI as a safe place to grow, develop and have as a stepping stone and go on to do very well in their chosen careers.

For education and employment settings:

1. **To be proactive and reach out to young people from Muslim communities to encourage them to take up opportunities for mentorship, shadowing or other work experiences**
 - See above – we work a lot with schools and local agencies to make a positive difference for Muslim communities.
 - We have offered shadowing and work experience to Muslim pupils and students.

- We encourage schools and employment setting to engage in positive action initiatives for Muslim pupils and community members – sharing the disadvantage they face and need for support to have a level playing field.
2. **To ensure that extra-curricular activities are accessible to Muslim families and to challenge themselves if they are not accessing them – perhaps they are not deemed culturally appropriate by parents.**
 - See above – we do what we can via our casework and education services
 - We do try to be role models as this can make a difference and help to build trust in Muslim families and communities to access extra-curricular activities.
 - Our training for schools/ organisations build cultural competence, sensitivity and understanding so they then make their services more accessible to Muslim communities – as we always raise their specific needs.
 - TIWG as a forum that brings together Muslim professionals, faith leaders and statutory/ VCS agencies also is great for highlighting any challenges or blocks to the above and then will help to find solutions with the relevant providers/ community reps.
 3. **To work with parents to ensure young people are attending employment fairs and other such opportunities so they can broaden their horizons.**

How can education best work for Muslims in Bristol?

Educational institutions including schools, colleges and universities should work:

1. **To make greater and more proactive efforts to make families aware of the value of extracurricular activities and to feel supported when accessing other sources of support (for example, dyslexia assessments).**
 - Our work on this is covered above. We deliver services to tackle disability hate crime and discrimination too and with this being jointly provided by SARI with disability specialist partners – we are a safe and culturally aware service for Muslim community members who need support to turn to.
2. **To check their effectiveness of this, there should be a monitoring of the uptake of support.**
 - We wholeheartedly agree with this and encourage agencies via our training, consultancy and strategic work to do this so they are being meaningful, genuine and transparent about the
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- impact of their efforts to improve access and proportionate outcomes for Muslim communities.
- 3. To ensure educational establishments should work with Muslim community organisations and families to understand what services may be specifically required by Muslim students (e.g.: prayer facilities).**
- Covered above via our Education and training services.
 - We have done lots of work to support community members raising concerns about schools and educational establishments to ensure their voices are heard and the right solutions are found.
 - We have supported many schools and education establishments to improve their outcomes for Muslim communities, pupils, students and families
 - An example is the work we did to ensure local education establishments and other statutory agencies consider the needs, fears and did the right myth-busting/ information campaigns re: the new RSHE curriculum whilst also ensuring the needs of LGBTQ+ and other communities we considered and represented. This was crucial work and helped us avoid major conflict, tensions and mis information in our City.
- 4. To decolonise curricula to ensure that global knowledge enters the curriculum with the aim of being more inclusive as well as preparing citizens for the global workplace. This should include a more positive history of Islamic contributions to knowledge such as science and art.**
- SARI is not involved in this but is linked to Bristol One Curriculum and has supported lesson plans and classroom activities and celebrate Muslim contribution and culture to the region.
 - We were behind, supported and will be disseminating the Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet that will be a great resource and asset for this objective.

Communities need:

- 1. To be more active and seek support available rather than assume there is nothing.**
- See above for the work we are doing for this action via our casework and education service.
 - The Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet will really help with this too.
 - TIWG can look at organising a conference/ event to raise awareness of services available for parents and pupils in schools perhaps.

2. To seek advice and support from agencies such as BMSLG or other organisations if they feel unable to access so their concerns can be raised with Equality & Diversity departments in institutions.

- And SARI as per above.

3. To mobilise and utilise internal sources of support and expertise from within Bristol Muslim communities for educational ventures.

- Completely agree with this action. The Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet will aid this action.
- Consider doing a resources directory re: educational, youth related services specifically for children and young people and adult education offers. Could we extend the resources directory in the Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet to include a section for CYP/ education?

4. Develop more awareness of how the education system works so that Muslim children are not disadvantaged

- SARI/ TIWG do this regularly through casework with parents and families; training for school staff and governors especially re: hate crime and discrimination.
- Need to consider what else BMSLG/ TIWG with SARI can do to further this aim. Maybe community event focused on how the Education System works or an information booklet. What about ESOL course?
- Look at how we can ensure Afghan and other newly arriving Muslim refugees/ Asylum-Seekers are given the information they need to understand the education system.

Ending the silos - how can organisations work together?

1. To explore what support is available for mosque committee development? What funding is available to support this?

SARI will continue through TIWG and our connections to promote training, raising awareness and pushing for resources to go to Mosques to better develop their involvement/ knowledge in this area. E.g. we already involve and work with Mosques in our work with BDP and AWP via our talks, training and Champions groups. We run a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Workers Group for Bristol Mental Health and a WhatsApp Group for BAME staff in Bristol Mental Health and do all we can to support these staff and to ensure mental health, Drugs and Alcohol Services are promoted to Muslim communities and they are made accessible and culturally sensitive and appropriate. We have coordinated lots of workshops for Faith communities knowing that these can be difficult and

shameful topics for some community members. We aim to try and stop people feeling shameful and to have the courage to get support and help when needed.

We also involve Mosques and BMCS in delivering a section of our Cultural Awareness Tours on the needs of Muslim communities and ensuring professionals, practitioners and agencies understand Islam and key cultural observations as well as barriers. AWP send the Bristol Mental Health services staff on this as do many other local agencies providing mental health and other linked services.

2. To meet regularly as a community to discuss such issues openly and follow up on actions – regular conferences was a key suggestion.

Fully support this. SARI will take part when we can. See above for some of the work we are doing to support this action.

3. To have a Muslim organisation that can help facilitate the ending of silos. Delegates indicated that BMSLG could have a key role to play in this, given their diverse membership and connection with partners

SARI does a lot of work to contribute to this aim and will continue to do so. TIWG is a Forum that focuses on this aim delivering events, conferences, the Muslims in Bristol and Britain Booklet. The TIWG Terms of Reference outline many objectives linked to this action. SARI is also tackling this aim via our Hate Crime & Discrimination Services. Hate Crime leads to silos, fear, tensions and many other negative impacts. We need to appreciate the importance of hate crime services and response by key agencies such as the police, housing, schools and other providers to prevent and stop hate crime as being a critical factor in achieving this action.

Working with Statutory Partners

Statutory partners, organisations and service deliverers need:

1. To focus on genuine and regular cultural and diversity training.

- See above re: SARI training and Cultural Awareness Tours.
- SARI are also commissioned to deliver the Inclusive Policing with Confidence Training Programme for Avon & Somerset Constabulary. We have recruited a Muslim Programme Manager and Trainer in SARI. This is collaborative – led by SARI with Babbasa; WECIL and the Diversity Trust. See Press Release and information on this attached. This will really contribute to this action and we can learn from the approach and apply to other statutory partners.

2. To ensure that equality and diversity is not just present in behaviours but also in systems and processes.

- The above training all contribute to this action as we make it clear that training is not enough
- We provide consultancy support and contracts with statutory partners that mean ED&I have to be more embedded and we have a number of interventions we have developed which we think really aid this.
- How about bringing ED&I training providers/ consultants together and checking what they are doing and what more they can do to support this action? Maybe with Statutory partners so they can hear the ideas suggested.

3. To make greater efforts to ensure communities are aware of services and;

- This is a bit part of our training and Cultural Awareness Tours and consultancy services as per above. We do need to hold statutory partners to account and check what they are doing to ensure this. Also they need to be representative of local Muslim communities for this to really succeed too.
- Need to look at what services are doing to engage with and listen to voices of their Muslim communities and service users and staff.

4. To scrutinise when the take-up of services is low from certain communities in order to challenge their own systems and processes in terms of whether they are understanding that communities cultural need and also reaching efficiently out to those communities.

- We need to check in that this is being done properly and meaningfully for Muslim people – and not just the overall BAME category. We know there are very specific inequalities for different Muslim communities and groups. How can we make sure we get this considered meaningfully?
- Our above interventions aid this action.

5. To work much more closely with organisations at the planning and policy level to ensure services meet the needs of all users

- Agreed – this is a critical task for BMSLG
- SARI continue to do what we can via our training, consultancy, casework and education interventions to achieve this on behalf of Muslim communities.



**Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire**
Clinical Commissioning Group

Alex Ward-Booth
Head of Insights and Public Engagement

NHS Response to Bristol Muslim Strategy Conference

I wanted to reiterate that the CCG is committed to advancing inclusion for the Muslim communities across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, and to continuing and building on this work as we become part of the new Integrated Care System (ICS) in April 2022. We feel that we have made real progress over the past year, particularly in response to Covid-19, by working much more closely with the VCSE sector, community champions and providers. The support of the BMSLG has been instrumental in helping to support the delivery of key messages to various communities and the work of all system and community partners has led to an improved take up of the Covid vaccine, so I would firstly want to pass on my thanks from colleagues across the CCG to you and your team.

The Bristol Muslim Strategy Conference Report has highlighted a number of actions that would support inclusion of these communities and the CCG are committed to support as detailed below.

There were two actions within the Communities section, which we wanted to mention further (although you may not have necessarily requested feedback from the CCG on these points in the report):

To take a proactive stance on asking partners or service providers when needs are being met

We are keen to support Muslim organisations in monitoring when communities are struggling with services and raising these through the BMSLG. When appropriate and helpful to do so, we would also encourage issues to be raised either with the local Healthwatch team, or direct to the CCG's Customer Services team, so that they can be investigated and addressed.

To encourage young people to seek and take up opportunities which enhance their employment and life opportunities

The CCG is committed to expanding work experience opportunities within our organisation; for example, we have taken part in the South West Black Intern Pilot, offering placements across our organisation.

The CCG will also revisit the planned work experience programme, that was due to start in the summer of 2020 but was suspended because of the need to isolate and protect all vulnerable communities and staff.

Our inclusion plan for 2021 includes actions to improve the recruitment processes that will support attracting a more diverse candidate pool; and as a system partner, we will participate in the BNSSG Talent Management Programme that is currently being developed, this will enable talented ethnic minority staff to be developed for career progression. Our goal is to see representation at every level of the organisation.

Thinking specifically about the Statutory Partner Action/s:

To ensure that all communities are made more aware of their services through greater and more sophisticated outreach work, e.g. tailoring materials

The CCG is currently rolling out a workforce training programme to support staff to understand equalities matters and equip them to embed inclusion into all their work areas. A key output of this work will be to ensure a consistently high standard of outreach work with the people and communities we serve.

We will share lessons learned from the BNSSG Covid vaccine programme (where effective community engagement was a critical enabler) and other key projects with the organisation. As part of our journey towards becoming an ICS, it will be critical to define and share best practice in optimising take-up of services, as well as encouraging a mindset towards continuous improvement on this across the system.

We will continue to seek out new and better ways of working with the people and communities we serve; in the last 12 months we have explored new ways of using data to ensure that we are focusing on the areas of greatest need, as well as trialing new approaches to engagement which will help people to engage on their own terms and applying a people-centred design approach to service development and improvement.

To monitor and scrutinise when take-up of services is low and ask why and what they could be doing better to improve it, e.g. by having more effective monitoring systems and scrutinise data

Through the formation of the BNSSG ICP, we will continue to explore ways in which our services can capture and understand equality data to ensure that we understand how services are being used.

Furthermore, we will also be working to ensure that we look at new and different ways of capturing the experience of those using our services, and ensuring that the voice of people is placed at the heart of decision-making across the system.

