

British Muslim Heritage Centre Aspiring Leaders

# Young Adults

Health and Wellbeing Seminar



Report: 12 March 2022

# Introduction

The young Adults project is a partnership project with the Manchester City Council supported by Islamic Relief and Manchester Wellbeing Fund.

The project is response to number of issues highlighted by young Adults in our work with Aspiring Leaders and our work with young people during the pandemic, particularly around mental health and wellbeing.

## PROJECT AIM

To establish a Young Adults Network, led by young people to tackle identified health inequalities by young people in various webinars sessions, research and through the existing Aspiring Leaders modules. The young adults health and wellbeing network will also:

- a) **Support young adults** concerning their health and wellbeing, isolation due to covid-19, support with career opportunities, hate crimes including Islamophobia.
- b) **Act as a bridge** by bringing together professionals from the public institutions such as the NHS and Local Authorities etc, to speak at the network meetings, seminar and conferences.
- c) **Develop a “young adults health and wellbeing training the trainers pack”** focusing on the mental health of young adults to train members of the network so that they can train other young people within Manchester.





## The Health and Wellbeing Seminar is

part of the Young Adults Health and Wellbeing Project. The seminar took place on the 12 March 2022 at the British Muslim Heritage Centre.

**Aim of the seminar** was to listen and provide support to young adults on issues affecting their health and wellbeing before, during and after covid.

The seminar was chaired by two of the Young Adults: Mahi Chowdhury and Hilma Janwar who introduced the speakers and our key guest Mr Afzal Khan MP, Adil Mohammed Javed, Maqsood Ahmad, Dr Fatimah Khan, Karimah Mohammed and Dr Saira

**The seminar programme** (appendix 1) was designed by young adults, ensuring that it meaningfully engaged young adults through interactive sessions.

**Acknowledgement:** we would like to thank our partners, speakers, Young Adults Oversight Group for planning the seminars including the programme.

Above all our thanks to all the young adults that took part and made the seminar a high success.

# Thank you





# Young Adults Tackling health inequalities

**Maqsood Ahmad** OBE outlined his vision as Chief Executive Officer of the British Muslim Centre which was to empower and develop young adults who can be supported to tackle health inequalities. He thanked everyone for attending and stated that he was very proud of the young adults involved in the Aspiring Leaders that he has had the pleasure of supporting over the months.

Maqsood give an example of the two current chairs: Mahi and Halima as the aspiring leaders in practice, by chairing the seminar and ensuring that young people voices are heard not only by the participants in the room but also by the decision makers is something that he is confident will happen.

Maqsood shared his own experience of working with young adults and the impact of health inequalities before, during and after the pandemic. He was very much here today to listen to the young adults and to see how he can help young people to tackling some of the issues that have already been identified in the webinars and this would be a second opportunity to engage with more young adults.

He is looking forward to the roundtable discussions and the solutions that young people will come up with to resolve some of the challenges young adults face.



## Adil Mohammed Javed

Founder and Artistic Director, Alchemy Arts

Adil thanked Maqsood Ahmad and the British Muslim Heritage Centre for inviting him to speak and share his thoughts with young people. He congratulated the two chairs for organising the such fantastic attendance at the seminar facilitated by young adults for young adults. Supporting young people via Covid and the role of voluntary sector.

Adil went on to share his own personal and moving story in relation to mental health and wellbeing. He wished that when he was growing up there was support available and had someone that he could talk to but sadly there wasn't many services around that catered for young people like him at that time. His personal experience has driven him to working with young people on this very important area.

He recognises the challenges young adults are confronted with not only during the pandemic period but also before the pandemic started such as unemployment, social isolation, racism to discrimination which can and do have an impact on young people mental health.

The role of the voluntary sector is vital to connect up with young people and the mainstream public bodies, they can act as a bridge between the two, but they have to ensure that the agenda is set by young adults not the voluntary sector of public institutions. Culture stigmatization continues to exist within Asian communities, and this is something that needs to be tackled. He thanked the two young adults and looked forward to hearing from them during the round table discussions.





## Dr Sarah Moataz

Supporting young adults - the role of NHS Professionals

Dr Moataz very much committed to supporting young people. She focused on the understanding of mental health and accessing mental health services for Muslim women, its important that we educate Muslim women on the importance of mental well-being and promote mental well-being by way of mental health promotions and mental health initiatives.

We must also encourage existing organisations, such as the British Muslim Heritage Centre, health centres, and GP surgeries, to become involved in raising awareness, through means that are possible for them, such as distribution of reading material in the forms of e-leaflets, e-posters on mental health campaigns and information on contacts for organisations and help lines for mental health.

Finally, I would say that we must make mental health services and service providers aware of the cultural and religious needs of Muslim women in order to properly address the needs of Muslim women when accessing treatment. The Doctors and other professionals can play an important part in supporting young people help to overcome the taboos especially in our communities. They can encourage individuals and through their connections in the community to seek help as soon as possible. They themselves can speak about issues regarding mental health and get positive message out to the communities and young people such as everyone has mental health at different level, and it can be managed with support from professionals and communities. She tanked thanked the two young adult chairs and stated this is an excellent start to discuss mental health of young people under the banner of health and wellbeing.



## Round table discussion

The roundtable discussions were designed to prompt dialogue and collaboration between the young people around two key issues:

### **Discussion 1: The issues that most affect young adults.**

The young people were asked to spend a few minutes thinking this through and devising a list of five issues. They were then asked to communicate the issues they had individual listed with the group and through group dialogue rank the 3 top issues and describe what these mean to you.

### **Discussion 2: Solutions to issues identified.**

Based on their top three issues from discussion 1, the young people were asked to discuss and identify three solutions that they thought would help alleviate each issue.

The interactive discussion session was designed to encourage young adults to increase their confidence in public speaking and an opportunity for them to have two-way dialogue of equals with the facilitators and guest speakers. One of the young people who have attended number of workshops has certainly increased his confidence to over come his challenge as someone who stutters. He has fed back on number of occasions the importance of young people supporting each other in a non-judgmental and safe environment which this network and the aspiring leaders programme is designed to do.





# Themes from roundtable discussion 1

## Issues that most impact young people

### 1. Mental health and wellbeing.

The subject that arose most frequently as the key issue affecting young Muslims was mental health and wellbeing. The group repeatedly identified that Young Muslims suffering from negative mental health outcomes are subject to a *double stigma*, not only are such issues widely stigmatised across society, but the young people felt that there is a lack of awareness and a culture of silence and shame within Muslim families and communities. Religious explanations for negative mental health outcomes can further complicate an already fraught issue.

### 2. Islamophobia, racism and cultural differences.

The lived experiences of intersecting racisms arose throughout group discussions and were variously labelled 'racism', 'Islamophobia' or 'cultural differences.' During discussion the young people asserted that experiences of structurally embedded oppressions and everyday racisms have a cumulative negative impact on their lived experiences, mental health and aspirations.

### 3. Achieving aspirations, success, and social mobility.

Related to number two, anxieties related to fulfilling material aspirations in an era of rising Islamophobia came to the fore. The young people were evidently motivated to do well, but there were clear apprehensions around doing well in academia, achieving employment commensurate to their qualifications and work experiences, lack of access to social mobility and financial independence due to structural Islamophobia. Various articulated as 'anxiety for exams,' 'finding purpose,' 'figuring out careers' and 'making money.'

### 4. Social media.

Social media was prevalent during discussions and associated with a range of social ills and burdens, including, for example, 'peer pressure' and 'manipulation' and 'fake news.'

### 5. Balancing competing needs and relationships.

Another key concern for young people was balancing family and cultural expectations with their own aspirations and gaining independence.





## Themes from roundtable discussion 2

### Solutions to alleviate issues identified

#### 1. Mental health and wellbeing.

The most frequent suggestion to alleviate mental health and wellbeing issues for young Muslims was for the provision of culturally and religiously sensitive support and counselling. In addition, the cohort advocated for Islamically rooted guidance and counselling for negative mental health outcomes from within the community, including from adults, Islamic scholars, and imams.

#### 2. Training programme targeting young people.

The young people identify a need for eradication of mental health stigma within Muslim communities, a move away from demonological explanations toward psychological and evidence-based understandings; a need for open, bi-directional conversations around mental health issues and 'support without stigma.' They suggested community mental health hubs, culturally and religiously sensitive mental health training programmes for both young people and adults. Train the community, not just young people.

#### 3. Cultural differences, Islamophobia and racism.

Many of the discussion highlighted a need for support from adults within the Muslim community alongside knowledge exchange, education and raising awareness of Islam in wider society to challenge racism and Islamophobia.



## Themes from roundtable discussion 2

### Solutions to alleviate issues identified

#### 4. Achieving aspirations, success, and social mobility.

Young people identified mentorship around work experience, CVs and education as key to supporting aspirations, success and social mobility. In addition to targeted support and guidance the young people recognised the need for independent self-development including, for example, learning to drive, taking part-time work and acquiring life skills (cooking and 'life admin').

#### 5. Social media.

Group dialogue around solutions for harms associated with social media included a need for workshops around reliable and robust sources, raising capacity for independent critical thinking and safe social media use.

#### 6. Balancing competing needs and relationships.

The solutions for this issue cascade from the solutions suggested for mental health issues that focus on the need for open, bi-directional and supportive communications between adults and young people. Support from community leaders to balance family and community with independence and individual aspirations.





# Recommendations

## 1. Mental health:

- a) To address the causes of poor mental health outcomes among Muslims groups by tackling structural racism and pervasive negative experiences.
- b) An urgent need to research the connections between Islamophobia and mental health outcomes.
- c) To develop faith and culturally sensitive services to improve health outcomes the lack of which deters Muslims from accessing services and support.
- d) The need to raise mental health awareness within the community and Muslim families by creating toolkits, appropriate trainings and sustainable models for cascading knowledge and capacity building.

## 2. Islamophobia and racism:

- a) The need to challenge Islamophobia and the associated structural exclusion for young Muslims across multiple sectors, particularly education and employment for social mobility that is commensurate with young Muslim achievements and experience.
- b) To robustly contest the misinformation that Britain is a post-racial society that has eradicated institutional racism as asserted by the Commission for Racial and Ethnic Disparities commission (2020).
- c) To challenge increasingly hostile policies that create a two-tier model of citizenship, including for example, the Prevent strategy, Nationality and Borders Bill and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.



## Appendix 1: Programme and Facilitators

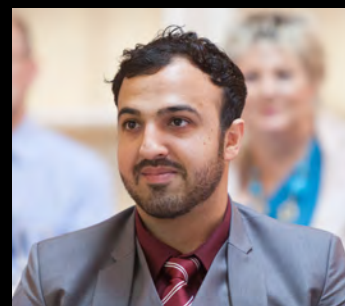
Time	Session	Facilitator
10.30 am	Registration., Tea and Coffee	Shaista Begum, Events Manager
11.00 am	Welcome and aims of the seminar	Mahi Hussain, Aspiring Leaders Programme Hilma Janwar, Aspiring Leaders Programme Maqsood Ahmad, Chief Executive
11.10 am	Supporting young people via Covid and the role of voluntary sector.	Adil Mohammed Javed Founder and Artistic Director, Alchemy Arts
11.25 am	Supporting young people the role of health professionals	Dr Tariq Chauhan Chief Executive, Beacon Group
11..35 am	Questions and Answers to Panel and speakers	Karimah Mohmmmed Aspiring Leaders Programme
11..50 am	Issues effecting Young Adults Round table discussions	Dr Fatima Khan Manchester Metropolitan University Karimah Mohammed Aspiring Leaders Programme Coordinator
12.05 pm	Feedback from tables	Dr Fatima Khan Karimah Mohammed
12..15 pm	Break	
12.30 pm	Overcoming issues effecting young adults as identified in the first round table discussions	Dr Fatima Khan Karimah Mohammed
12.45 pm	Feedback from tables	Dr Fatima Khan Karimah Mohammed
1.00 pm	Concluding remarks, next steps	Mahi Hussain and Hilma Janwar



**Mahi Hussain**  
Chair, Seminar



**Hilma Janwar**  
Co-chair, Seminar



**Adil Mohammed Javed**



**Karimah Mohammed**



**Dr Tariq Chauhan**



**Dr Fatima Khan**



**Maqsood Ahmad**