

## Muslim engagement & development

# COVID-19

## MEND Activity Report

**www.mend.org.uk**



artful\_dodger\_01



Thank  
You!





*“It is thus important that we rebalance the narrative to include the valuable work and sacrifices that minority communities undertake on a daily basis in supporting both national efforts and their local communities.”*

## A note from our CEO: MEND's response to the pandemic

As for countless organisations and individuals across the country, COVID-19 has exposed MEND to a new range of challenges, and we have endeavoured to adapt and respond to these new challenges, whilst continuing to work to represent the needs and concerns of the Muslim communities we seek to serve.

Muslim contributions to our society are often overlooked, yet conspiracy theories and media images linking the spread of COVID to Muslim and BAME communities are rife. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected Muslim and BAME communities, yet many people from these communities have been key frontline workers in the NHS and other services. Many of these contributions have sadly resulted in the deaths of a number of Muslim healthcare workers and frontline staff.

It is thus important that we rebalance the narrative to include the valuable work and sacrifices that minority communities undertake on a daily basis in supporting both national efforts and their local communities.

Throughout the pandemic, MEND's staff and volunteers have been at the forefront of supporting their communities, including the following;

- Parliamentary engagement to protect the interests of minority communities,
- Providing essential supplies to the vulnerable within local communities,
- Media monitoring and holding the press to account,
- Online education and empowerment resources,
- Victim support services,
- And much more.

This Activity Report hopes to provide a brief (but certainly not exhaustive) overview of some of MEND's work throughout the course of the pandemic.

MEND would like to thank all its staff and volunteers for their passion and dedication to supporting their local communities.

**Dr Shazad Amin, CEO**

# The Context

Pandemics often present a uniquely opportune moment for the spreading of misinformation amidst public nervousness at a time when public information is frequently slow to be disseminated. The coronavirus pandemic itself has been associated with the spread of misinformation at such a scale that the World Health Organisation termed it an *“infodemic”* before the outbreak was even considered a pandemic; *“an over-abundance of information (some accurate and some not) that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance”*.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Online Far-Right Space (OFRS) has been utilising the current pandemic to propagate stories of perceived threats posed by Muslim communities. Traditionally, popular far-right narratives portray Muslims as threats to security and public safety. These themes have been furthered by theories that Muslims are also a unique threat to public health in relation to COVID-19.

International conspiracies connecting Muslims to the spread of the coronavirus continue to abound.<sup>2</sup> In India, where the persecution of the minority Muslim community by the Hindutva agenda has now been well documented, evidence has emerged demonstrating how the pandemic is being used to spread further Islamophobia. The term *“corona-jihad”* has gained particular momentum, denoting the theory that Muslim communities in India are actively undermining the Government to spread coronavirus as a form of warfare and terrorism.

At the same time, groups in the UK have popularised these conspiracies on social media, with counter-terrorism police recently investigating far-right groups accused of *“trying to use the coronavirus crisis to stoke anti-Muslim sentiment”*.<sup>3</sup>

A report produced by members of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group (AMHWG) investigated posts from major social media platforms during the pandemic and noted several key themes emerging amongst anti-Muslim narratives. In particular, these themes include:

- Associating mosques with continued communal gatherings and the spread of COVID-19;
- Claims that Muslims are failing to observe social distancing rules and are *“super-spreaders”* of the virus, including the assertion that the *“UK’s Muslim population is responsible for a quarter of the country’s COVID-related deaths”*;
- Arguments that the police are giving favourable treatment to Muslims due to fears of being accused of racism.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Imran Awan, co-author of the report, noted that: *“The COVID-19 crisis has been used to create ‘others’ of Muslims, blaming them for the spread of the virus. The spread of fake news online is contributing to this extremely worrying trend”*.<sup>5</sup>

1. World Health Organization. 2020. “Novel Coronavirus(2019-Ncov) Situation Report - 13”. <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200202-sitrep-13-ncov-v3.pdf>.

2. Omar Suleiman, “Like India, Sri Lanka Is Using Coronavirus to Stigmatise Muslims,” Coronavirus pandemic | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, May 20, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/india-sri-lanka-coronavirus-stigmatise-muslims-200519134939934.html>

3. Nazia Parveen, “Police Investigate UK Far-Right Groups over Anti-Muslim Coronavirus Claims,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, April 5, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/05/police-investigate-uk-far-right-groups-over-anti-muslim-coronavirus-claims>

4. Roxan Khan Williams, “CORONAVIRUS, FEAR AND HOW ISLAMOPHOBIA SPREADS ON SOCIAL MEDIA,” Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, April 20, 2020, <https://anti-muslim-hatred-working-group.home.blog/2020/04/20/coronavirus-fear-and-how-islamophobia-spreads-on-social-media/>

5. Lizzie Dearden Home Affairs Correspondent @lizziedearden, “‘Dangerous’ Conspiracy Theories Could Spark Wave of Islamophobic Attacks When Lockdown Lifts, Report Warns,” The Independent (Independent Digital News and Media, April 19, 2020),



Indeed, a variety of fake stories and images have circulated online depicting Muslims as flouting social distancing measures by attending mosques for congregational prayers.<sup>6</sup> Many of these stories include historic images and videos of mosques in operation prior to lockdown measures being enforced. Such misinformation has led to police being inundated with false complaints by members of the public, with some posting messages online calling for the demolition of all mosques to “cure” COVID-19.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed research from the University of Essex and London School of Economics looked at changes in neighbourhood communication since lockdown amongst different ethnic groups and found BAME communities reduced this more than white communities. Report author Dr Alita Nandi said “*We find no supporting evidence that ethnic minorities are less likely to observe social distancing*”.<sup>8</sup>

These conspiracies have been given further impetus by far-right voices and commentators, including Daily Mail commentator, Andrew Pearce, who suggested that “If families gather for holy month of Ramadan will there be a huge spike in Covid cases. Doctors are very worried”.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Katie Hopkins inferred that the UK police should follow the example of India in deploying violence against Muslims during lockdown. In a video she shared on Twitter Muslim worshippers in India can be seen being beaten by police using a ‘lathi’ (a wooden stick that can measure up to 1.8m). This was accompanied by a comment suggesting that Humberside Police force should perhaps aspire to the same measures.<sup>10 11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-muslim-lockdown-conspiracy-theories-tommy-robinson-katie-hopkins-a9471516.html>

<sup>7</sup> Vikram Dodd, “Fears of Rise in UK Terrorist Recruits as Anti-Radicalisation Referrals Collapse,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, April 22, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/22/fears-of-rise-in-uk-terrorism-recruits-after-anti-radicalisation-referrals-collapse-coronavirus>

<sup>8</sup> Lizzie Dearden Home Affairs Correspondent @lizziedearden, “‘Dangerous’ Conspiracy Theories Could Spark Wave of Islamophobic Attacks When Lockdown Lifts, Report Warns,” The Independent (Independent Digital News and Media, April 19, 2020), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-muslim-lockdown-conspiracy-theories-tommy-robinson-katie-hopkins-a9471516.html>

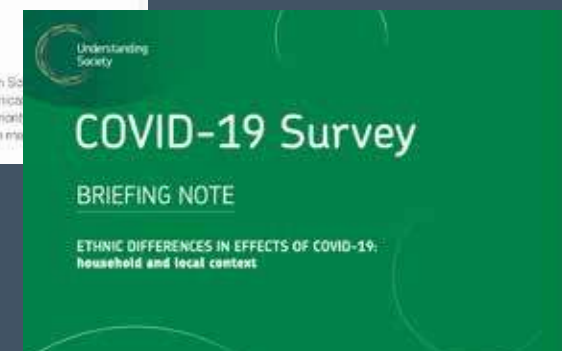
<sup>9</sup> Aina Khan, “Anger as Right-Wing UK Voices Suggest Ramadan Virus Spread,” News | Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, April 13, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/anger-wing-uk-voices-predict-ramadan-virus-spread-200413170844190.html?xif=10>

<sup>10</sup> @KTHopkins, Twitter, March 2020. Accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020. <https://twitter.com/kthopkins/status/1243625444139769858>

<sup>11</sup> @KTHopkins, Twitter, March 2020. Accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020. <https://twitter.com/kthopkins/status/1243625444139769858>



A tweet from Katie Hopkins’ account.



Meanwhile, Tommy Robinson shared a video on his Telegram channel allegedly showing British Muslims attending prayers at a “secret mosque” in Birmingham.<sup>12</sup> The West Midlands police subsequently dismissed these claims, however, the video had been watched more than 14,000 times<sup>13</sup> and continues to be shared as evidence of Muslim communities allegedly undermining the British state.<sup>14</sup>

The activity of OFRS has very tangible consequences and as mounting conspiracy theories are given life on online spaces during the current pandemic, there are concerns that Muslims and mosques may be vulnerable to a wave of Islamophobic attacks as lockdown measures are increasingly lifted.<sup>15</sup> Any Government response should therefore be mindful of the potential for misdirected frustration (which is currently largely contained to online spaces as a consequence of lockdown) to be violently targeted at minority communities once public restrictions are eased.

12. Nazia Parveen, “Police Investigate UK Far-Right Groups over Anti-Muslim Coronavirus Claims,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, April 5, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/05/police-investigate-uk-far-right-groups-over-anti-muslim-coronavirus-claims>

13. Imran Awan, “Coronavirus: Conspiracy Theories and Fake Videos Fuel Rise in Islamophobia,” *The Conversation*, May 7, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-and-fake-videos-fuel-rise-in-islamophobia-137107>

14. Lizzie Dearden Home Affairs Correspondent @lizziedearden, “‘Dangerous’ Conspiracy Theories Could Spark Wave of Islamophobic Attacks When Lockdown Lifts, Report Warns,” *The Independent* (Independent Digital News and Media, April 19, 2020), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-muslim-lockdown-conspiracy-theories-tommy-robinson-katie-hopkins-a9471516.html>

15. Lizzie Dearden Home Affairs Correspondent @lizziedearden, “‘Dangerous’ Conspiracy Theories Could Spark Wave of Islamophobic Attacks When Lockdown Lifts, Report Warns,” *The Independent* (Independent Digital News and Media, April 19, 2020), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-muslim-lockdown-conspiracy-theories-tommy-robinson-katie-hopkins-a9471516.html>







# MEND's National Work During the Pandemic

## The Coronavirus Act 2020

When the Coronavirus Bill 2019–21 was introduced in Parliament, MEND worked hard to analyse the bill and provide resources to address problematic aspects contained within it. In particular, MEND issued an action alert raising concerns that, as it was originally written, the bill would have allowed designated local authorities to cremate bodies against the wishes of the deceased. The team quickly produced an action alert and template letters to empower communities to bring this issue to the attention of local MPs. At the same time, we drew on our own contacts within Parliament to ask them to act.

In light of this work and the concurrent work of other Muslim individuals and faith groups, Naz Shah, MP, tabled an amendment which was supported by over 100 MPs, resulting in the Government tabling its own similar amendment to the bill. Consequently, this work was vital in ensuring that the final act contained a clarification that both national and local authorities “must have regard to the desirability of disposing of a dead person’s body or other remains –

1. in accordance with the person’s wishes, if known, or
2. otherwise in a way that appears consistent with the person’s religion or beliefs, if known.”

Read our explanation of the amendment [here](#).





## Local organising to avoid cremations

MEND produced a position statement offering practical advice on how mosques and burial committees should seek to organise themselves and liaise with local councils to avoid cremations by ensuring that both religious beliefs are upheld, and that public health is assured. This was disseminated throughout Muslim communities via our working groups and networks.

At the same time, MEND's volunteers across the country were mobilised to assist local burial organisations in ensuring that procedures were in place through liaising with the local councils, funeral directors, cemeteries, and mosques. They were also essential in organising training on how to wash bodies, arranging transport to collect the deceased from the hospital, and transporting the deceased to the cemetery for the final burial rights. These efforts resulted in hundreds of families being supported through the emotional time of the burial of their loved ones. Their stories were reported by the national media.



### 'I can't tell you how many bodies we've picked up': Muslim community on coronavirus impact as Ramadan starts

WORLD | HEALTH | RELIGION | CORONAVIRUS

🕒 Friday 24 April 2020, 2:38pm



25.03.2020

#### Local organising to avoid cremations and support local authorities during the Covid-19 outbreak

Over the course of the last week, a variety of Muslim organisations raised concerns about the Coronavirus Bill 2019-21 and its provisions for allowing designated local authorities to cremate bodies against the wishes of the deceased.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the second reading of the Coronavirus Bill 2019-21 was held in the House of Commons. In light of the concerns that had been raised by Muslim and other faith groups and in response to an amendment which was tabled by Naz Shah MP and supported by over 100 MPs, the Government tabled its own similar amendment to the bill.

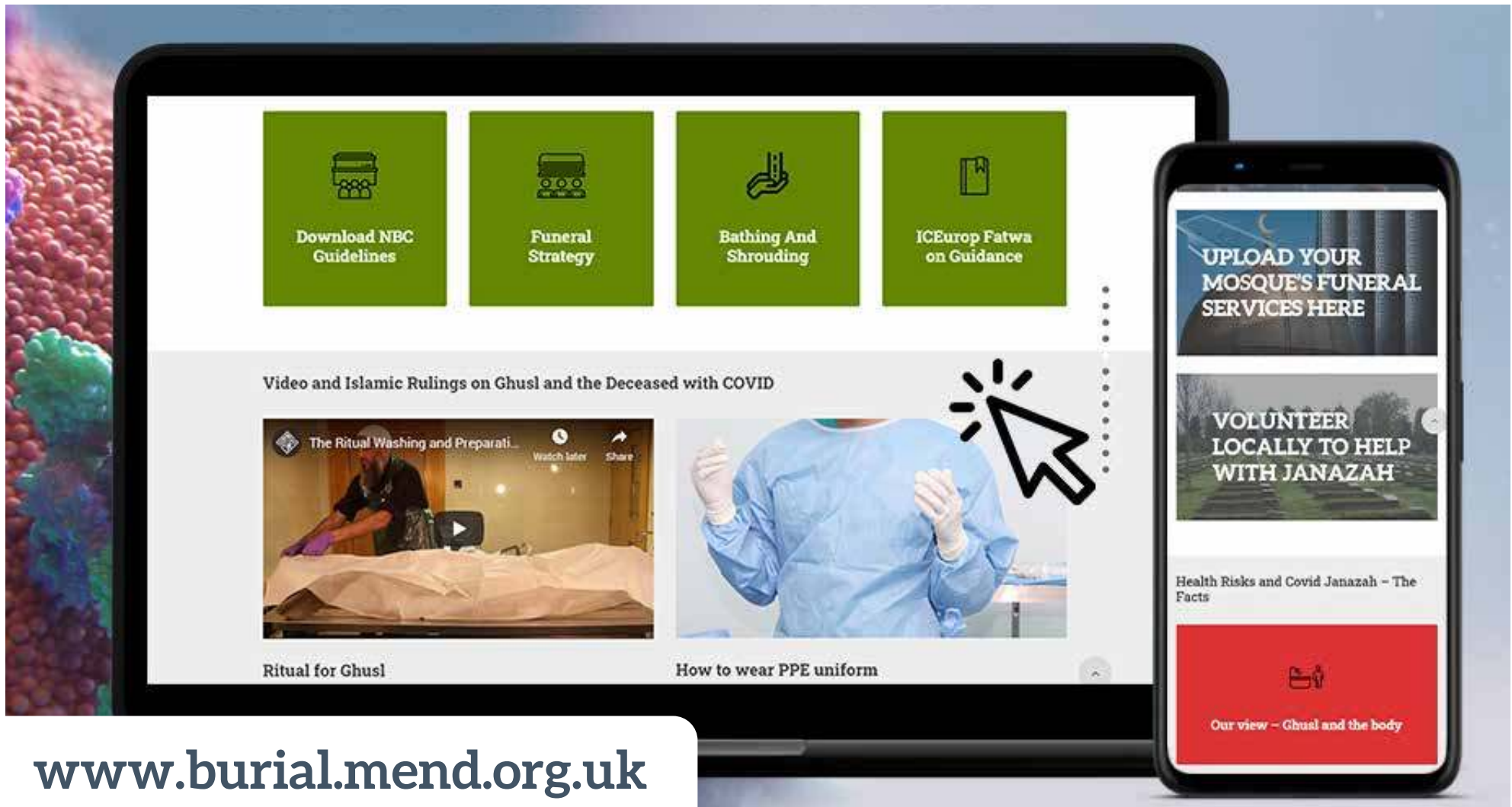
This amendment is undoubtedly an improvement as it clarifies that both national and local authorities "must have regard to the desirability of disposing of a dead person's body or other remains -

- a) in accordance with the person's wishes, if known, or
- b) otherwise in a way that appears consistent with the person's religion or beliefs, if known."



## Burial Website

Since COVID-19 has sadly disproportionately affected BAME communities, including Muslims, we found there was a need for people from Muslim communities to be access information on carrying out burials, performing ghusl, obtaining PPE, and a range of other issues relating to the death and burial of their loved ones. In conjunction with the National Burial Council, we produced a website ([www.burial.mend.org.uk](http://www.burial.mend.org.uk)) that brought together information on these issues. This website has been accessed over 11,000 times and we believe is an invaluable resource for bereaved families.



[www.burial.mend.org.uk](http://www.burial.mend.org.uk)



Coordinated by: **mcf**  
Muslim Charities Forum  
SUPPORT | CONNECT | REPRESENT

#### CHARITY PARTNERS



#### FRIENDS OF THE CAMPAIGN



#### MEDIA PARTNERS



Support our COVID-19 Emergency Appeal

[WWW.LAUNCHGOOD.COM/NATIONALSOLIDARITY](http://WWW.LAUNCHGOOD.COM/NATIONALSOLIDARITY)

## COVID-19 Action fund

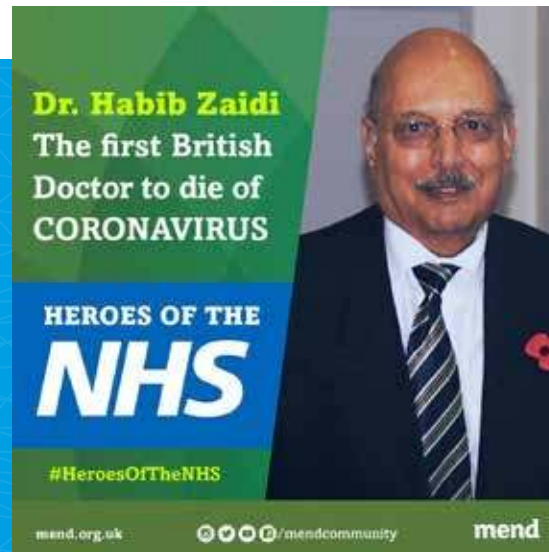
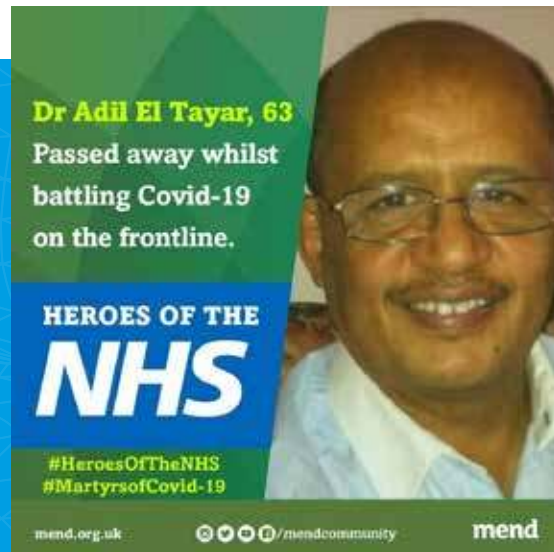
In these difficult times, MEND have recognised that many families are going through financial hardship. We have thus made available a fund to assist such families by giving grants of up to several hundred pounds to help our aid partners on the ground. To date we provided £11,500 to 15 organisations, including Huddersfield Community First, Southern Women's Aid Network, the NHS Wellness Box project, and Period Poverty Manchester, to name but a few.



MEND and other organisations supporting the Muslim Charity Forums' collective Campaign for National Solidarity.

# #HeroesoftheNHS

MEND initiated a campaign on social media entitled #HeroesoftheNHS. Within this we have highlighted the Muslim health professionals who have sadly died during this crisis as well as those who are performing tremendous work on the frontlines in a series of short videos.







# MEND's Local Work During the Pandemic

As mentioned previously, MEND have provided £11,500 to 15 organisations in order to assist in local COVID-19 efforts. However, as well as financial assistance, we have also dedicated significant human resources to supporting local initiatives.

The vast majority of MEND's grassroots work is achieved through a network of 30 working groups and a number of satellite groups across the UK. These working groups deliver MEND's national strategy on a local level through their work with delivery partners such as the police, councils, schools, and inter-faith organisations, to name but a few.

What makes these working groups unique is that they are almost entirely comprised of local community volunteers. As such, working groups function on the basis of enthusiastic and dedicated individuals. Consequently, almost 800 people across the country freely give their time and expertise to MEND because they believe passionately in the causes and principles we espouse.

Below is a brief overview of just some of the work our volunteers have engaged with in recent months as part of national and local COVID-19 efforts.





**1. South Women's Aid Network (SWAN)**  
– South London

**2. NHS Wellness Box Project**  
– Central London

**3. Nadi Park Royal Food Parcels**  
– West London

**4. Hot Meals in Basildon** – Basildon

**5. Ilford Muslim Society** – Ilford

**6. "Thank You NHS" banners**  
– East London

**7. Muslimah Voices** – London

**8. Path 2 Success Series & Phone Listen-  
ing Service** – Birmingham

**9. Christ the King Foodbank** – Leicester

**10. Midlands Langar Seva (PPE)**  
– Leicester

**11. Himmah Foodbank** – Nottingham

**12. Funeral Services UK** – Coventry

**13. Virtues of Lockdown** – Leicester

**14. The Period Poverty Project**  
– Manchester

**15. Homeless Aid UK** – Bolton

**16. Deepdale Community Association**  
– Preston

**17. Social Media Training** – Cardiff

**18. Radio Ramadan Cymru** – Cardiff

**19. Headbands for the NHS staff**  
– Cardiff

**20. A Meeting with ITV News** – Cardiff

**21. Huddersfield Community First** –  
Huddersfield

**22. Purpose of Life** – Kirklees

**23. MENDtalks: What Muslim Women  
Want You to Know** – Leeds

**24. Glasgow Muslim Aid** – Glasgow

**25. Volunteering database** – Edinburgh

**26. Webinar Panels** – Edinburgh

**27. STOP THE PRESS!** – Edinburgh





## London and the South East

### 1. South Women's Aid Network (SWAN)

A volunteer from our South London Working Group led a COVID support project with South Women's Aid Network (SWAN) where she would create essential food packs with donations received from the local community. Everyday a list would be sent to her detailing vulnerable people who are in need of these food packs. She would then coordinate local volunteers who would pick up food packs and deliver them to vulnerable individuals in the area.

MEND has also supported the SWAN project by donating £300 towards the cost of creating food packs.

The project has made a huge impact on the lives of vulnerable South Londoners. Mohamed, one of the recipients of the food pack shared his feedback

*"You are helping us in a very critical time that is difficult for us to cover our Ramadan Iftar. You have sacrificed yourselves to assist us seeing as we are facing very difficult time in which every person has go away to protect themselves."*

### 2. NHS Wellness Box Project

A volunteer from our Central London team partnered with one of his colleagues to bring the NHS Wellness Box initiative to the heart of the City. They sourced and created wellbeing packages, including motivational cards, energy bars, coffee, hand cream, and toothpaste to name but a few useful items. They delivered these to NHS staff at various hospitals in Central London. MEND volunteers from across London came together to put together these boxes for our NHS heroes. This turned into a weekly effort with over 100 boxes made and delivered every week since the beginning of lockdown to the first week of July. MEND further supported this initiative by donating £350 towards the cost of the contents





in these boxes. Our volunteers received very positive feedback from the NHS staff who were blown away with their generosity.

### 3. **Nadi Park Royal Food Parcels**

MEND volunteers from across London were involved in supporting the vulnerable during the pandemic to ensure these people were getting the food and essentials that they needed. In West London, a MEND volunteer partnered with Nadi Park Royal, a Muslim community centre, to put together Ramadan food parcels which were sent out to families who were struggling to buy food to break their fast. Food was donated by kind donors which was packed by volunteers at the community centre and then delivered safely to locals who needed it most. A large number of boxes were also delivered to Lady of Willesden Church to help support vulnerable individuals from the local Christian community.



### 4. **Hot Meals in Basildon**

Despite restaurants being forced to close to the public, a volunteer from our East London group used the opportunity to cook over 100 hot meals daily in his restaurant based in Basildon, Essex, to feed the hard-working staff at Basildon Hospital. He encouraged healthy employees to participate in cooking and delivery of the meals. His efforts were mentioned in a local newspaper.



### 5. **Ilford Muslim Society**

Ilford Muslim Society teamed up with local restaurants who would cook hot meals and a team of volunteers would pack them and deliver them to vulnerable members of the community so that low income families did not have to worry about their next hot meal whilst being unable to work. The meals were also sent to NHS hospitals across East London to keep the NHS staff going on their life saving shifts. The backbone to all of these efforts was one of our volunteers from the East London group who drove the delivery van tirelessly to ensure those in need received a hot meal.



## 6. "Thank You NHS" banners

A volunteer from MEND's East London Working Group organised a large banner to be displayed across the entrance of Musalla An Noor Mosque in Hackney reading 'Thank You NHS' followed by verses from the Quran. This began to be replicated across a number of mosques in London. In order to show our support for the NHS, MEND sponsored the printing of these banners for mosques across the South East, including SLMCC (Harrow), Sri Lanka East London Mosque (East Ham), Essex Islamic Academy (Barking), Sri Lanka Muslim Community (East Ham), Camberley Mosque, IANL (Finchley), Masjid Al Jannha (Slough), Purley Mosque.

## 7. Muslimah Voices

Prior to the COVID lockdown, female volunteers across London had planned a large event for International Women's Day, which unfortunately had to be cancelled. However, this did not stop the volunteers from bringing forth creative solutions to celebrate Muslim Women. MEND volunteers from West London decided to create a podcast series dedicated to celebrating the achievements of Muslim women. The Muslimah Voices podcast has been hugely successful in giving a platform to the voices and experiences of Muslim women across the country.

## The Midlands

### 8. Path 2 Success Series & Phone Listening Service

During lockdown there has been serious national concern surrounding spikes in domestic violence and abuse. MEND's Birmingham working group have thus worked tirelessly in collaboration with Birmingham Central Mosque to conduct a weekly webinar series by the name of '[Path to Success](#)' to support women in turbulent times who are in need of self-development and empowerment tools in order to ensure that their voices are



9



heard. This project was then complimented by the development of the Phone Listening Service to ensure that no one must suffer in silence.

### 9. Christ the King Foodbank

MEND's Leicester volunteers joined the Leicester East COVID Support Community Group created by Claudia Webbe and other community initiatives responding to the local needs of the community. Through their community contacts and links, our volunteers identified a key opportunity to support Christ the King food bank in Beaumont Leys. MEND's Leicester working group members organised a refrigerated van and, with the support from local businesses, organised four-weeks-worth of frozen food for delivery to those in need.

### 10. Midlands Langar Seva (PPE)

As the UK began to experience a shortage of PPE equipment, MEND's volunteers and local community members mobilised to support NHS workers and grassroots organizations to continue to provide essential support to those vulnerable within communities. As one example, a MEND volunteer kindly donated PPE masks and gloves to be distributed across Leicestershire's community groups and organisations in need during the crisis.

One of the receivers of the PPE masks was Midlands Langar Seva, who were extremely appreciative of the support provided by the team as it ensured that their foodbank services were able to continue to support those who are vulnerable and in need during these difficult times.

### 11. Himmah Foodbank

MEND has partnered with HIMMAH Foodbank in Nottingham to provide support to the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis. The foodbank had been experiencing a shortage of



10



11





donations and required support to enable them to continue to serve people and families who are struggling to access basic food and essentials because of the current pandemic.

### 12. Funeral Services UK, Coventry

MEND donated to the Coventry based grassroots organization, Funeral Services UK. The organisation also used MEND's burial strategy document to aid their own burials process.

### 13. Virtues of Lockdown

The Virtues of Lockdown series was introduced by the MEND Leicester Working Group to celebrate the very British quality of making the best of the COVID-19 situation. It aimed to be a platform through which to bring together the local community and explore the impact of COVID-19 on our families and friends. In particular, the series was highly successful in showcasing issues surrounding supporting and empowering our young people to gain new skills, find their voice, and inspire others during the lockdown.

## The North West

### 14. The Period Poverty Project

MEND's Manchester working partnered up with The Period Poverty Project. The project was set up by Ghazala Tehseen, a 4th year medical student, and works to address a lack of access to menstrual products for women and girls, especially within the Muslim community. Prior to the pandemic, the project ran a service where they delivered sanitary products to organisations and individuals. Within the confines of the pandemic, the team shifted to providing supplies to local organisations, community hubs, and food banks.





MEND donated to the cause and supported them in purchasing supplies. Through this work, more than 1000 products were distributed to those who needed it.

To further this work, MEND also organised a webinar, entitled *"MENDTalks: What Muslim women want you to know"*, for which Ghazala Tehseen spoke on the panel.

### 15. **Homeless Aid UK**

Homeless Aid UK, based in Bolton, have around 300 volunteers across the North West. COVID-19 has exacerbated many issues that Homeless Aid UK have been dealing with, and to support the excellent work, MEND donated to their cause. The money was used to distribute hampers to the most vulnerable in Bolton and to provide meals for 600 to 700 homeless people each week.

### 16. **Deepdale Community Association**

Deepdale Community Association (DCA) are a collective set up in Preston who work to support the vulnerable individuals and families in the locality. MEND's Preston volunteers partnered with DCA by providing financial donations that would allow the group to purchase the necessary items to create food packs to those in need of support in the local community.



## **Wales**

### 17. **Social Media Training**

Due to COVID-19, many of MEND's partners and local stakeholders have transferred much of their daily work to online platforms. These partners and stakeholders were thus keen to increase their outreach and highlight their work on social media. MEND provided social media training, where participants learnt about the importance of utilising social media, the differences between social media platforms, and their benefits.



and drawbacks. Finally, the participants learnt how to plan a successful social media campaign.

### 18. Radio Ramadan Cymru

MEND hosts its own radio show *"Let's MEND it!"* on Radio Ramadan Cymru, every Sunday from 6:45pm until 7:30pm. The show explores what it takes to become proactive Muslims during this divisive time. As but two examples, in the first show, the guests discussed whether Islamophobia exists and if so, whether it is exaggerated within discourse. Meanwhile, in the second show, Faiza Mukith, an employment lawyer and head of MEND's Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) touched upon several topics including discrimination in the workplace and gendered Islamophobia.

### 19. Headbands for the NHS staff

After seeing photos of NHS workers with painful bruises behind their ears from wearing surgical masks for long hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MEND volunteers and their children decided to buy headbands and sew colourful buttons on them. These buttons helped to hook the surgical masks' straps instead of hooking them behind the ears in order to prevent bruises. The children also made "Thank You" cards which were distributed with the colourful buttoned headbands to the NHS staff, working at the intensive care unit (ICU) of Heath Hospital in Cardiff.

### 20. A Meeting with ITV News

MEND attended a meeting organised by ITV news to review ITV coverage of COVID-19. The purpose of the meeting was to put forward suggestions to improve its coverage, ensuring it is inclusive and informative. In the meeting, MEND emphasised the importance of accuracy in reporting, as well as diversifying reporting to include positive stories from Muslim and BAME communities.



**Sunday 3rd May:**  
Have you been a victim of Islamophobia? Live chat with MEND's Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) and an Employment and Discrimination Lawyer.

**Every Sunday from 6:45 to 7:30pm**

Email [info@radioramadhan.cymru](mailto:info@radioramadhan.cymru) for your comments or questions or text 07729 952186.  
You can also email MEND: [cardiff@mend.org.uk](mailto:cardiff@mend.org.uk)

[mend.org.uk](http://mend.org.uk)  
**mend**

Listen Live  
RADIO RAMADHAN CYMRU  
[www.radioramadhan.cymru](http://www.radioramadhan.cymru)

18





## Yorkshire

### 21. Huddersfield Community First

MEND partnered with Huddersfield Community First to support their community in a number of ways, including deliveries of food, medicine, and other supplies to local people in need. These simple but caring tasks have greatly alleviated the struggles of many in Huddersfield during these challenging times.

### 22. Purpose of Life

MEND partnered with the Muslim charity, Purpose of Life, to support them with their community work across Kirklees, as well as surrounding areas during the early stages of the COVID pandemic. For over five years, Purpose of Life has been working as a children's charity to provide aid overseas, as well as support for local communities through the 'Our Soul Food Project'. During the current Coronavirus crisis, Purpose of Life worked tirelessly in Kirklees to support the homeless and vulnerable through providing food parcel deliveries and COVID related information to those who were self-isolating.

The work of the organisation achieved recognition from local MP, Tracy Brabin, who said that the commitment of Purpose of Life in supporting the vulnerable was "*inspiring*". During Ramadan and Eid, Purpose of Life delivered over 800 food parcels and celebrated the end of Ramadan with an Eid party where 100 parcels were given to the needy.

### 23. MEND Talks: What Muslim Women Want You to Know

To kick off our series of local online events, MEND's Yorkshire team transformed an International Women's Day event into the first of our 'MENDtalks' webinars, where six Muslim women from across the UK gave short speeches on a number of topics. Our speakers, Hina Junejo, Ghazala Tehseen, Saiqa Riad, Salma Al-Arefi, An-





drea Hunt and Madiha Ansari, spoke on a wide range of issues from period poverty to the struggles of entering academia as a Muslim woman.

## Scotland

### 24. Glasgow Muslim Aid

Glasgow Muslim Aid set up food distribution throughout the month of Ramadan when they provided over 200 hot meals per night to asylum seekers, destitute individuals, and those in need. The initiative was self-funded by the organisers, friends, family, the wider community, and MEND, who donated £500 from their action aid fund. MEND's team in Scotland also organised a delivery scheme with seven drivers working on a rota system to deliver over 100 hot meals and other donated items every other night throughout Ramadan.

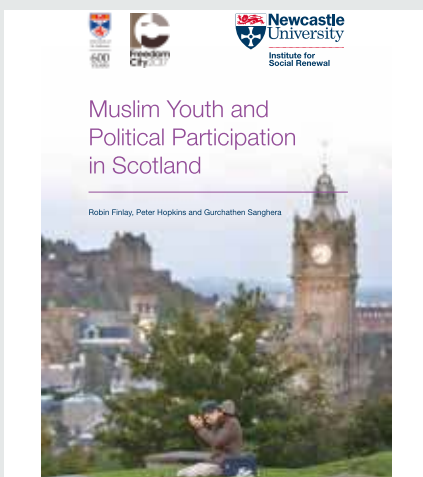
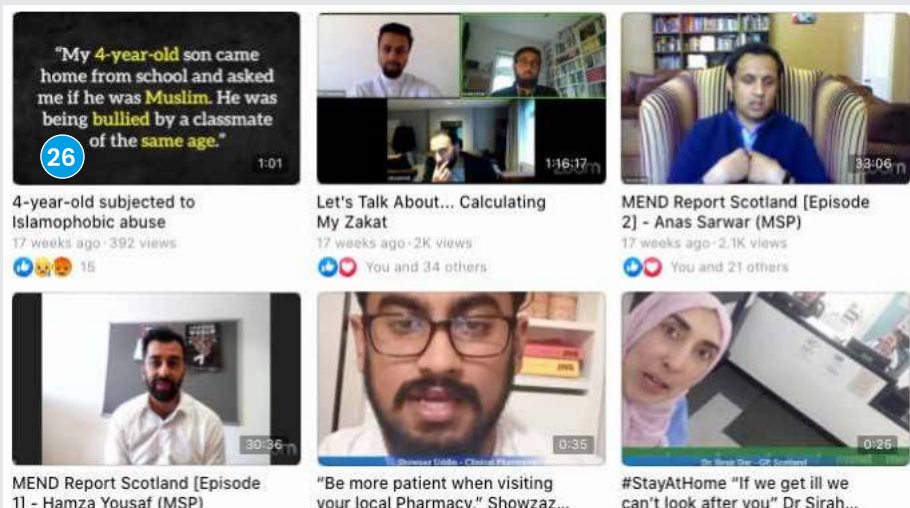
### 25. Volunteering database

MEND's volunteers in Scotland developed a database of mosques, Muslim charities, and organisations around Scotland that are working to support communities and front-line staff at this time. This allowed other volunteers to access up to date information regarding the opportunities to contribute in their local area, whether they are able to volunteer their time, provide funds, or even if they are looking for signposting to support that is available for themselves or others in their local area.

### 26. Webinar Panels

MEND's volunteers in Scotland initiated a series of webinars to highlight key issues and discuss topics that have specific relevance for people in Scotland during lockdown. We were delighted to have been able to host a series of excellent speakers, including Humza Yousuf MSP, Anas Sarwar MSP, and Zara





Janjua, an award-winning broadcaster and journalist. These webinars focussed on a wide range of issues in relation to lockdown, as well as topics such as Islamophobia, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, how communities can effectively engage with the media, and celebrating Eid in lockdown. The webinars were greatly received not only in Scotland, but throughout the whole of the UK.

## 27. Open Letter

MEND initiated an open letter that was signed by almost 40 Muslim and equalities organisations and called on all political parties in Scotland to sign a commitment to work towards increasing Muslim representation within Scottish politics, and specifically to place more Muslim candidates in winnable seats for the Holyrood elections in 2021, as part of the fight against Islamophobia.

The open letter received a great deal of media attention in Scotland and served an important role in highlighting Islamophobia in Scotland, particularly in the context of findings from the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Islamophobia, who found that 83% of Muslims had experienced Islamophobia in Scotland, with 79% of Muslims feeling Islamophobia in Scotland is getting worse. Meanwhile, a study carried out by Newcastle University and the University of St Andrews found that everyday Islamophobia is a deterrent for young Muslims engaging in the political process in Scotland.



# Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)

The Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU) was founded by MEND in response to rising anti-Muslim attacks across Europe and a growing tide of anti-Muslim sentiment. The IRU offers a platform for victims of Islamophobic hate crime and discrimination to report and share their experiences and serves as a source of free advice, support, and referral services.

While many may assume that lockdown measures may have limited the opportunity for Islamophobic abuse to materialise, the IRU has seen a continued pattern of reporting (55 reports of hate crime or discrimination between 1<sup>st</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020), whilst also noting several cases of past abuse being compounded by lockdown measures and actually getting worse.

As but one example, Kamran (not his real name) and his family had been subjected to criminal damage, verbal abuse, and harassment from their neighbour for five years. Unfortunately, lockdown saw an increase in this abuse. Speaking of the IRU's support, Kamran stated:

***“At a time when I felt completely let down by the authorities, notably my housing officer and the police; IRU were always supporting me... I feel assured knowing the IRU will leave no stone unturned and will fight tooth and nail for me, my family”***

Meanwhile, due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, many workers have been negatively impacted by either being made redundant, being put on furlough, or simply having their salaries cut. Ongoing issues around discrimination have, therefore, become particularly acute during this time. As an example, Battersea Mosque began to receive calls from local residents who were concerned about the financial troubles they are facing. Many of these people felt they were being discriminated against by their workplace as employees from other backgrounds had reportedly been treated differently. As a result, Battersea Mosque reached out to MEND's IRU for help with these cases. The mosque now operates as a referral service and anyone who reported hate crime or discrimination to the mosque can now get direct help and support from our legal team.



**DISCRIMINATION SUPPORT LINE**

**Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)** **icec**

**UNFAIRLY TARGETED AT WORK DUE TO YOUR RELIGION AND HAVE NO ONE TO TURN TO?**

**WE ARE HERE TO HELP.**

ICEC is partnering with MEND's Islamophobia Response Unit to help and provide support to our local Muslims who have been discriminated at their workplace. Support can also be given to those who may be experiencing Islamophobic hate crime.

Contact: Imam Safwaan Hussein - 07426 064024

mend.org.uk **mend**



**Aisha was subjected to Islamophobic discrimination by her University. As a result of the discrimination, she left University without her degree certificate.**

"When I felt **completely let down** by the authorities, notably my housing officer and the police; **IRU** were **always supporting** me and trying to get questions answered".



On a normal evening, Bilal's **neighbour** came to his door and **threatened** to "**stick a knife**" into Bilal's throat.



# IRU

ISLAMOPHOBIA  
RESPONSE UNIT





# MEND's National & Regional Webinars and other work

Throughout the pandemic, MEND has used its online presence to reach the public and discuss important issues impacting local communities. We have thus created several different programs of webinar series designed to not only inform the public, but also empower them throughout these challenging times.

## MEND Report Webinars

MEND launched the MEND Report series to encourage lively debate on important issues. These have included:

An exploration of the challenges facing British people stuck abroad during the COVID-19 crisis, featuring Claudia Webbe, MP, and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan.

A discussion about the impact of COVID-19 on BAME and Muslim students, between Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, Afzal Khan MP; General Secretary of the National Education Union, Kevin Courtney; Professor of Race and Education, Vini Lander; and Deputy Head of Bankside Primary School, Kauser Jan.

MEND's team in Scotland explored Islamophobia and the lack of Muslim representation within politics and media, with Humza Yusuf MSP, Anas Sarwar MSP, and Zara Janjua, an award-winning broadcaster, producer, and presenter.

MEND's volunteers in Leicester discussed the negative media coverage and racist overtones surrounding the local lockdowns, as well as the contributions of Muslim and BAME communities in supporting local COVID efforts. Panellists included Isla Dixon, Leicestershire Police's Hate Crime Officer; Inspector Kam Mistry; Imam Mohammad Lockhat; and Ahmed Kasu, a community volunteer.

Richard Burgon, MP and former Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, discussed Racism and Islamophobia with our Yorkshire team.



**f LIVE**

 **Suhaimah Manzoor-Khan**  
Award-winning spoken-word poet

 **Claudia Webbe**  
Labour MP for Leicester East

**mend**  
REPORT

SUNDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020 | AT 12PM

...kicks off our new series of webinars by looking ... during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
...unity or [facebook.com/mendcommunity](https://facebook.com/mendcommunity) or email them to on

**MONDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY**  
**7:00PM - 7:30PM**

**mend**  
REPORT

Please join us in a live webinar with **Anas Sarwar MSP** as we discuss the hot topics of the day:

- COVID19,
- Islamophobia,
- Scotland's Islamophobia cross party group
- Plus much more including a chance to ask your own questions of Anas Sarwar



**facebook**  
LIVE

Join us on Facebook LIVE:  
[www.facebook.com/mendcommunity/live](https://www.facebook.com/mendcommunity/live)

[mend.org.uk](https://mend.org.uk)     /mendcommunity **mend**

MUSLIM ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

**mendtalks**  
SCOTLAND



Please join us in a live webinar on Facebook live as we have a frank and informative talk with Scotland's

**Humza Yousaf MSP**  
- Cabinet Secretary for Justice -

Topics include:

1. BME communities and why they are being hit so hard by COVID19
2. Ramadan and how we can embrace during lockdown
3. Police powers during lockdown
4. Negativity already showing towards Muslims in relation to COVID19
5. Plus much more including a chance to ask your questions.

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 | 2:30 - 3:00pm

Join us on Facebook Live @[mendcommunity](https://mendcommunity.org) or [facebook.com/mendcommunity/live](https://facebook.com/mendcommunity/live) **f LIVE**

**f LIVE**



**mend**  
REPORT SCOTLAND

TUESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020 | 6:30PM - 7:00PM

Join us in a live webinar with Zara Janjua award winning broadcaster, producer and presenter as we delve into the pressing issues of the day.

Facebook Live @[mendcommunity](https://mendcommunity.org) or [facebook.com/mendcommunity/live](https://facebook.com/mendcommunity/live)

[mend.org.uk](https://mend.org.uk) **mend**





**MEND - Muslim Engagement & Development** was live, 13 August

### MEND Report Midlands: Leicester in Lockdown

Listen to how the community got together and helped their own and the wider community during the pan...  
[See more](#)

31 17 comments 2.6K views

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

**Comments** [Hide](#)

Most relevant

**Sigil Khwaja Patel** · 14:30  
 Fabulous work by the community. A question for the police would you say your response was more reactive rather than proactive? Prior to initial lockdown the community were making plans and provisions to deal with the lockdown do you think the police c... [See more](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 5 w

**Jamaal Moosa** · 52:52  
 Always a great insight from Ahmed Kasu, speaks sense!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 5 w

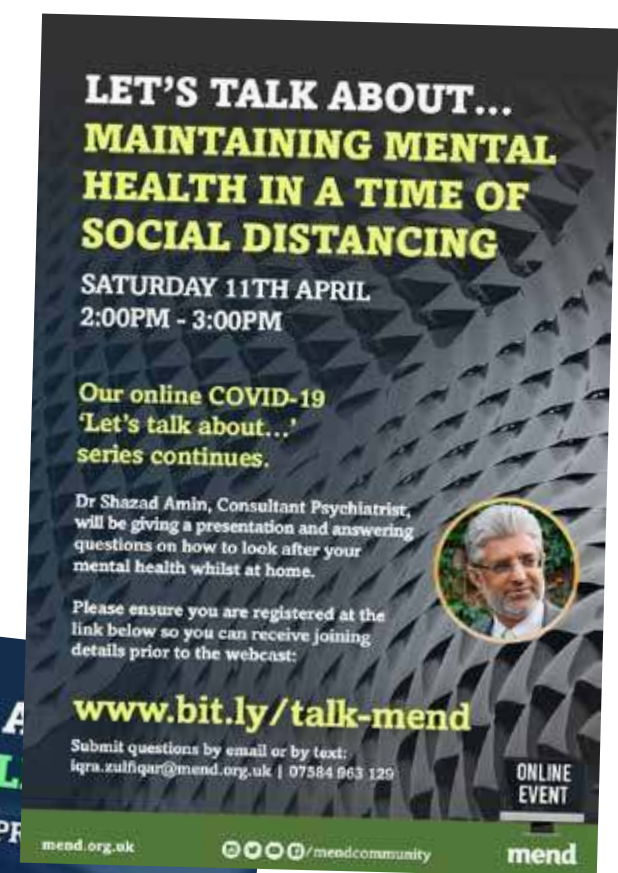
[View 11 more comments](#)

## MENDtalks

MENDtalks is a platform for voices that are not often heard in Muslim spaces, to share their personal experiences. MENDtalks has explored themes such as 'What Muslim Women Want You To Know', 'The Muslim Youth Experience', 'Muslim Experiences in the Criminal Justice System', and 'Being Black and Muslim' which had 8.4k views.

## Let's Talk About...

At the outset of the global crisis, MEND's volunteers wanted to put together a project that would support their communities through this huge adjustment. As such, MEND developed a webinar series entitled 'Let's Talk About...' to platform local expertise and help inform the public about topical issues. Topics have included mental health, working from home, exploring coronavirus, Islamic wills, Zakat, burials, end of life care, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and Malcom X. As an example, one session looked to address questions of healthcare surrounding COVID-19 and was presented by Dr Jawad Amin. He gave his advice on how those who live with vulnerable people can best protect themselves, how useful face masks are, and explaining technical concepts such as 'the curve'.

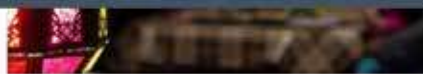




# Articles

The team has written dozen articles in the last month, covering topics such as:

- Understanding what the Coronavirus Act 2020 says about [cremations](#) and its impact on [civil rights](#), as well as the impacts of [restrictions](#) on hospital visitors and dying patients.
- The [appointment](#) of Sir Keir Starmer as the new Labour leader and leaked reports of [Islamophobia](#) within the Labour Party.
- Inequalities in [education](#) and the impact of the Government's COVID-19 response on the [exam](#) results of BAME students.
- [Racism, Far-Right](#) extremism, and the [vulnerabilities](#) of BAME communities during Coronavirus, and particularly the dangers facing [mosques](#).
- The [relationship](#) between the press and minority groups, including the impact of [skewed](#) reporting regarding COVID and minorities, and the need to increase [diversity](#) within newsrooms.
- Police relations both during the current [crisis](#) and the long term need for increased [engagement](#).
- The painful [anniversaries](#) of the murder of Jo Cox, the Finsbury Park terror attack, [Anders Breivik](#), and [Srebrenica](#), as well as the lessons that must be learned three years after [Grenfell Tower](#).
- Developments in [justice](#), including the [appointment](#) of the first British hijabi judge and the quest to reach justice for [Shukri Abdi's](#) family.
- The damaging use of security [terminologies](#) and the [impact](#) of the current Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill 2019–21, as well as the [appointment](#) of a new Independent Reviewer of PREVENT and the ongoing problematic nature of the damaging counter-terror [strategy](#).
- The importance of [decolonise](#) our education system and recognise the valuable [contributions](#) of BAME and Muslim communities to our society, including the importance of Muslim [heroes](#) and the [contributions](#) of BAME workers to the NHS, as well as the [challenges](#) that they face.



## The Impact of COVID-19 on Religious Holidays

Since the start of lockdown, religious communities across the UK have had to adjust to the new reality as they celebrate their religious festivals. The Jewish festival of Passover took place on April 8, which was shortly followed by Good Friday on April 10 and Easter Sunday on April 12 for...

[Read more](#)



## The Covid-19 pandemic must not mean the over-policing of minorities

A cross-party group of MPs has written to the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, warning that ethnic minorities must not be unfairly targeted by police forces in the exercise of their powers to enforce the Coronavirus lockdown. This warning is not without merit. Some police forces have demonstrated a...

[Read more](#)



## A Press Release from Hacked Off: Print media in the UK is the least trusted in Europe again

Print media in the UK is the least trusted out of all European countries. In an annual survey of 33 countries (EU states as well as acceding and candidate countries), the UK comes last, a position it has held for 9 of the 10 years the survey has been conducted. Other key findings in the [...]

[Read more](#)



## Far-Right focus on Muslims During COVID-19

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the virus has been used as a tool by the far-right to peddle Islamophobic hate by spreading stereotypes fuelled by conspiracy theories, memes, and fake videos, leading to a rise in Islamophobic sentiment online. Since the beginning of the outbreak, abuse directed...

[Read more](#)



## Exam grade predictions: Why BAME and Muslim communities are worried and how you can have your say.



## Putting into perspective the NHS ethnic pay gap during Covid-19

The frequent battle cry of populist and far-right discourse



## Coronavirus Bill in the House of Commons

Yesterday, Monday 23 March, the emergency Coronavirus Bill was debated and passed in the House of Commons. Naz Shah, MP for Bradford West, successfully pushed for an amendment to the draft bill to permit those from faith backgrounds to be exempted from automatic cremation in the advent of their...

[Read more](#)



## MEND Press Release: British Muslims distraught at possibility of 'forced cremations'

The Coronavirus Bill 2019-21 is due to have its second reading in the House of Commons on Monday 23rd March. As it is currently written, the Bill will allow designated local authorities to disregard section 46(3) of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which is designed to prevent a...

[Read more](#)



## MEND STATEMENT ON PROPOSED 'FORCED CREMATION OF DECEASED MUSLIMS' WITHIN EMERGENCY CORONAVIRUS BILL

MEND is deeply concerned by an element of the draft, emergency 'Coronavirus Bill 2019-21' due to have its second reading in the House of Commons on Monday 23rd March. As it is currently drafted, the Bill will allow designated local authorities to disregard section 46(3) of the Public Health...

[Read more](#)



## Prominent Far-Right Party Donor Revealed to Have Given Money to UK Conservative Club

The Conservative Party has been once more exposed as relying on the support of individuals possessing far-right sentiments. It has emerged that the Carlton Club, an institution described as the "spiritual home of the Tories" was the recipient of a large donation in January this year...

[Read more](#)



# Submissions to consultations and Government inquiries

MEND has submitted evidence to a variety of consultations and Government inquiries in the last few months.

## **The Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into Coronavirus and the impact on people with protected characteristics**

This submission examines the ways in which BAME and Muslim communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and the Government's response to it.

Read it [here](#).

## **The APPG on Religion in the Media's Inquiry into Religious Literacy in Print and Broadcast Media**

This submission seeks to assist the APPG to explore mechanisms for promoting nuanced representations of faith groups for the benefit of mutual understanding and social harmony.

Read it [here](#).

## **The Consultation on the Editors' Code of Practice**

This submission examines how the current Editors' Code of Practice may be best improved in order to provide appropriate guidelines for a press that is integral in shaping the socio-political landscape in the UK.

Read it [here](#).

## **The Regulator of Social Housing's Consultation on Equality Objectives**

This submission looks at how the Regulator of Social Housing can

combat Islamophobia in the context of social housing through the development and application of appropriate equality objectives.

Read it [here](#).

## **The Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Home Office Preparedness for COVID-19**

This submission seeks to assist the Home Affairs Committee to explore the current dangers posed in online spaces on account of the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well as highlighting potential mechanisms for mitigating these harms.

Read it [here](#).

## **The Education Committee inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services**

This submission explores both the short-term and longer-term implications of the outbreak of COVID-19 on the education of children, particularly those from BAME backgrounds and Muslim communities.

Read it [here](#).

## **The Public Bill Committee hearing on the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill 2019–21**

This submission examines the implications of the bill with particular reference to the bill's proposals to extend TPIMs powers and remove any deadline for the completion of the Independent Review of PREVENT. Read it [here](#).



## The Home Office consultation on protecting places of worship

This submission looks at the dangers facing places of worship, particularly emanating from the far-right, and explores how to develop a robust strategy to protect mosques and Islamic institutions across the UK.

Read it [here](#).

## The Justice Committee call for evidence regarding the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

This submission explores the potential benefits, impacts, and oversights of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill that must be taken into account during the consideration of the bill.

Read it [here](#).

## The APPG on British Muslims inquiry into the British Muslim Response to COVID.

This submission seeks to explore the contributions that have been made by Muslim communities, individuals, and organisations throughout the course of the pandemic.

Read it [here](#).

## The Joint Committee on Human Rights' inquiry into the Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications

This submission seeks to explore the Government's approach the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of their strategy's compliance with human rights. **Read it [here](#).**



# Online training and Regular Interest Updates

Like many organisations, we have had to adapt our training to online platforms, such as Zoom. During the current crisis, we have trained around 200 people on our Masterclasses on Politics and the Media. Empowering the community to engage in politics and the media is a central part of our mission to ensure that Muslim communities are aware of their rights and are equipped with the resources to fully participate in our democracy.

MEND also ran a four-week Advanced Training Course (ATC) covering the Counter-Jihad Movement. It explored the international network of funders, think-tanks, politicians, “experts”, media figures, grassroots movements, and social media platforms that work together to propagate Islamophobia across the world.



Every week, MEND produces graphics to keep Muslim communities and wider readers informed and entertained during the lockdown period. These updates include:

## Muslim Heroes

Examples of the amazing contributions that Muslim individuals and organisations are making to support Coronavirus efforts.

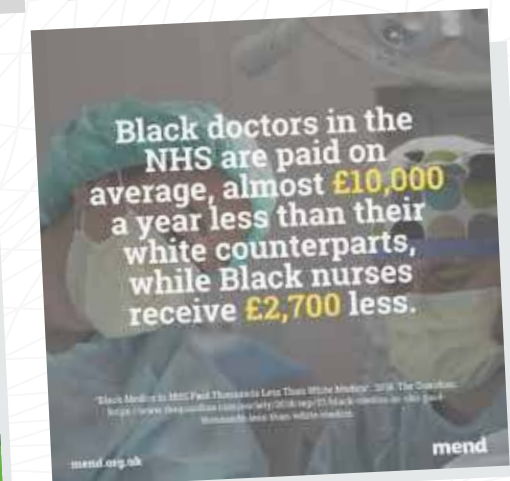
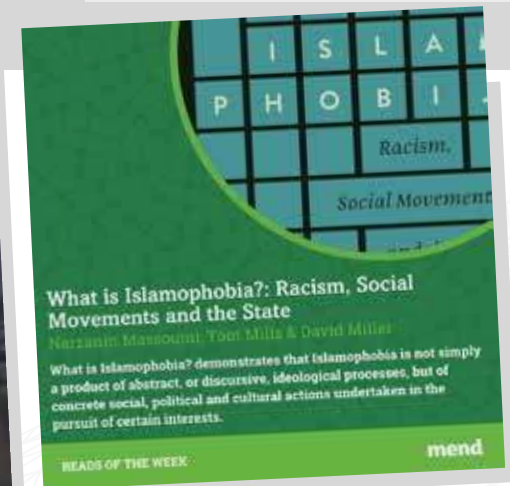
## Reads of the Week

Every week, we recommend interesting reads on equality, politics, and general interest topics.

## Inspirational and informative quotes and facts from about Muslims and Islamophobia

Inspirational and informative quotes from individuals leading the fight for equality.

Fun and interesting facts about Islamophobia and Muslim contributions to the UK.



# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Srebrenica

In July 1995 Serbian Army forces rounded up 8,000 Muslim men and boys in a supposed 'safe enclave' of Srebrenica protected by Dutch UN peacekeepers. They were taken away and murdered in cold blood.

Just before the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide, it was discovered that, in 1997, the Prime Minister wrote an article challenging Bianca Jagger's support for more direct intervention against the Serbian Army in the Bosnian war. He wrote "Alright, I say, the fate of Srebrenica was appalling. But they weren't exactly angels, these Muslims".

MEND organised two open letters from over 100 Muslim organisations and community representatives and over 30 members of Parliament demanding that Boris Johnson apologise for his comments and the distress that they caused.

MEND also hosted an online webinar as part of our MEND Report series, featuring survivor and author Hasan Hasanovic.

#### OPEN LETTER

IS IT NOT TIME FOR BORIS JOHNSON TO APOLOGISE FOR HIS APPALLING COMMENTS ON THE VICTIMS OF THE SREBRENICA MASSACRE?

"Alright, I say, the fate of Srebrenica was appalling. But they weren't exactly angels, these Muslims."

25 years ago, the Bosnian War witnessed the worst genocide on European soil since the Holocaust. In July 1995 Serbian Army forces rounded up 8,000 Muslim men and boys in a supposed 'safe enclave' of Srebrenica protected by Dutch UN peacekeepers. They were taken away and murdered in cold blood.

In the week of events commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide, we are aware that the journalist Aggy Ostani has discovered [evidence](#) made by Boris Johnson in 1997, who was then a political columnist for the Spectator.

Boris Johnson wrote an article questioning the motives of Bianca Jagger's support for more direct intervention against the Serbian Army in the Bosnian War. Within the article Johnson wrote the following words:

"Alright, I say, the fate of Srebrenica was appalling. But they weren't exactly angels, these Muslims."

There is no contextual basis for these comments and no explanation for his views.

In any case, can there ever be justification for 'blaming' the victims of genocide? Would we even countenance anyone casting aspersions on the whether Jews murdered in gas chambers were "angels".

To our knowledge Boris Johnson has never apologised for such comments. We think it is about time he did.

We, the undersigned, thus call upon the Prime Minister to urgently and unreservedly apologise for these appalling comments and for the distress and offence they have caused.

Yours sincerely,

1. Dr Sharad Amin, CEO, Muslim Engagement & Development
2. Rebecca Fox, Community Champion, Remembering Srebrenica
3. Rashed Al Tikriti, President Muslim Association of Britain
4. Weyman Bennett, Stand up to Racism, Co-convenor
5. Enam Ahmed, President, Federation of Student Islamic Societies

## SREBRENICA 25 YEARS ON

THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY  
6PM – 7:30PM

25 years on we remember the  
*Genocide of over 8,000  
Muslims in Srebrenica*

JOIN US TO HEAR FROM  
GUEST SPEAKERS:



Hasan Hasanovic  
Survivor and  
acclaimed author



Rev Dr Lorna Hood OBE  
Chair of  
Remembering Srebrenica  
Scotland board



Dr Ian Hanson  
Deputy Chair of the  
European Forensic  
Archaeology Group.



Rebecca Fox  
Community Champion for  
Remembering Srebrenica

Watch here: [facebook.com/mendcommunity/live](https://facebook.com/mendcommunity/live)

Warning: We note that this live webinar may contain disturbing and graphic descriptions of genocide.

[mend.org.uk](https://mend.org.uk)

| [mendcommunity](https://mendcommunity)



**mend**



# Media monitoring and corrections

Every weekday, the team explores and analyses news articles from around the world. These articles are posted on MEND's social media to keep you up to date and allow the team to challenge stories that may breach rules on media regulation.

The imposition of second lockdowns across the country was accompanied by an increase in far-right and racist discourse attempting to scapegoat minority communities for the continued spread of the virus. This was compounded by articles in the mainstream press that used selective data in order to pursue distorted editorial agendas. One such example can be found in The Telegraph, The Sun, and the Daily Mail who attempted to highlight how "*half of [the] UK's imported Covid-19 infections are from Pakistan*" – a categorically false and misleading claim based on selective data.

MEND was instrumental in a national campaign to have all of the articles in the three publications edited. A full analysis of the problematic nature of these articles can be found [here](https://www.mend.org.uk).



The @Telegraph, @TheSun & @DailyMailUK did not give you the context when reporting that 50% of COVID-19 cases coming to the UK in June were from Pakistan. The graph below shows how the numbers speak for themselves.



4:38 PM - Jul 1, 2020 - Twitter for iPhone

20 Retweets 19 Likes



LestaLad123

55 MINUTES AGO

We all know the reason Leicester may have to have a second lockdown ! It is not racist to say it has been reported 50 % of imported Corona cases have been imported from Pakistan and leicester has a very high BAME population - they are facts.

Reply Share Report

5 1



The Telegraph @Telegraph - 26 Jun

Exclusive: Half of Britain's imported coronavirus cases originate from Pakistan, amid calls for tougher quarantine checks on arrivals from "high risk" countries



The Telegraph

Exclusive: Half of UK's imported Covid-19 infections are from Pakistan  
Experts warn that the Government needed to concentrate its resources on screening individuals from "high risk" countries  
@telegraph.co.uk

333

693

711

Tom Collins  
@Reprobate24

Replying to @Telegraph and @PennyMidasRollo  
Send them back !

## Responding to Craig Whittaker, MP's, Islamophobic comments

Political representatives have also been central in popularising the false notion that Muslim and BAME communities are a primary cause for the continued impacts of the pandemic. In a recent interview, Craig Whittaker, Conservative MP for Calder Valley in West Yorkshire, stated that there are *"sections of our community that are just not taking the pandemic seriously"*. When pressed as to whether he was referring to Muslim communities, Whittaker responded: *"Of course."*

However, Whittaker's accusation of BAME and Muslim communities *"not taking the pandemic seriously"* is unfounded, prejudicial, and myopic, thus distorting the realities of the current crisis and scapegoating minority communities.

MEND consequently wrote to Whittaker asking him to:

- Apologise and retract his statements;
- Accept our offer to attend private diversity awareness training so he may consider the realities surrounding his remarks and their subsequent implications.

MEND also called upon the Conservative party to launch an investigation into his comments and remove the party whip from Mr Whittaker while the investigation is ongoing.



overall NHS workforce. 58.6% of all senior **doctors** are BAME.

- Muslims **account** for roughly 5% of the UK population, but approximately 17% of our doctors.
- The overrepresentation of minorities within the profession is reflected in the disproportionate number of tragic **deaths** of BAME NHS workers throughout the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Muslim individuals and organisations have been pivotal in supporting their local communities in the North of England throughout the crisis:



- The Muslim charity in Kirklees, Purpose of Life, have provided food parcels and COVID related information to those who are homeless, vulnerable, or self-isolating.
- The Period Project in Manchester have continued delivering sanitary wear to local organisations, community hubs, and food banks, in order to help women and girls struggling to access menstrual products.
- Muslim volunteers have partnered with Huddersfield Community First to deliver food, medicine, and other supplies to local people in need.
- Muslim volunteers in Bolton have supported Homeless Aid UK to provide meals for 600 to 700 homeless people each week.

Consequently, MEND has written to Craig Whittaker, MP, asking him to:

- Apologise and retract his statements;



## Scottish call for increased Muslim representation in Holyrood

MEND's Scotland team organised an open letter that was signed by almost 40 Muslim and equalities organisations, calling upon all political parties in Scotland to make a commitment to place more Muslim candidates in winnable seats for the Holyrood elections in 2021, as part of the fight against Islamophobia.

Jawad Khursheed, Chair of MEND Scotland, said that: *"The need for fair representation within the Scottish political system is essential to tackle the rise of islamophobia facing Muslims across the whole of Scotland. The Scottish Parliament needs better representation from BAME communities, including Muslims."*

Read the letter [here](#).

## MEND complains about the appointment of Trevor Phillips to the Public Health England Review of BAME deaths from Covid-19

MEND were concerned about the appointment of Trevor Phillips to the the Public Health England Review of BAME deaths from Covid-19 given that fact that he is currently suspended from the Labour Party on allegations of Islamophobia, and has a long track record of making Islamophobic comments, including asserting that;

- British Muslims were becoming a *"nation within a nation"*,
- A Muslim family fostering a non-Muslim girl was *"akin to child abuse"*,
- Muslims *"see the world differently"* from others in the UK.

MEND thus wrote to the Chief Executive of Public Health England to complain about this appointment and our CEO, Dr Shazad Amin, penned an article in the Byline Times about the problematic nature of Phillips' appointment.

It is significant that, ultimately, Mr Phillips did not author the report published by Public Health England, hence it is our view that the pressure brought by ourselves and other parties had a positive effect on reversing their initial decision regarding his role in the review.

Open letter to all Scottish political party leaders



Categories: Latest News



Tuesday, June 23, 2020

We, the undersigned, urge all of Scotland's political parties to commit to taking tangible actions to address some of the issues raised by the recent findings of the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on tackling Islamophobia.

The CPG found some serious issues, namely that 83% of Muslims had experienced Islamophobia in Scotland, and 79% of Muslims feel Islamophobia is getting worse in Scotland. Additionally, a ComRes poll commissioned by MEND in 2018 found that nearly half of all Scottish people felt that there was more negative discrimination



FACT

ARGUMENT

REPORTAGE

CULTURE

BAME Coronavirus Deaths Inquiry

## Trevor Phillips Appointment 'Insensitive and Insulting'

Dr Shazad Amin

13 May 2020

**mend**Muslim Engagement  
& Development22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Mr Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive  
Public Health England  
Wellington House  
133-135 Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8UG

Dear Mr Selbie,

Re: Appointment of Trevor Phillips to the PHE review of BAME deaths from COVID-19

I am writing on behalf of MEND, a non for profit company that tackles Islamophobia in the UK, and helps to to empower and encourage British Muslims within local communities to be more actively involved in British media and politics. MEND's work has been commended by the World Economic Forum and EU's Parliament Magazine.

Dr Shazad Amin  
Muslim Engagement and  
Development  
126 Cavell Street  
London  
E1 2JA  
[ceo@mend.org.uk](mailto:ceo@mend.org.uk)



**As British Muslims on the healthcare frontline bear the brunt of COVID-19 fatalities, Dr Shazad Amin joins mounting calls for Public Health England to reverse its decision.**

Share this article

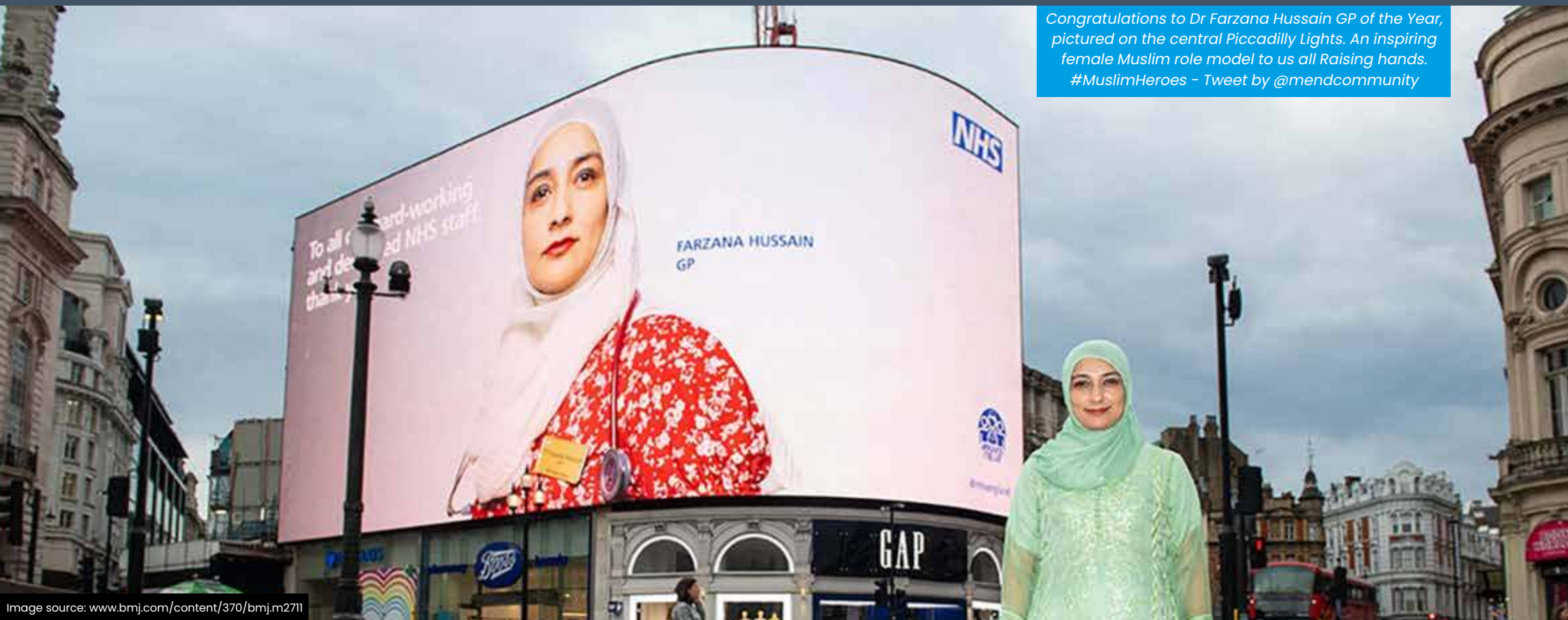
Email

Twitter

Facebook



# Conclusion



Congratulations to Dr Farzana Hussain GP of the Year, pictured on the central Piccadilly Lights. An inspiring female Muslim role model to us all Raising hands. #MuslimHeroes - Tweet by @mendcommunity

This report has shown one of the most effective ways to counter damaging far right conspiratorial narratives about Muslims during this pandemic is to highlight the positive contributions of Muslim communities.

The pandemic has changed our lives dramatically. However Islamophobia has continued unabated and MEND has responded to this challenge by developing new ways of working to continue supporting and defending

our communities in a variety of different ways including community work, online training, educational webinars, the Islamophobia Response Unit and much more.

We are immensely proud of the incredible work that has been done by both our staff and volunteers throughout the pandemic and is constantly humbled by the enthusiasm and commitment that our supporters demonstrate in leading their communities and making our society a better place.







    /mendcommunity

**mend**